

LIFE IN THE SPIRIT:

Communion with the Vicarious Humanity of Christ

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Abstract: *Life in the Spirit is usually summarized as simply not "gratifying the desires of the flesh" (Galatians 5:16, New Revised Standard Version) or a subjective, experiential "If we live by the Spirit, let us be guided by the Spirit" (Galatians 5:25). As important as those biblical aspects are, they need to be christologically grounded in the continual significance and reality of the humanity of Christ as the substitute and representative of our reality, what Thomas F. Torrance calls "the vicarious humanity of Christ." In this way, The Spirit is Christ continually meeting us in our weakness (Romans 8:26). Since Christ ascended to the Father (a significant part of the preaching on the Day of Pentecost – Acts 2:33), the Spirit has been poured out to connect us with his continual ministry (Hebrews 7:25), another major theme in Torrance's Christology. This has tremendous pastoral implications for our Christology today in a world of innocent suffering that often wonders if the "omnipotent" God is on our side as we suffer. The Spirit of Christ is this "belonging" of the "children of God" (Romans 8:9, 14).*

Introduction

Jesus is the one Spirit-led believer. Can we believe that? Is that an affront to our own ideas of spirituality and religiosity, the project of the *homo religiosus*, the religious person? How does the Spirit who empowered Jesus, however, empower the church today? How does it do so in a way which continues the vicarious ministry of Christ? Is there a vicarious ministry of the Spirit?

The disciples were not able to heal the epileptic boy, Jesus said, "Because of your little faith. For truly I tell you, if you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you." (Matthew 17:20)

How torturous this saying has been to us! "[I]f you have faith..." What an "if"! What happens when I *don't* have enough faith? Has Jesus cast me aside, then? Is he only interested in those whose faith "measures up" to his level of faith?

Perhaps faith is simply, as Ernest Becker says, our "offering to the life force," a wistful, poignant affirmation of life, simply because one has nothing to lose.¹ Is faith that barren, resigned to meaninglessness?

Jesus believes. My faith may be next to nothing. It may have been devastated by the cruelties of life. It may have been destroyed by my own bad choices. Yet Jesus still believes. The faithfulness of Jesus, Torrance says, "undergirds" my weak, devastated faith.² One has already believed and *still believes*. Thus, faith is not simply our part of the contract, what we do in response to grace. No, the faith of Jesus is an expression, a manifestation of *the faithfulness of God*.³

¹ Ernest Becker, *The Denial of Death* (New York: The Free Press, 1973), 285.

² T. F. Torrance, *God and Rationality* (London and New York: Oxford University Press, 1971), 114.

³ T. F. Torrance, "One Aspect of the Biblical Conception of Faith," *The Expository Times* 68 (1956-57), 111-14, 221-22; T. F. Torrance, *Conflict and Agreement in the Church, II: The Ministry and Sacraments of the Gospel* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1959), 74-82.

In the New Testament, Jesus bestows the Spirit upon others (John 14:16-19, 26; 16:13-15; 1 John 3:24; 4:13), and even a couple citations seemingly identify Jesus and the Spirit (1 Corinthians 15:45; 2 Corinthians 3:17).⁴ The tendency is to see the Spirit as that which “aids” or “bridges” the gap between God and ourselves rather than, as Zizioulas puts it, “the person of the Trinity who actually realizes in history that which we call Christ, this absolutely relational entity, our Savior.”⁵ The relational tone of Zizioulas is certainly welcome, but where is the basis in humanity for the Spirit if the vicarious *humanity* of Christ is not there? Zizioulas has been criticized for this absence before.⁶ Should we say, Christ exists only pneumatologically, with Zizioulas?⁷ Perhaps, but not without the ontological and human foundation in the vicarious humanity of Christ.

As Torrance puts it, some doctrines of the Spirit readily flounder with “our subjective states” or “confusing the Spirit with our spirits.”⁸ The “objectivity” of being “face to face with Jesus” is lost. This is what the vicarious humanity of Christ repairs. This makes clear, yes, there is a ministry of the Spirit today, but it makes a difference that the Spirit’s ministry depends on the unique, historical ministry of the Incarnate Son, which continues today, even in the heavenlies.⁹ There is no “kingdom of the Spirit,” nor an “Incarnation of the Spirit,” but a “Kingdom of Christ in and by the Spirit.”¹⁰ It is only through the incarnate Son, the *eidos*, the “image” of God, Torrance contends, that God is known “to us creaturely human beings

⁴ Thomas N. Finger, *Contemporary Anabaptist Theology: Biblical, Historical, Constructive* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 358.

⁵ John D. Zizioulas, *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1985), 110-11.

⁶ Todd Speidell, *Fully Human in Christ: The Incarnation as the End of Ethics* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2016), 91-92.

⁷ Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 111.

