

REDEMPTION AND RESURRECTION: AN EXERCISE IN BIBLICAL-SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY

Richard B. Gaffin, Jr.

The author is Professor of Biblical and Systematic Theology at Westminster Theological Seminary, Philadelphia, PA, USA, and an ordained minister in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

*He is author of a number of scholarly articles and books including **Perspectives on Pentecost** (Presbyterian and Reformed), **Calvin and the Sabbath** (Christian Focus) and **Resurrection and Redemption** (Presbyterian and Reformed).*

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Christ's resurrection, inseparably connected with his death, is at the heart of the gospel (e.g., Rom. 10:9; 1 Cor. 15:3-5). Central to the hope ministered by the gospel is the Christian's resurrection (e.g., Rom. 8:23; 1 Cor. 15). A reality so evidently dominant presents a variety of aspects for reflection. As my title suggests, here I propose to consider particularly its relationship to our salvation by taking a so-called biblical-theological approach.

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1. I should probably make clear how I understand 'biblical theology'. Briefly, I have in view not so much one particular discipline or area of study among others, as I do methodological considerations indispensable for sound biblical interpretation. Specifically, in terms of the principle of context, the text, whatever its relative size, is always to be read in its redemptive- or salvation-historical context, understanding the text's subject matter within the horizon of the unfolding history of salvation – that, I take it, is the distinguishing concern of biblical-theological exegesis (= redemptive-historical interpretation).

Such an approach stems from recognising that Scripture as a whole, with its various human authors and diverse literary genres, has its integrity as the God-breathed record of the actual revelation process of Scripture, the Bible's own origin being an essential part of that process. This history of (verbal) revelation, in turn, is tethered, as a strand within, to the larger history of the accomplishment of redemption (deed revelation); that history begins already in the Garden, subsequent to the Fall (Gen. 3:15), and reaches its consummation in the fullness of time (Gal. 4:4), in the incarnate Christ and his work.

The clearest, most explicit biblical warrant for this fundamental theological construct is provided by the opening words of

Hebrews 1:1-2a: 'God, having spoken in the past to the fathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, has spoken to us in these last days by his Son'. This umbrella statement, intended to provide an overall perspective on the teaching of the entire document, is fairly applied, by extension, to the Bible as a whole. Note how it captures three interrelated factors: a) revelation as a historical process; b) the diversity involved in that process (including, we might observe, multiple modes and literary genres – as well as, whatever legitimate methodologies have emerged, particularly in the modern era, for dealing with them); and c) the incarnate Christ as the integrating omega-point (cf. 2:2-4; 3:1-6, esp. 5-6), the nothing-less-than-last days, eschatological endpoint of the process.¹

The biblical-theological treatment of the Resurrection offered here is primarily with a view to the expressed focus of the volume: the revitalisation of systematic theology. That, in brief, I understand to be the presentation, under appropriate topics (*loci*), of the unified teaching of the Bible as a whole, an overall statement of what is either expressly set down in Scripture or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture (*Westminster Confession of Faith*, 1:6). Systematics (or church dogmatics), then, is radically non-speculative in that its viability depends on biblical exegesis. Because of that, in my view, nothing will serve more to revitalise systematics than exegesis that is redemptive-historically sensitive, and biblical-theologically regulated.

2. Our reflections here on the Resurrection need to be set against a broad historical background. As a generalisation – no doubt subject to qualification but still fair as a generalisation – we may say that in the history of doctrine, especially in soteriology, Christ's resurrection has been relatively eclipsed. In Eastern Orthodoxy, if I rightly understand, the accent has been on his incarnation (with a view to salvation understood as theosis or deification). In Western Christianity (both Roman Catholic and Protestant), especially since Anselm (eleventh century) and the ensuing debate triggered, say, by the views of Abelard, attention has been focused heavily and at times almost exclusively on Christ's death and its significance. The overriding concern, especially since the Reformation, has been to keep clear that the Cross is not simply an ennobling and challenging example but a real atonement – a substitutionary, expiatory sacrifice that reconciles God to sinners and propitiates his judicial wrath. In short, the salvation accomplished by Christ and the atonement have been virtually synonymous.

My point is not to challenge the validity or even the necessity of this development, far less the conclusions reached. But in this dominating preoccupation with the death of Christ, the doctrinal or

¹ In my judgement, the most instructive single summary treatment of issues related to biblical-theological method is still Geerhardus Vos, *Biblical Theology, Old and New Testaments* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1948), 11-27.

soteriological significance of his resurrection has been largely overlooked. Not that the Resurrection has been deemed unimportant, but all too frequently it has been considered exclusively as a stimulus and support for Christian faith (which it undoubtedly is) and in terms of its apologetic value, as the crowning evidence for Christ's deity and the truth of Christianity in general.

(Especially since the Enlightenment and with the emergence of the historical-critical method, this apologetic value has been rendered more and more problematic as increasingly the historicity of the Resurrection has been questioned or denied. On that large issue I simply assert here that for the NT the gospel plainly stands or falls with the reality of the Resurrection understood, despite all that is unique and unprecedented about it, as lying on the same plane of historical occurrence as Christ's death [1 Cor. 15:14, 17].)