⁸ T. F. Torrance, “The Relevance of the Doctrine of the Holy Spirit for Ecumenical Theology” in *Theology in Reconstruction* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), 235-36.

⁹ T. F. Torrance, “Introduction” in *The School of Faith: The Catechisms of the Reformed Church* (London: James Clarke and Co., 1959), xcvi.

¹⁰ T. F. Torrance, “The Foundation of the Church: Union with Christ through the Spirit,” *Theology in Reconstruction* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), 204-5.

within the conditions and structures of our earthly existence," since only he is both "homoousios with the Father" and "homoousios with us."¹¹ Athanasius can speak of the Son as the means by which we know the Spirit: "We are permitted to see in the Son the Spirit in whom we are enlightened."¹² There is "one grace," Athanasius adds, "from the Father which is perfected through the Son in the Holy Spirit."¹³

In the Son's vicarious humanity we see how crucial it is, in Torrance's words, to develop "the reconciliation of mind."¹⁴ At the heart of the vicarious humanity of Christ is Paul's exhortation to present ourselves as "a living sacrifice," not to be "conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds" (Romans 12:1-2). This means all of our humanity is taken captive by Christ, not just the "spiritual" or the "moral," but including how we think. This involves a check upon vacuous views of "spirit" that circulate periodically in cultures, even today.

Yet it is only by the Spirit we know that Jesus is Lord (1 Corinthians 12:3). Theology has often forgotten that. (I remember Torrance lecturing that there is no "logical connection" between the cross and forgiveness. But there is a "Holy Ghost" connection!¹⁵ That is, as Barth puts it, this is not "the spirit of the true, the good, the beautiful, but as being ... the quite incomprehensible Holy Spirit who is striving with man's hostility in this battle and victory of grace."¹⁶) "The Son never encounters the Father," Hans Urs von Balthasar observes, "and the Father never

¹¹ T. F. Torrance, *The Trinitarian Faith: The Evangelical Theology of the Ancient Catholic Church* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1988), 203.

¹² Athanasius, *Letters to Serapion*, 1.19.2, in Athanasius and Didymus the Blind, *Works on the Spirit*, trans. Mark DelCogliano, Andrew Radde-Gallwitz, and Lewis Ayres (Yonkers, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2011).

¹³ Athanasius, *Letters to Serapion*, 1.14.6.

¹⁴ T. F. Torrance, "The Reconciliation of Mind" in *Atonement: The Person and Work of Christ* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster and Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009), 437-447. Cf. T. F. Torrance, "The Epistemology of the Holy Spirit" in *God and Rationality* (London: Oxford University Press, 1971), 165-92; *The Christian Frame of Mind: Reason, Order and Openness in Theology and Natural Science* (Colorado Springs: Helmers and Howard, 1989).

¹⁵ T. F. Torrance, "The Grammar of Theology" lectures, Fuller Theological Seminary, 1981, Grace Communion International website, gci.org.

¹⁶ Karl Barth, *The Holy Spirit and the Christian Life*, trans. R. Birch Hoyle (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993), 20.

encounters the Son, except in the Holy Spirit.”¹⁷ So Jesus “rejoiced in the Holy Spirit” when he began his great prayer to the Father, “I thank you, Father ...” (Luke 10:21).

At the heart of Christian faith is Jesus Christ. As the Council of Chalcedon puts it, he is Very God and Very Man. Barth comments on Chalcedon in this way: “As certainly as Jesus Christ is very God and also very man, it includes also the fact that there may be genuine obedience on the part of man: the obedience of man as his free act.”¹⁸ The faith and obedience of Jesus is the foundation of the faith and obedience of his followers who are led by his Spirit. This is a vicarious faith, on our behalf and in our place, a faith that meets us in our utter need.

While one must not identify Christ and the Spirit, one must also see their oneness (in a Chalcedonian sense: “not to be separated, but not to be confused”). As Athanasius points out, when we are enlightened by the Spirit, “it is Christ who in the Spirit enlightens us. For ‘he was the true light’ (John 1:9).”¹⁹ But Athanasius also remembers the distinction in the Triune Persons: “So, again, while the Father is fountain, and the Son is called river, we are said to drink of the Spirit. For it is written that ‘we have all been given to drink of one Spirit’ (1 Corinthians 12:13).” Athanasius possesses a dynamic “Logos/Spirit” Christology which takes a distinct ministry of the Spirit towards humanity seriously: our participation by the Spirit: “For what the Word has by nature, ... in the Father, that he wishes to be given to us through the Spirit irrevocably.”²⁰ In Cyprian’s cry for the unity of the Church, he cites the oneness of Christ and the Spirit, quoting Ephesians 4:4: “There is one

¹⁷ Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Theo-Logic: Theological Logical Theory: Volume III: The Spirit of Truth*, trans. Graham Harrison (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2005), 369.

¹⁸ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* (cited afterward as *CD*), eds. T. F. Torrance and G. W. Bromiley (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1956-1969) IV/2, 801.

¹⁹ Athanasius, *Letters to Serapion on the Holy Spirit*, 1.19.4, in *Athanasius*, ed. Khaled Anatolios (London and New York: Routledge, 2004), 218.

²⁰ Athanasius, *Against the Arians*, Discourse III.25.25, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, second series* (cited afterward as *NPNF*), eds. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1887) 4, 407.

body and one Spirit, one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God."²¹

Torrance is skeptical of all that lessens the "objectivity" of God. The importance of an objective perfect human response in Christ's vicarious humanity reaffirms this. Such a conviction is suspicious of pneumatologies that originate with "our subjective states" or "evaporating the Spirit into immanent nature or confusing the Spirit with our spirit."²² The alternative is, bluntly, becoming "face to face with Jesus." G. W. Bromiley questions the Christian East's refusal to accept the *filioque* addition to the creed ("and the Son") as "testif[ying] perhaps to an underlying impulse to separate the Holy Spirit and His work from Jesus Christ, to give to the Holy Spirit an autonomy in revelation and redemption, to achieve a Christianity of the 'spirit' without the corresponding embodiment of the 'flesh.'"²³ Of course, Bromiley adds, church history is replete with other examples in the West, from Puritans to Quakers, of when that has been done. That "fleshly" aspect is seen deeply in the scriptural narrative of Jesus, beginning with Christ being born of a virgin by the Holy Spirit. "To deny the Virgin Birth is to separate between Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit," indeed the whole Trinity, according to Bromiley.²⁴ The one sent by the Father was conceived by the Spirit, but was known first of all in the flesh of his humanity as the incarnate Son.

Such a Christology which is open to the Spirit is a Christology which Karl Barth repeatedly called a Christology of "the *living* Jesus Christ" (emphasis mine).²⁵ "The truth is identical with the *living* Jesus Christ, the true Witness. It is identical with the *personal* work ... It is identical ... with the promise of the Spirit..."²⁶

²¹ Cyprian, "On the Unity of the Church," *Ante-Nicene Fathers* (cited afterward as *ANF*), eds. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1951) 5.1.4, 422.

²² T. F. Torrance, "The Relevance of the Doctrine of the Spirit for Ecumenical Theology" in *Theology in Reconstruction*, 235.

²³ G. W. Bromiley, "The Spirit of Christ" in *Essays in Christology for Karl Barth*, ed. T. H. L. Parker (London: Lutterworth Press, 1956), 135.

²⁴ Bromiley, "The Spirit of Christ," 137.

²⁵ Barth, *CD* IV/3.1, 475, *passim*.

²⁶ Barth, *CD* IV/3.1, 475.

The vicarious humanity is essential in understanding the importance of the Holy Spirit who is “mediated by Christ.”²⁷ Often cited is John 20:21, where the resurrected Jesus repeats his continuity with the Father’s mission (cf. John 17:18: “As you have sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world.”), with the additional promise (or imperative?): “Receive the Holy Spirit.” At least one can see the direct connection between Christ and the Spirit. The danger across the centuries of Christian history is for doctrines of an unmediated Spirit to capture the fancy of the church. The vicarious nature of the Christ who gives his Spirit to his people means, for Torrance, “only God can give God.” Only he is able to give himself, particularly in human nature, in vicarious *humanity*, sharing in who we are. This involves partaking of the Spirit of God, becoming the Spirit-led believer of the Gospels. Although the Spirit is always involved in creation (Genesis 1:1-2), this is a much more intimate involvement because of the Incarnation, Torrance avows, and what happens in human nature through Jesus’ being born of the Virgin Mary, his baptism, his life in unity with the Father, and his offering himself as Lamb and Priest for our salvation. In the entirety of his humanity, he is “both the God who gives and the Man who receives in One Person.”²⁸ As “the Man who receives” this applies “above all to the gift of the Holy Spirit.”²⁹

But in following the dynamic of Paul in Romans 8, Torrance emphasizes the significance of the Holy Spirit, who “mediates Christ to us.”³⁰ The rampaging Spirit of the Old Testament has been “adapted and accustomed” to the flesh of Jesus, “not as isolated and naked Spirit, but as Spirit charged with all the experience of Jesus as he shared to fill our mortal nature and weakness”³¹ But Christ does not leave us. He is in “continual intercession” as our “High Priest,” having taken up “the gloried Humanity of Christ.” Therefore, the Spirit’s vicarious work “answers” to “the twofold work of the Son,” both “manward” and “Godward,” the “Godward” being the

²⁷ T. F. Torrance, “Come, Creator Spirit, for the Renewal of Worship and Witness” in *Theology in Reconstruction*, 245-46.