3. Turning now to the NT, such an oversight or lack of emphasis on the doctrinal meaning of the Resurrection proves particularly impoverishing. That is especially true for Paul. His writings, which constitute such a substantial sub-unit within the larger organism of NT revelation, evidence, with their fully occasional character taken into account, a coherent and pervasive concern with how Christ's resurrection is integral to our salvation, or, as we might also put it, a concern with the specific saving efficacy or redemptive efficiency of his resurrection. I proceed now to sketch the basic dimensions of what we may fairly call Paul's resurrection theology, and then to reflect on several aspects in more detail.²

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1. The longest single continuous treatment of the Resurrection in Paul is 1 Corinthians 15. There, in verse 20 (cf. 23), he affirms that Christ in his resurrection is the first-fruits of those who are fallen asleep. We begin our survey here because this declaration expresses a key thought, one that governs not only much of the argument from verse 12 to the end of the chapter but, in large measure, Paul's teaching as a whole on resurrection.

This description of the resurrected Christ as first-fruits is more than an indication of bare temporal priority or even pre-eminence. Rather, commensurate with its OT cultic background (e.g., Ex. 23:19; Lev. 23:9ff.), the metaphor conveys the idea of organic connection or unity; the first-fruits is the initial quantity brought into view only as it is a part of and so inseparable from the whole; in that sense it represents the whole.

The resurrection of Christ and of believers cannot be separated, then, because to extend the metaphor as Paul surely intends, Christ is the first-fruits of the resurrection-harvest that includes believers

² See in greater detail my *The Centrality of the Resurrection* (Phillipsburg, N.J.: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1978; reprinted as *Resurrection and Redemption*, 1987), 33-74.

(note, as 15:23 shows, that this harvest is an entirely soteriological reality; the resurrection of unbelievers, taught by Paul elsewhere, e.g. in Acts 24:15, is outside his purview here). Christ's resurrection is the guarantee of the future bodily resurrection of believers not simply as a bare sign but as 'the actual beginning of th[e] general epochal event'.³ The two resurrections, though separated in time, are not so much separate events as two episodes of the same event, the beginning and end of the one and same harvest.

This unbreakable unity between the two resurrections is a controlling presupposition in the hypothetical argumentation of the immediately preceding section (vv. 12–19), so much so that a denial of the future resurrection of the believer entails a denial of Christ's resurrection (vv. 13, 15, 16). Essentially the same idea of solidarity in resurrection is also expressed elsewhere in the description of Christ as the firstborn from among the dead (Col. 1:18).

In view, further, is Christ's resurrection as an innately eschatological event. In fact, as much as any, it is the key inaugurating event of eschatology, the dawn of the new creation (2 Cor. 5:17; Gal. 6:15), the arrival of the age to come (Rom. 12:2; Gal. 1:4). It is not an isolated event in the past, but, in having occurred in the past, it belongs to the future consummation and from that future has entered history. In Christ's resurrection the resurrection-harvest at the end of history is already visible. Pressed, if present, say, at a modern-day prophecy conference, as to when the event of bodily resurrection for believers will take place, the first thing the apostle would probably want to say is, it has already begun!

2. The emphasis on Christ as the first-fruits of resurrection points out that, for Paul, the primary significance of Christ's resurrection lies in what he and believers have in common, not in the profound difference between them; the accent falls not on his true deity but on his genuine humanity. The Resurrection, as we will presently note in more detail, is not so much an especially evident display or powerful proof of Christ's divine nature as it is the powerful transformation of his human nature.

This emphasis is confirmed in an implicit but pervasive fashion by Paul's numerous references, without elaboration, to the simple fact of the Resurrection.⁴ These undeveloped statements display a consistent, unmistakable pattern: 1) God in his specific identity as the Father raises Jesus from the dead (Gal. 1:1); 2) Jesus is passive in his resurrection. This viewpoint is held without exception, so far as I can see. Nowhere does Paul teach that Christ was active in or contributed to his resurrection, much less that he raised himself;

³ Geerhardus Vos, *The Pauline Eschatology* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 1979), 45

⁴ Grammatically, with the verb *egetrō* used almost exclusively, Christ is either the direct object of (aorist) active forms (e.g., Rom. 4:24; 10:9), or the subject of (aorist and perfect) passive forms (e.g., 1 Cor. 15:20; 2 Cor. 5:15). In the case of the latter, an intransitive/active sense is excluded by the context.

Jesus did not rise, but was raised from the dead. The stress everywhere is on the creative power and action of the Father, of which Christ is the recipient.

To see a conflict here with statements such as that of Jesus in John 10:18 ('I have authority to lay [my life] down and authority to take it up again', NIV) is both superficial and unnecessary. The Chalcedon formulation proves helpful here: The two natures co-exist hypostatically (in one person), without either confusion or separation; Jesus expresses what is true of his person in terms of his deity, Paul expresses what is no less true in terms of his humanity.

3. To fill out this basic sketch, one other element needs to be noted. The passages so far considered express the bond between Christ's resurrection and the future, bodily resurrection of believers. But Paul also speaks of the Christian's resurrection in the past tense; believers have already been raised with Christ (e.g., Eph. 2:5-6; Col. 2:12-13; 3:1). This past resurrection, it needs to be recognised, is so, not only in the sense that Christ represented the church in his resurrection. Rather, it is an experience in the actual life-history of each believer. That is apparent from Ephesians 2, where the Resurrection in view terminates on being dead in your transgressions and sins (vv. 1, 5), and effects a radical, 180-degree reversal in walk or actual conduct – from walking in the deadness of sin (v. 1) to walking in the good works of new-creation existence in Christ (v. 10). It bears emphasising that to speak of this experiential transformation as resurrection is not merely metaphorical; Paul intends such language no less realistically or literally (and, we might add, no less irrevocably) than what he says about the hope of bodily resurrection.