²⁸ Torrance, “Come, Creator Spirit,” 245.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 246.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ *Ibid.*, 247.

vicarious humanity of Christ.³² The Spirit does not work apart from “answering” the vicarious humanity of Christ. So there should be no thought of the Spirit “replacing” Christ. We can now be “partakers” in the Son’s worship, through the Spirit.³³ The Spirit’s aim is in “uniting us to the response and obedience and faith and prayer of Jesus.”³⁴ In fact, one should speak of the Spirit as the one who “hides himself” and only speaks of the Son, who was the one who was incarnate.³⁵

Jesus in the Fourth Gospel remarkably paints the picture of the “rivers of living water” that will flow “[o]ut of the believer’s heart” when the Spirit is given (John 7:38-39). Paul can also say powerfully to the Romans, “God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us” (Romans 5:5). He can also write to the church at Corinth of the dependence on the Spirit for even the Christian’s confession of the lordship of Jesus: “... no one speaking by the Spirit of God ever says ‘Let Jesus be accursed!’ and no one can say ‘Jesus is Lord’ except by the Holy Spirit” (1 Corinthians 12:3).

The Holy Spirit: Grace, Union with Christ, Participation in the Spirit, and Intercession

The Holy Spirit in fact is involved in God’s initiative of grace, says Luther in his Small Catechism: “I believe that by my own reason or strength I cannot believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to him. But the Holy Spirit has called me through the Gospel”³⁶ For Calvin, the Holy Spirit is at the heart of his doctrine of union with Christ, the Spirit who is “the bond by which Christ effectually unites us to himself.”³⁷ Without union with Christ through the Spirit, “Christ remains outside of

³² Ibid., 248.

³³ Ibid., 249.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid., 252.

³⁶ Luther’s Small Catechism, Third Article of the Apostles’ Creed, *Creeds of the Churches*, ed. John H. Leith (Atlanta: Westminster John Knox, 1963), 116. Cf. Barth, *CD IV/3.2*, 490-91, 495, 503-5.

³⁷ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 1559 edition, 3.1.1.

us.” Calvin speaks of “the secret energy of the Spirit, by which we come to enjoy Christ and all his benefits.”³⁸ “The testimony of the Spirit ... seals the cleansing and sacrifice of Christ.”³⁹ “Our souls are cleansed by the secret watering of the Spirit.”⁴⁰ Torrance is distinctive in his stress on the Incarnation as the *one* union with Christ and humanity and his criticism of subsequent Reformed theology’s teaching on a subsequent union: There is “only one union with Christ, that He has wrought out with us in His birth and life and death and resurrection and in which He gives us to share through the gift of His Spirit.”⁴¹ Notice the emphasis Torrance puts on the connection between union with Christ and the gift of the Spirit. As Ray Anderson comments, 2 Corinthians 5:19 teaches that “in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself,” but Romans 8 speaks of the work of the Spirit in redemption (8:23).⁴² Torrance’s contention is that we understand that we are not saved by our act of believing but by “the vicarious faith of Christ ... It is only on this basis that we are really free to believe and have faith in Christ without any ulterior motive of using faith to secure our salvation.”⁴³ This is the very *foundation* for our belief, rather than preempting our belief, as some critics think.⁴⁴ Indeed, the Torrance brothers speak of union with Christ and the vicarious humanity of Christ as “twin doctrines,” which lead to our participation in Christ through the Spirit.⁴⁵ For as Barth simply

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Torrance, “Introduction” in *The School of Faith*, cvii.

⁴² Interview with Ray S. Anderson, “God and the Prodigal Son” in *Trinitarian Conversations, Volume 1: Interviews with Ten Theologians* (Glendora, CA: Grace Communion International, 2013), 12. Anderson attributes this thought to Karl Barth.

⁴³ Torrance, “Introduction” in *The School of Faith*, cix.

⁴⁴ See Donald MacLeod, *Jesus is Lord: Christology. Yesterday and Today* (Fearn, Ross-shire: Mentor, 2000), 134. See also the critique in Myk Habets, *Theosis in the Theology of T. F. Torrance* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2009), 77.

⁴⁵ James B. Torrance, “Christ in Our Place” in Thomas F. Torrance, James B. Torrance, and David W. Torrance, *A Passion for Christ: The Vision That Ignites Ministry*, eds. Gerrit Dawson and Jock Stein (Edinburgh: The Handsel Press and Lenoir: PLC Publications, 1999), 51.

puts it, being "in Christ" means "where Christ is" and "belonging" to him.⁴⁶ This is where Christ has union with the entire human being, body and soul, as emphasized by the vicarious humanity, not just death of Christ. This has been neglected by some Reformed divines' emphasis simply on our "spiritual" nature.⁴⁷

The importance, if not priority, of the Spirit is highlighted in Matthew 12:32: "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." Whatever is the interpretation of the troublesome "blasphemy against the Holy Spirit," if Jesus means "the Son of Man" to be one of his titles, it does bring up a possible superseding of the Spirit over the Son (at least economically), or at least his ministry as "the Son of Man." This may be academic if one takes into account that Jesus is the One Spirit-led Believer in whom all the works of the Spirit begin and in whom all other works of the Spirit participate.