4. To sum up this overview of Paul's resurrection theology: An unbreakable bond or unity exists between Christ and Christians in the experience of resurrection. That bond is such that the latter (the resurrection of Christians) has two components – one that has already taken place, at the inception of Christian life when the sinner is united to Christ by faith; and one that is still future, at Christ's return. From this it will be readily apparent how Paul's teaching on the fundamental event of resurrection reflects the overall already/not-yet structure of eschatological fulfilment in the period between Christ's resurrection and his return.

If we raise the question of distinguishing the two episodes of the believer's resurrection, various proposals suggest themselves: secret/open; non-bodily/bodily; internal/external.⁵ Paul himself offers the distinction between the outer man and the inner man (2 Cor. 4:16), which we should understand not as two discrete

⁵ Spiritual/physical is not an apt distinction, and is perhaps even misleading, at least if 'spiritual' is used in its pervasive NT sense, referring to the activity of the Holy Spirit. The past resurrection of the believer is certainly spiritual in this sense, but so is the future, bodily resurrection – pre-eminently, climactically so (1 Cor. 15:44).

entities but as two aspects of the whole person. So far as believers are 'outer man', that is, in terms of the body, they are yet to be raised. So far as they are 'inner man', they are already raised and, he adds, the subject of daily renewal.

III

This pattern of teaching is open to being explored further along two interrelated but distinct lines: what concerns Christ (Christology), and what concerns Christians/the church (soteriology and ecclesiology). The reflections that follow are necessarily selective.⁶

1. So far as the Christ is concerned, most striking is the relationship between Christ and the Holy Spirit resulting from the Resurrection. Here the key, single most important passage is also in 1 Corinthians 15, where Paul says of Christ that the last Adam became the life-giving Spirit (v. 45). The observations that follow will have to be brief; an effort at more careful exegesis is found in several footnotes.

1) The noun *pneuma* (spirit) in 1 Corinthians 15:45 is definite⁷ and refers to the person of the Holy Spirit.⁸ This is the view taken, across

⁶ Missing, for instance, is a treatment of the forensic significance of the Resurrection, especially its relationship to justification. Briefly, Christ was raised for our justification (Rom. 4:25). The Resurrection vindicates Jesus in his obedience unto death (Phil. 2:8-9); it reveals that he embodies the perfect righteousness that avails before God. In that sense his resurrection is his justification and so, by imputation, through union with him by faith, our justification. Without the Resurrection, along with his death, there would be no justification of the ungodly (Rom. 4:5), our faith would be futile, and we would still be in our sins (1 Cor. 15:17); see further my Resurrection and Redemption, 114ff.

⁷ The absence of the article before *pneuma* has little weight as a counter-argument, if for no other reason, because of the tendency in koine Greek to omit the article before nouns designating persons when, as here, in construction with a preposition. See A. Blass, A. Debrunner, R.W. Funk, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), 133f. (254, 255, 257).

⁸ This conclusion rests on a couple of interlocking, mutually reinforcing considerations that appear to me to be decisive.

a) *Pneuma* in v. 45 and *pneumatikon* (spiritual, vv. 44a, b, 46) are cognate noun and adjective. The adjective, particularly as it is paired antithetically here with *pneumatikos*, and in the light of the only other NT occurrence of this antithesis earlier (in 2:14-15), has in view the work of the Spirit and what is effected by him. This is further confirmed by Paul's consistent use of *psuchikos anthrōpos* elsewhere; it never has an anthropological sense (e.g., Rom. 1:11; Eph. 1:3; Col. 1:9; the only exception appears to be Eph. 6:12).

In 2:6-16 the activity of the Spirit - his sovereign, exclusive work in giving and receiving God's revealed wisdom - is the primary focus of the immediate context. In contrast to the unbeliever (*ho pneumatikos*, v. 14), the spiritual man (*pneumatikos*, v. 15) is the believer (cf. vv. 4-5) as indwelt, enlightened, motivated, directed by the Spirit. The long-standing effort to enlist this passage in support of an anthropological trichotomy (with *pneumatikos* here referring to the human spirit come to its revived

a fairly broad front, by a substantial majority of contemporary commentators and other interpreters who address the issue.⁹ In English translation, Spirit should be capitalised;¹⁰ Paul knows of no other 'life-giving' *pneuma* than the Holy Spirit (2 Cor. 3:6; cf. Rom. 8:11).¹¹

2) 'The life-giving Spirit', it should not be missed, is not a timeless description of Christ – who he has always been. Rather, he 'became' *egeneto* such. The time-point of this 'becoming' is surely his resurrection or, more broadly, his exaltation.¹² As 'first-fruits' of the resurrection-harvest (vv. 20, 23) he is 'life-giving Spirit' (v. 45); as 'the life-giving Spirit' he is 'the first-fruits'. As resurrected, the last Adam has ascended; as 'the second man', he is now, by virtue of

ascendancy), I take it, is not successful and ought to be abandoned; see, e.g., John Murray, *Collected Writings of John Murray*, vol. 2 (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1977), 23–33, esp. 23–29.

b) The participial modifier in 15:45b points to the same conclusion. The last Adam did not simply become *pneuma* but 'life-giving' *pneuma* (*pneuma zōtopoioun*). Paul's use of this verb elsewhere with the Spirit as subject proves decisive, especially his sweeping assertion in 2 Corinthians 3:6: 'the Spirit gives life'. Few, if any, will dispute that here the Spirit (to *pneuma*) is 'the Spirit of the living God' just mentioned in 3:3, in other words, the Holy Spirit. And in Romans 8:11, a statement closely related to the 1 Corinthians 15 passage, the 'life-giving' activity of raising believers bodily is attributed to the Spirit (cf. John 6:63).