Here is the place in Torrance's thought for the significance of *participation* through the Spirit. What Christ has done for us has been done in his humanity, in identification with ours through the Holy Spirit. Torrance is careful to include the Holy Spirit in calling the Incarnation the "controlling and shaping principle ... a knowledge mediated through the Son which we may have only through the activity of the Holy Spirit and as in the Spirit we participate in the Son and through him in God."⁴⁸ Participation is participation in God's own life, as sons and daughters of God, or *theosis*.⁴⁹ This is what happens in the Godward movement of the vicarious humanity of Christ, as we participate in the Spirit in the risen and ascended Christ's humanity, finding our true center in God.

⁴⁶ Barth, *CD IV/3.2*, 594.

⁴⁷ Torrance, "Introduction" in *The School of Faith*, cvi-cvii.

⁴⁸ Torrance, *The Trinitarian Faith*, 63-64.

⁴⁹ Torrance, "Come, Creator Spirit," 243. Cf. Habets, *Theosis in the Theology of Thomas Torrance*; T. F. Torrance, *Theology in Reconstruction* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), 243; T. F. Torrance, *Theology in Reconciliation: Essays Towards Evangelical and Catholic Unity in East and West* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 223, 234; T. F. Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God: One Being, Three Persons* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1996), 151.

Here also we find participation by the Spirit as intertwined with faith.⁵⁰ Faith, of course, as many have increasingly realized in recent years, should be first understood as the faith *of Jesus*.⁵¹

The One who asks his disciples for more faith is the same One who prays for us (John 17:6-26). His prayers, as Campbell says, are the highest expression of his trust in the Father.⁵² Jesus is the one who boldly prays in "the knowledge of the Father's will and confidence in His love." He *intercedes* for those who do not have enough faith. That is what is happening in Matthew 17:20 with the disciples. What is often only seen as a criticism of the disciples, an exhortation for them to "have more faith," is actually *an act of intercession* on the part of Jesus. Intercession. Can this be a pointer towards the vicarious work of Christ today?

Intercession is a peculiar form of vicarious life. This was true for the relationship between Dietrich Bonhoeffer and his friend Eberhard Bethge when the former was in prison. So Bonhoeffer can write to Bethge,

I have the feeling that to a certain degree you also see things with my eyes, just as I see things here with yours. We thus experience our different fates for each other in a kind of *vicarious way*.⁵³

Is this an entrée into the vicarious work of the Spirit, "because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God" (Romans 8:27)? Is this kind of vicarious intercession a way we participate in the work of the Spirit for each other? Our inability, our need to depend upon another, enables the Spirit to work in our lives.

⁵⁰ Frank D. Macchia, *Justified in the Spirit: Creation, Redemption, and the Triune God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 221.

⁵¹ Macchia, *Justified in the Spirit*, 240; Richard B. Hays, *The Faith of Jesus Christ: The Narrative Substructure of Galatians 3:1-4:11*, second edition (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 141-62; *The Faith of Jesus Christ: Exegetical, Biblical, Theological Studies*, eds. Michael F. Bird and Preston M. Sprinkle (Milton Keynes: Paternoster and Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2009).

⁵² John McLeod Campbell, *The Nature of the Atonement* (Edinburgh: The Handsel Press and Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 176.

⁵³ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works, Volume 8, trans. Isabel Best, Lisa E. Dahill, Reinhard Krauss, and Nancy Lukens (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009), 191 (emphasis mine).

Lack of knowledge (“we do not know how to pray as we ought”) as well as moral inability (“for I do not do the good I want”) are both problems for us.

The Vicarious Humanity of Christ, the Spirit-Led Believer

The concern of the vicarious humanity of Christ is that there is no doctrine or experience of the Holy Spirit which has any ground apart from the humanity of Christ. It is at this point that the emphasis the vicarious humanity of Christ puts on the faith of Jesus finds harmony in those adherents of “Spirit Christology” who find many traditional Christologies lacking in attention to the earthly life of Jesus.⁵⁴ The vicarious humanity of Christ reminds us we must not do that, for our faith and obedience is based on the faith and obedience of Jesus. Indeed, although there is a long history (particularly in the Reformed tradition) of the place of inner testimony of the Holy Spirit in the knowledge of God, it has famously been critiqued by D. F. Strauss as the “Achilles’ heel” of Protestantism as ultimately too subjective.⁵⁵ Does not *the faith of Jesus* provide a grounding for the knowledge of God through the Holy Spirit that takes it away from our subjective experiences and places it on Jesus, the Spirit-led Believer, who believes on our behalf and in our place vicariously, yet avoids the problem of some Spirit Christologies which can lead to Adoptionism or Unitarianism?⁵⁶

Life in the Spirit, then, is not something superior to, or absent from, the presence of the same Jesus Christ who walked the sands of Galilee. The Spirit is only superior in the sense of eschatological fulfillment and universality (Acts 2:17). But the Holy Spirit is “the Spirit of Christ” (Romans 8:9), that will glorify the Son (John 16:14).