⁹ See, e.g., various articles in the recent *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, G.F. Hawthorne, R.P. Martin, eds. (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1993), 12a and 263b (L.J. Kreitzer), 107b, 108a, 112a (B. Witherington), 349a (R. B. Gaffin), 407b (T. Paige), 435a (G. M. Burge), 554 (J. J. Scott). See further Vos, *Pauline Eschatology*, 10, 168–69, 184, 312; Herman N. Ridderbos, *Paul: An Outline of His Theology* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1975), 88, 222–23, 225, 539; Gaffin, *Resurrection and Redemption*, 78–92.

¹⁰ Virtually all the standard English translations obscure the sense of v. 45 by rendering spirit in the lower case. Notable exceptions are The Living Bible (and now The New Living Translation) and Today's English Version; they, correctly I believe, capitalise Spirit.

¹¹ To deny that *pneuma* in v. 45 is the Holy Spirit at the very least undercuts a reference to his activity in the cognate adjective spiritual in v. 44 and ends up giving it a more indefinite sense of something like supernatural. That easily tends toward the widespread misunderstanding that it describes the (immaterial) composition of the Resurrection body. Also, it has to be asked: Within the first-century Mediterranean thought-world of Paul and his readers, what is a life-giving spirit with a lower-case s? What would that likely communicate, at least without further qualification, such as is lacking here, other than the notion of an angel or some other essentially immaterial being or apparition? But *pneuma* in that sense is exactly what Jesus, as resurrected, denies himself to be in Luke 24:37–39.

¹² The flow of the reasoning in ch. 15 makes that virtually certain. It would make no sense for Paul to argue for the Resurrection of believers as he does if Christ were 'life-giving' by virtue of, say, his pre-existence or incarnation – or any consideration other than his resurrection. This is in no way to suggest that his pre-existence and incarnation are unimportant or non-essential for Paul; they simply lie outside his purview here.

ascension, 'from heaven' (v. 47),¹³ 'the man from heaven' (v. 48). All told, the last Adam, who has become 'the life-giving Spirit', is specifically the exalted Christ.

3) In the immediate context (vv. 42–49), 'life-giving' contemplates Christ's future action, when he will resurrect the mortal bodies of believers (cf. v. 22). Within the broader context of Paul's teaching, however, his present activity, as well, is surely in view. As we have already noted, the resurrection of the Christian, in union with Christ, is not only future but has already taken place (e.g., Gal. 2:20; Col. 2:12–13; 3:1–4).

2. Here, more pointedly than anywhere else in Paul (or for that matter anywhere else in the NT), the significance of the Resurrection (and Ascension) for the relationship between Christ and the Spirit comes to light. In context, two closely related realities are in view: 1) Christ's own climactic transformation by the Spirit; and 2), along with that transformation, his unique and unprecedented reception of the Spirit.

1) Paul affirms what has not always been adequately elaborated in the church's Christology: the momentous, epochal significance of the exaltation for Christ personally; he has, as the first-fruits, what he did not have previously, a spiritual body.¹⁴ In his resurrection, something really happened to Jesus; by that experience he was and remains a changed man, in the truest and deepest, even eschatological sense.

As Paul puts it elsewhere (on the most likely reading of Rom. 1:3–4), by the declarative energy of the Holy Spirit in his resurrection, God's eternal (v. 3a) and now incarnate (v. 3b) Son has become what he was not previously, the Son of God with power (v. 4). Relatively speaking, according to 2 Corinthians 13:4, while Christ was crucified in (a state of) weakness, he now lives by God's power; his is now, by virtue of the Resurrection and Ascension, a glorified human nature.

Here, as so often in Paul, Christology and soteriology are inextricable. Christ does not receive his glorified humanity merely for himself but for the sake of the church. In the language of Romans 8:29, the Resurrection constitutes him the image to which believers are

¹³ With the immediate context in view, this prepositional phrase is almost certainly an exaltation predicate, not a description of origin, say, out of pre-existence at the incarnation. As such ('from heaven', 'the man from heaven', v. 48, NIV), he is the one whose image believers ('those who are of heaven', v. 48, NIV) will bear (fully, at the time of their bodily resurrection, v. 49; cf. Phil. 3:20–21).

¹⁴ The resurrection body is 'spiritual' (v. 44), it bears emphasising, not in the sense of being adapted to the human *pneuma* or because of its (immaterial) composition or substance (to mention persisting misconceptions) but because it embodies (!) the fullest outworking, the ultimate outcome, of the work of the Holy Spirit in the believer (along with the renewal to be experienced by the entire creation, e.g., Rom. 8:19–22). That eschatological body is the believer's hope of total, (psycho-)physical transformation, and in that sense, our bodies, too, enlivened and renovated by the Spirit.

predestined to be conformed, so that he, the Son, might be firstborn among many brothers; specifically, the exalted Christ is that image into which Christians are even now already being transformed (2 Cor. 3:18) and which they will one day bear bodily in their future resurrection at his return (1 Cor. 15:49).

2) This resurrection-transformation of Christ by the Spirit also results in a climactic intimacy, a bond between them that surpasses what previously existed, a relationship involving, in fact, a new and permanent equation or oneness that Paul captures by saying that Christ became the life-giving Spirit.¹⁵ This is not to deny that previously Christ and the Spirit were at work together among God's people.¹⁶ But now, dating from his resurrection and ascension, their joint action is given its stable and consummate basis in the history of redemption; that culminating synergy is the crowning consequence of the work of the incarnate Christ actually and definitively accomplished in history.

First Corinthians 15:45 is, in effect, a one-sentence commentary on the primary meaning of Pentecost: Christ is the receiver-giver of the Spirit. What Peter delineates in his Pentecost sermon as inseparable once-for-all events – resurrection, ascension, reception of the Spirit, outpouring of the Spirit (Acts 2:32–33) – Paul telescopes by saying that the last Adam became the life-giving Spirit.¹⁷

3. It bears emphasising that this oneness or unity of Christ and the Spirit, though certainly sweeping, is at the same time circumscribed in a specific respect; it concerns their activity, the activity of giving resurrection (= eschatological) life. In this sense it may be dubbed 'functional' or 'eschatological', or, to use an older theological category, 'economic' (rather than 'ontological').¹⁸

In other words, the scope, the salvation-historical focus of Paul's statement, needs to be kept in view. Essential-eternal, ontological-trinitarian relationships are quite outside his purview here. His concern is not with who Christ is (timelessly), as the eternal Son, but with who he 'became', what has happened to him in history, and

¹⁵ Herman Bavinck's way of stating this truth is striking: 'But the Holy Spirit has become entirely the property of Christ, and was, so to speak, absorbed into Christ or assimilated by him. By his resurrection and ascension Christ has become the quickening Spirit'. *Our Reasonable Faith* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1956), 387.

¹⁶ Prior to this time, already even under the old covenant, Christ pre-incarnate and the Spirit were conjointly present and at work; 1 Cor. 10:3–4, whatever its further exegesis, points to that. Cf. 1 Pet. 1:10–11: The Spirit comprehensively at work in the OT prophets is specifically 'the Spirit of Christ'.

¹⁷ On the once-for-all significance of Pentecost – along with the death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ – see Richard B. Gaffin, Jr., *Perspectives on Pentecost* (Phillipsburg, N.J.: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1979), 13–41.

¹⁸ Although, as noted earlier, there is involved a real change/transformation experienced by Christ in terms of his true humanity. By virtue of the Resurrection, he now possesses what he did not previously possess, a glorified human nature (cf. 2 Cor. 13:4).

specifically in his identity – Paul could hardly have been more emphatic – as ‘the last Adam’, ‘the second man’ (v. 47), that is, in terms of his true humanity.

Consequently, it is completely gratuitous to find here and elsewhere in Paul, as the historical-critical tradition has long and characteristically maintained, a ‘functional’ christology in the sense that it denies the personal difference between Christ and the Spirit and so is in conflict with later church formulation of trinitarian doctrine. In no way is Paul here even obscuring, much less denying, the distinction between the second and third persons of the Trinity. The personal, parallel distinction between God (the Father), Christ as Lord, and the (Holy) Spirit – underlying subsequent doctrinal formulation – is clear enough elsewhere in Paul (e.g. 1 Cor. 12:4–6; 2 Cor. 13:14; Eph. 4:4–6).¹⁹ His trinitarian conception of God is not at issue but is properly made a presupposition in the interpretation of 1 Corinthians 15:45.

4. The last clause in 1 Corinthians 15:45 not only connects closely, as already noted, with Romans 1:4 but also with the subsequent statement at the beginning of 2 Corinthians 3:17: ‘the Lord is the Spirit’. There, the ‘Lord’ (*ho kurios*) likely refers to Christ, and an equation between him and the Spirit is affirmed.²⁰ Here, too, essential, trinitarian identities and relationships are not being denied or blurred, but simply remain outside Paul’s purview. His focus, clear from the immediate context (see esp. v. 18), is the conjoint activity of the Spirit and Christ as glorified. The ‘is’ (*estin*) of 2 Corinthians 3:17, we may say, is based on the ‘became’ of 1 Corinthians 15:45. The exaltation experienced by the incarnate Christ results in a

¹⁹ In more recent literature, Paul’s clearly trinitarian understanding of God is admirably demonstrated by Gordon D. Fee, *God’s Empowering Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Letters of Paul* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1994), 825–45, esp. 839–42.

²⁰ A growing number of exegetes currently argue that the ‘Lord’ in v. 17a applies Ex. 34:34, just cited in v. 16, to the Spirit, and they minimise or even eliminate any christological reference from vv. 17b–18; e.g., Linda L. Belleville, *Reflections of Glory* (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991), 256ff.; J. Dunn, ‘2 Corinthians III.17 – “The Lord Is the Spirit”’, *Journal of Theological Studies* n.s. 31, no. 2 (Oct. 1970): 309–20; Fee, *God’s Empowering Presence*, 311–14; Scott J. Hafemann, *Paul, Moses, and the History of Israel* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1995), 396–400; Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1989), 143–44; N.T. Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant* (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1991), 183–84. But verse 17b (‘the Spirit of the Lord’) already distinguishes between the Spirit and the Lord, so that the latter likely refers to Christ, in light of what immediately follows in v. 18. There, ‘the Lord’s glory’ (NIV) is surely not the glory of the Spirit in distinction from Christ, but the glory of Christ; in beholding/reflecting that glory, Paul continues, believers are being transformed into ‘the same image’, and that image can only be the glory-image of the exalted Christ. In the verses that follow, 4:4 (‘the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God’, NIV), especially, points to that conclusion (note as well Rom. 8:29 and 1 Cor. 15:49). The only transforming glory believers behold with unveiled faces, which Paul knows of, is the glory of God in the [gospel-] face of Christ (4:6), mediated, to be sure, to and within them by the Spirit.