⁵⁴ See Jürgen Moltmann, *The Way of Jesus Christ: Christology in Messianic Dimensions*, trans. Margaret Kohl (New York: HarperCollins, 1989), 73-78.

⁵⁵ D. F. Strauss, *Die chr. Glaubenslehre*, vol. 1, 1840, 136, cited by Barth, *CD I/2*, 537.

⁵⁶ For examples of orthodox, trinitarian Spirit Christologies see Clark H. Pinnock, *Flame of Love: A Theology of the Holy Spirit* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1996); Myk Habets, *The Anointed Son: A Trinitarian Spirit Christology* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2010); and *Third Article Theology: A Pneumatological Dogmatics*, ed. Myk Habets (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2016).

We cannot have Pentecost without Christ, Ray Anderson argues: "Pentecost is not a replacement for Jesus Christ, but always the manifestation of Jesus Christ through the presence and power of the Holy Spirit."⁵⁷ We would contend that this is made even stronger by the recognition that this is Christ in his vicarious humanity, who does not leave us alone, but also does not allow us to let the entirety of our humanity to be untouched. As the fathers frequently said, "The unassumed is the unhealed."⁵⁸

It is right, then, to recognize a "Spirit Christology" that begins with Christ's being born of the Holy Spirit (Matthew 1:18; Luke 1:35). The Holy Spirit then descends upon him "like a dove" at his baptism (Matthew 3:16; Mark 1:10; Luke 3:22). "Full of the Holy Spirit," Jesus is led into the desert to be tempted by the devil (Matthew 4:1; Luke 4:1). He then fulfills the prophecy of Isaiah 61:1 as Jesus unrolls the scroll in the synagogue and reads, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me ..." (Luke 4:18). This manifests "the original source of his obedience as issuing out of the filial love of the Son for the Father and the Father for the Son," the Spirit being, in the Augustinian sense, the "bond" of love between the eternal Son and the eternal Father.⁵⁹

Yet the Spirit is more than just the continuation of the historical Jesus and a link to him so we as the "church" can celebrate Jesus as an "Abraham Lincoln Club" honors Abraham Lincoln. Jesus is no mere "example" in the past for the church to remember fondly and mimic. No, there is also an indwelling of the Spirit in the church that is a power and presence which is the source of the church's life and ministry.⁶⁰

⁵⁷ Ray S. Anderson, *Ministry on the Fireline: A Practical Theology for an Empowered Church* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1993), 40.

⁵⁸ Gregory of Nazianzus, *Ep.* 101, cited by Torrance, *The Trinitarian Faith*, 164; Gregory of Nyssa, *Adv. Apol.*, cited by Torrance, *The Trinitarian Faith*, 162; Athanasius, *Con. Ar.*, cited by Torrance, *The Trinitarian Faith*, 161. See the exhaustive study by E. Jerome Van Kuiken, *Christ's Humanity in Current and Ancient Controversy: Fallen or Not?* (London and New York: T & T Clark, 2017).

⁵⁹ Anderson, *Ministry on the Fireline*, 39.

⁶⁰ Ray S. Anderson, *The Soul of Ministry: Forming Leaders for God's People* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1997), 111.

Jesus may have been “led” by the Spirit and “baptized” by the Spirit as an example for us, but also to emphasize a genuine humanity lived in our place. After his baptism, the Holy Spirit was present in all of his actions, the church father Basil observes.⁶¹ His baptism is the one baptism in which all of our baptisms participate (T. F. Torrance).⁶² Torrance’s place for the human nature of Christ in the vicarious humanity of Christ is not “merely instrumental” in Torrance’s thought, as some have claimed.⁶³ The Son who is led by the Spirit is the Son who actually believes and obeys in our place and on our behalf. He has a genuine relationship with the Father in the Spirit. This hardly means that “Christ’s human experience” is “a considerable oversight” given the place of the vicarious life, faith, and obedience of Jesus in Torrance’s thought.⁶⁴ The vicarious humanity of Christ provides a critique of Spirit Christologies that begin dualistically with religious experience and “historical Jesus” research and thus suffer the “tunnel vision” inadequacy of the modern preoccupation with Christologies “from below.”