(working) relationship with the Holy Spirit of new and unprecedented intimacy. They are one here, specifically, in giving (eschatological) 'freedom' (3:17b), the close correlative of the resurrection life, in view in 1 Corinthians 15. That correlation is particularly unmistakable in the phrasing of Romans 8:2: 'the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set me free'.

IV

1. First Corinthians 15:45, Paul's most pivotal pronouncement on the relationship between the exalted Christ and the Spirit, is consequently the cornerstone of his teaching on the Christian life and the work of the Holy Spirit. Life in the Spirit has its specific quality as the shared life of the resurrected Christ, in union with him. There is no activity of the Spirit within the believer that is not also the activity of Christ; Christ at work in the church is the Spirit at work.

Romans 8:9-10 is particularly instructive here. There, in short compass, four expressions are virtually interchangeable: 'you ... in the Spirit' (9a); 'the Spirit ... in you' (9b); 'belong to [Christ]' (9d, equivalent to the frequent 'in Christ'); and 'Christ ... in you' (10a). These four expressions hardly describe different experiences, distinct from each other, but have in view the same reality in its full, rich dimensions. The presence of the Spirit is the presence of Christ; there is no relationship with Christ that is not also fellowship with the Spirit; to belong to Christ is to be possessed by the Spirit.

This truth about the believer's experience, it bears emphasising, is so not because of some more or less arbitrary divine arrangement, but pre-eminently because of what is true prior to our experience, in the experience of Christ, because of (in virtue of his death and resurrection) who the Spirit now is ('the Spirit of Christ', v. 9c), and who Christ has become ('the life-giving Spirit').²¹ So, elsewhere (in the prayer for the church in Eph. 3:16-17), for 'you ... to be strengthened ... through his Spirit in the inner man' is nothing other than for 'Christ [to] dwell in your hearts through faith' (NASB).

2. The Spirit at work in the church, then, is Christ at work in nothing less than eschatological (because resurrection) power. In fact, the NT has no more important or more basic perspective on being a Christian than this: The Christian life is resurrection-life. As we have already noted, it is part of the resurrection-harvest that begins with Christ's own resurrection (1 Cor. 15:20); the believer's place or share in that harvest is now – not only in the future but already in the present. The radical edge of Paul's outlook on the Christian life comes to light in the observation that, at the core of

²¹ That here, too, Paul does not intend an absolute identity, denying the personal distinction between Christ and the Spirit, is clear later on in the passage: the Spirit's interceding here, within believers (vv. 26-27), is distinguished from the complementary intercession of the ascended Christ there, at God's right hand (v. 34).

their being (the 'inner man', 2 Cor. 4:16; or what he also calls the heart, Rom. 2:29; 6:17; Eph. 1:18), Christians will never be more resurrected than they already are! Christian existence across its full range is a manifestation and outworking of the resurrection life and power of Christ, the life-giving Spirit (Rom. 6:2ff.; Eph. 2:5-6; Col. 2:12-13; 3:1-4).

These considerations need to be stressed in view of the tendency in much historical Christian thinking to de-eschatologise the gospel and its implications, especially where the work of the Holy Spirit is concerned. His present activity, characteristically, is viewed in a mystical or timeless way, as what God is doing in the inner life of the Christian, detached from eschatological realities. The result, too often has been largely privatised, individualistic, even self-centred understandings of the Spirit's work. The church ought constantly to make clear in its proclamation and teaching that, in the NT, 'eternal life' is eschatological life, specifically resurrection life. It is 'eternal', not because it is above or beyond history – 'timeless' in some ahistorical sense – but because it has been revealed, in Christ, at the end of history and, by the power of the Spirit, comes to us out of that consummation.

3. It seems fair to suggest that at issue here is a still-to-be-completed side of the Reformation. The Reformation, we should not forget, was a (re)discovery, at least implicitly, of the eschatological heart of the gospel; the *sola gratia* principle is eschatological in essence. Justification by faith, as the Reformers came to understand and experience it, is an anticipation of final judgement. It means that a favourable verdict at the last judgement is not an anxious, uncertain hope (where they felt themselves to be left by Rome), but a present possession, the confident and stable basis of the Christian life. Romans 8:1 ('There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus', NASB), which they clung to, is a decidedly eschatological pronouncement.

However while the Reformation and its children have grasped, at least intuitively, the eschatological thrust of the gospel for justification, that is not nearly the case for sanctification and the work of the Spirit. Undeniable is a tendency, at least in practice, to separate or even polarise justification and sanctification.²² Justification, on the one hand, is seen as what God does, once for all and perfectly; sanctification, on the other hand, is what the believer does, imperfectly. Sanctification is viewed as the response of the believer, an expression of gratitude from our side for salvation defined in terms of justification and the forgiveness of sins – usually with an emphasis on the inadequate and even impoverished quality of the gratitude expressed.

²² I leave to the side here the treatment of sanctification in the Lutheran and Reformed confessions of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and the extent to which they counteract and serve to correct this practical tendency.

The intention of such an emphasis is no doubt to safeguard the totally gratuitous character of justification. But church history has made all too evident that the apparently inevitable outcome of such an emphasis is the rise of moralism, the reintroduction into the Christian life of a refined works-principle, more or less divorced from the faith that justifies and eventually leaving no room for that faith. What is resolutely rejected at the front door of justification comes in through the back door of sanctification and takes over the whole house.

Certainly we must be on guard against all notions of sinless perfection. Forms of 'entire' sanctification or 'higher', 'victorious' life, supposedly achieved by a distinct act of faith subsequent to justification, operate with domesticated, voluntaristic notions of sin that invariably de-eschatologise the gospel and in their own way, despite their intention, end up promoting moralism. We must not forget that 'in this life even the holiest have only a small beginning' (Heidelberg Catechism, answer 114).

But – and this is the point – that beginning, however small, is an eschatological beginning. It stands under the apostolic promise that 'He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus' (Phil. 1:6, NASB). Sanctification, no less than justification, is God's work. In the NT there is no more basic perspective on sanctification and renewal than that expressed in Romans 6: It is a continual 'living to God' (v. 11) of those who are 'alive from the dead' (v. 13). Elsewhere, it is a matter of the 'good works' of the eschatological new creation, for which the church has already been 'created in Christ Jesus' (Eph. 2:10). In their sanctification, believers begin at the 'top', because they begin with Christ; in him they are those who are 'perfect' (1 Cor. 2:6) and 'spiritual' (v. 15), even when they have to be admonished as 'carnal' (3:1, 3).²³

An important and fruitful challenge for the teaching ministry of the church today is to give adequate attention to the eschatological nature of sanctification and the present work of the Holy Spirit (ensuring at the same time that justification is clarified within the already/not yet structure of NT eschatology).

4. But, it might now be asked, has not the resurgent Pentecostal spirituality of recent decades seen and, in large measure, recaptured the eschatological aspect of the Spirit's working, and so compensated for the traditional neglect and shortcomings just noted?

One brief observation concerning this multi-faceted question will have to suffice.²⁴ A current widespread misperception notwithstanding, the NT does not teach that spiritual gifts,

²³ See further especially the penetrating discussion of John Murray, *Collected Writings*, vol. 2, 277–84 ('Definitive Sanctification'); 285–93 ('The Agency in Definitive Sanctification').

²⁴ See, in greater detail, my comments in Wayne A. Grudem, ed., *Are Miraculous Gifts for Today?* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1996), 56–59.

especially miraculous gifts such as prophecy, tongues, and healing, belong to realised eschatology. For instance, a concern of 1 Corinthians 13:8–13 is to point out that prophecy and tongues are temporary in the life of the church. Whether or not at some point prior to the Parousia (I leave that an open question here), Paul is clear that they will cease and pass away (v. 8). But that cannot possibly be said of what is eschatological. Such realities, by their very nature, endure.²⁵ Phenomena such as prophecy and tongues, where they occur, are no more than provisional, less-than-eschatological epiphenomena.²⁶ I suggest that this reading of the passage helps with the perennial problem exegesis has wrestled with in verse 13: How can faith and hope be said to continue after the *Parousia*, in the light, of, for instance, 2 Corinthians 5:7 (for the present, in contrast to our resurrection-future, we ‘walk by faith, not by sight’) and Romans 8:24 (‘hope that is seen is not hope’, NASB)? That question misses the point. The ‘abiding’ in view is not future but concerns the present, eschatological worth of faith and hope (as well as love), in the midst of the non-enduring, sub-eschatological quality of our present knowledge, including whatever word gifts bring that knowledge.

All told, the NT makes a categorical distinction between the gift (singular) and the gifts (plural) of the Spirit, between the eschatological gift, Christ, the indwelling, life-giving Spirit himself, in which all believers share (e.g. 1 Cor. 12:13), and those sub-eschatological giftings, none of which, by divine design, is intended for or received by every believer (1 Cor. 12:28–30, for one, makes that clear enough).

The truly enduring work of the Spirit is the resurrection-renewal already experienced by every believer. And that renewal manifests itself in what Paul calls fruit – like faith, hope, love, joy and peace (to mention just some, Gal. 5:22–23), with, we should not miss, the virtually unlimited potential for their concrete expression, both in the corporate witness as well as in the personal lives of the people of God. This fruit – pre-eminently love, not the gifts – embodies the eschatological ‘first-fruits’ and ‘deposit’ of the Spirit (to use Paul’s metaphors). However imperfectly displayed for the present, such fruit

²⁵ To highlight this point by way of contrast, in terms of metaphors Paul uses for the Spirit: The arrival of the rest of the harvest does not involve the removal of the first-fruits (Rom. 8:23); the payment of the balance hardly results in subtracting the down payment or deposit (2 Cor. 1:22; 5:5; Eph. 1:14). Or, going to what is surely the heart of the Spirit’s activity, the resurrection of the body at Christ’s return will certainly not mean the undoing of the resurrection, already experienced, of the inner man.