Life in the Spirit and the Vicarious Humanity of Christ

Indeed, there is a danger of speaking of the spiritual life, of the life in the Spirit as a “Presence without form,” a danger of separating the Spirit from Christ.⁶⁵ As Barth comments, “the Holy Spirit is not identical with the human spirit, but He meets it.”⁶⁶ While recognizing the deity in which all three persons share, one must also recognize that it is only the Son who became incarnate, who took upon himself human flesh, human form. The vicarious humanity of Christ reminds us of this.

⁶¹ Basil the Great, *On the Holy Spirit*, 16.39 (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1980). Cf. Leopoldo A. Sánchez M., *Receiver, Bearer and Giver of God’s Spirit: Jesus’ Life in the Spirit as a Lens for Theology and Life* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2015), 225.

⁶² T. F. Torrance, “The One Baptism Common to Christ and the Church” in *Theology in Reconciliation*, 82-105.

⁶³ Habets, *Theosis in the Theology of Thomas Torrance*, 71.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 196; See also Myk Habets, “Spirit Christology: Seeing in Stereo,” *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* (2003), 199-235; Myk Habets, *The Anointed Son*.

⁶⁵ Ray S. Anderson, *Historical Transcendence and the Reality of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 227.

⁶⁶ Karl Barth, *Dogmatics in Outline*, trans. G. T. Thomson (New York: Philosophical Library, 1949), 140.

Christ must continually take our place, not just be our representative, as in some theories of the atonement. Forensic views limit substitution to one moment of Christ paying the penalty for our sins on Calvary. Moral example views disallow Christ from taking our place in every aspect of our humanity. The vicarious humanity of Christ, by contrast, digs deep into the totality of our humanity with the totality of Christ's humanity so that when we act in the world, the Spirit of Christ is his Spirit of concrete love, not just "virtue signaling," but a love that concretely meets needs. "Disembodied love," says Anderson, "is a state of mind, and does not exist at all."⁶⁷ "Disembodied" is, unfortunately, how many today would define "spiritual," so goes with how they define the life of the Spirit.

But one must remember that Jesus just remains an historical figure without the Holy Spirit. In this way we may even say that it is the vicarious humanity of Christ that also needs the Holy Spirit: the vicarious humanity as, in Paul's term, the "Last Adam" (1 Corinthians 15:45) who is "a life-giving spirit."⁶⁸ James D. G. Dunn sees the anointing of the Spirit at Jesus' baptism as biblical grounds for Jesus as the representative of Israel, as, indeed, the new Adam.⁶⁹ Zizioulas can even say, Christ's "corporate personality" is "impossible to conceive without Pneumatology."⁷⁰

Still, problems can arise when the Spirit is seen as the culmination of God's work, and Christ as taking second place. Leonardo Boff presents four stages of God's work: first, Mary, second, Christ, third, human and church community and, fourth, "everything comes from the Spirit."⁷¹ The vicarious humanity of Christ is a critique of such a Hegelian move. But what becomes of Jesus Christ in such a

⁶⁷ Anderson, *Historical Transcendence and the Reality of God*, 227.

⁶⁸ Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 130.

⁶⁹ James D. G. Dunn, *Baptism in the Holy Spirit* (London: SCM Press, 1970), 29.

⁷⁰ Dunn, *Baptism in the Holy Spirit*, 29.

⁷¹ Leonardo Boff, *Holy Trinity, Perfect Community*, trans. Philip Berryman (Maryknoll, NY; Orbis Press, 1988), 22-23. See 17: "The Trinity is not revealed as a doctrine but as a practice: in the deeds and words of Jesus and in the action of the Holy Spirit in the world in the world and in people." This is an unfortunate example of what Torrance would call dualistic thinking. See also the critique of Boff in Christian D. Kettler, *The Vicarious Humanity of Christ and the Reality of Salvation* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1991), 25-39.

theology? The vicarious humanity of Christ calls a halt to that which would take the place of Christ in the world, and in our lives, even life in the Spirit. Although the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* can speak in an Irenaean way of the Father sending both his Word and his Breath, this is their “joint mission,” distinct only in that the Son is “seen” and the Spirit “reveals” him.⁷² Is it helpful to speak of God’s work in a trinitarian way, as the Father’s “two hands,” the Word (or Son) and the Spirit, as Irenaeus suggests?⁷³ This is very popular in contemporary theology, as it seems to give attention to a “Word/Spirit” theology, taking each into account. While this suggests a strong trinitarian form as well, it also is strongly monarchical and tends to separate the Son from the Spirit. Also, as David Coffey points out concerning the “two hands,” “though true,” the separation of Christ from the Spirit severs the Spirit from the priority of the mission of the incarnate Son.⁷⁴ Torrance sounds a welcome alarm:

The operation of the Spirit is never merely instrumental in the hands of God – that is the danger in the old patristic image. He is God Himself personally present in this way, distinct from His Person as Father and distinct from His Person as Son, and yet as proceeding personally from the person of the Father and the person of the Son in the unity of the One God, and in the indivisible operations of the Trinity.⁷⁵

Perhaps one can here make a modest proposal: Instead of a “Logos-centered” or “Spirit-centered” Christology, we see a “double movement” of the Incarnation itself, found in the *katabasis/anabasis* of the history of worship (proclamation then sacrament), a reflection of the deity and humanity of Christ, as reflected in a “Word/Spirit” theology. Many have suggested this, but without the important middle term of the vicarious humanity of Christ, who goes deeply into the

⁷² *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (New York: Doubleday, 1994). par. 689.