²⁶ Contemporary discussion of this passage (on all sides, I would observe) too frequently obscures or even misses Paul’s primary concern: for the present, until Jesus returns, it is not our knowledge (along with the prophetic gifts that may contribute to that knowledge), but our faith, hope, and love that have abiding, that is, eschatological, significance. In contrast to the partial, obscured, dimly mirrored quality of the believer’s present knowledge brought by such gifts, faith in its modes of hope and especially love has what we might call an eschatological ‘reach’ or ‘grasp’ (vv. 12–13).

is eschatological at its core. Not in particular gifts, however important such gifts undoubtedly are for the health of the church, but in these fruits we experience the eschatological touch of the Spirit in our lives today. This is a point, I hope, on which charismatics and non-charismatics, whatever their remaining differences, will eventually agree.

5. A question may now come from another quarter: Will not stressing the resurrection quality of the Christian life and the eschatological nature of the Spirit's work minister an easy triumphalism, a false sense of attainment? Trivialising options such as 'possibility thinking' and 'prosperity theology' in various forms are by no means an imaginary danger, as our own times make all too clear.

The NT itself is alert to this danger – the perennial danger for the church of an overly realised eschatology. In the interim between Christ's resurrection and return, believers are 'alive from the dead', but they are that only 'in your mortal body' (Rom. 6:12–13); Christians experience 'the powers of the age to come' (Heb. 6:5), but only as 'the present evil age' (Gal. 1:4) is prolonged, only within the transient 'form of this world' (1 Cor. 7:31) (all references NASB).

What such interim existence entails is captured perhaps most instructively and challengingly, even if at first glance a paradox, in several passages in Paul. Though, strictly speaking, autobiographical and having uniquely apostolic dimensions, they intend the suffering he experienced as a paradigm for all believers.

Philippians 3:10 is a particularly compelling instance. As part of Paul's aspiration to gain Christ and be found in him (vv. 8–9), he expresses the desire to 'know [Christ] and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being conformed to his death' (NASB). In this declaration, I take it, the two 'ands' are not co-ordinating but explanatory. Knowing Christ, the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his suffering are not sequential or alternating in the believer's experience, as if memorable and exhilarating times of resurrection power are offset by down days of suffering. Rather, Paul is intent on articulating the single, much more than merely cognitive, experience of knowing Christ, what he has just called 'the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord' (v. 8, niv). To know Christ, then, is to know his resurrection power as a sharing in his sufferings – an experience, all told, that Paul glosses as being conformed to his death. The imprint left in our lives by Christ's resurrection power is, in a word, the Cross.

Similarly, 2 Corinthians 4:10–11 speaks of always carrying around in the body the dying of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may be manifested in our body, and, again, of always being given up to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus may be manifested in our mortal flesh. Here the two counterposed notions of the active dying of Jesus and of his resurrection life do not describe somehow separate sectors of experience. Rather, the life of Jesus, Paul is saying, is revealed in our mortal flesh, and nowhere else; the (mortal) body is the locus of the life of the exalted Jesus. Christian

suffering, described as the dying of Jesus, moulds the manifestation of his resurrection-life in believers.

This 'cross-conformity' of the church is, as much as anything about its life in this world-age, the signature of inaugurated eschatology. Believers suffer, not in spite of or even alongside the fact that they share in Christ's resurrection, but just because they are raised up and seated with him in heaven (Eph. 2:5-6). According to Peter (1 Pet. 4:14), it is just as Christians suffer for Christ that God's Spirit of (eschatological) glory rests on them. For the present, until he returns, suffering with Christ remains a primary discriminant of the eschatological Spirit. The choice Paul places before the church for all time, until Jesus comes, is not for a theology of the Cross instead of a theology of resurrection-glory, but for his resurrection theology as theology of the Cross.

The question of Christian suffering needs careful and probing reflection, especially for the church in North America with its relative freedom and affluence, where suffering can seem remote and confined to the church elsewhere, but where we are surely naive not to be preparing for the day when that distance may disappear – perhaps much sooner than we may think.

Romans 8:18ff., where Paul opens a much broader understanding of Christian suffering than we usually have, is instructive. There, with an eye to the Genesis 3 narrative and the curse on human sin, he reflects on what he calls, categorically, the sufferings of the present time (v. 18), that is, the time, for now, until the bodily resurrection of the believer (v. 23). From that sweeping angle of vision, suffering is everything about our lives, as they remain subjected, fundamentally and unremittingly, to the enervating futility (v. 20) and bondage to decay (v. 21), which, until Jesus comes, permeate the entire creation.

Christian suffering, then, is a comprehensive reality that includes everything in our lives in this present order, borne for Christ and done in his service. Suffering with Christ includes not only monumental and traumatic crises, martyrdom and overt persecution, but it is to be a daily reality (cf. Luke 9:23: 'take up his cross *daily*' [NIV, italics added]); it involves the mundane frustrations and unspectacular difficulties of our everyday lives – when these are endured for the sake of Christ.

Philippians 1:29, I take it, is a perennial word to the church: 'For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for him' (NIV). Here Paul speaks of the givenness of Christian suffering for the church as church. Probably we are not over-translating to speak of the gracious given-ness of suffering; suffering is given to the church as a gift. At any rate, Paul is clear, the Christian life is a not only/but also proposition – not only a matter of believing but also a matter of suffering. Suffering is not simply for some believers but for all. We may be sure of this: where the church embraces this inseparable bond between faith and suffering, there it will have come a long way toward not only comprehending theologically but also actually experiencing the eschatological quality of its resurrection-life in Christ, the life-giving Spirit.