⁷³ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, ANF, 4.20.1. See also Boff, *Holy Trinity, Perfect Community*, 16-17.

⁷⁴ David Coffey, “The Method of Third Article Theology” in *Third Article Theology: A Pneumatological Dogmatics*, ed. Myk Habets (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2016), 24.

⁷⁵ Torrance, “Introduction” in *The School of Faith*, xcvi.

ontological recesses of our humanity in the downward, humanward first movement (representation), and then believes, obeys, worships, serves, loves, in our place, in the second movement, the upward, Godward movement, in the power and presence of the Holy Spirit.⁷⁶ This does not mean that the Word or Spirit are absent in the other movements, in a kind of Nestorianism, but that the first movement is primarily Word and the second primarily Spirit, yet still indivisible and united through the vicarious humanity of Christ. Yet we would hope to avoid the temptation of many advocates of Irenaeus' "two hands" of the Father, the Word and the Spirit, to end with their being separate from each other, by always being reminded that the foundation of the Spirit on earth is the vicarious humanity of Christ. A "Word/Spirit" Christology centers on the living Christ himself, as Barth likes to say, which the vicarious humanity of Christ accentuates in a particular way, so that the apostolic *kerygma* is never proclaimed apart from the living Christ himself, as Torrance emphasizes. Christ proclaims himself as Word in the personal power of the Spirit, "making his work effective."⁷⁷ So Calvin can speak of Christ addressing the whole person, "without" (the Word) and "within" (the Spirit), for the end "to contemplate God's face" (remarkable for the iconoclastic Calvin!).⁷⁸ This has great implications for theological anthropology, as Torrance perceives. In *The Mediation of Christ* and other places he will speak of "the personalizing and actualizing activity of Christ."⁷⁹ As Gary Deddo points out, in other writings, Torrance connects Christ with the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of God harmonizing with the humanity of the Son which "perfects/sanctifies our personhood, for by the Spirit

⁷⁶ See also Yves Congar, *The Word and Spirit*, trans. David Smith (London: Geoffrey Chapman and San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1986); Word and Spirit in Calvin, *Institutes*, 1.9.3., 2.5.3.

⁷⁷ T. F. Torrance, *Atonement*, 322-23.

⁷⁸ Calvin, *Institutes*, 2.5.5, 1.9.3.

⁷⁹ T. F. Torrance, *The Mediation of Christ*, second edition (Colorado Springs: Helmers and Howard, 1992), 67-69; Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God: One Being, Three Persons*, 160-61.

we are given a share in the Son's perfected and so personalized human nature."⁸⁰ Do we have participation and *theosis* fulfilled here?

Much of ethical exhortation is built upon the possibilities of our own strength, the imperative of a good will (Kant), and therefore is a slap in the face to those who are weak. This assumes that the gospel is for the righteous, not for the sinner, for the one who is well, not for the one who is ill (Luke 5:31, 32). Anderson names such living as "the kenotic way of life," from the word *kenos*, Greek for "empty," as is found in Philippians 2:7, in which Christ "emptied himself, taking the form of a slave" Such is found to be the correct form of life in the Spirit, a "religious" life of "humility." But such a life, Anderson contends, is powerfully devoted to self-existence. This is despite how Bonhoeffer defines the church: "The church is the church only when it is there for others." So it immediately follows: "As a first step it must give away all its property to those in need."⁸¹ But, in fact, the church would be losing its concrete existence in the world, its "lived transcendence," as Anderson argues against Bonhoeffer, that is, not being a reflection of continuing to participate in the life and ministry of the incarnate Christ. Anderson's view would be critical of George Hendry: "The evangelical-Protestant understanding of the relation between the Holy Spirit and the Church," George Hendry observes, is determined primarily by its concern for the integrity of the gospel."⁸² Concern for "integrity" above all is a mark of "the kenotic way of life," Anderson believes, but not what Jesus expressed in creating what we might call "the kenotic community."

In contrast to "the kenotic way of life" is "the kenotic community," from Ray Anderson's thought, which, mirroring the incarnate Christ, is marked, not by the persons it renounces, but by the persons it receives.⁸³ Such character reflects who Jesus really is, that in "emptying" himself, he is not giving away his divinity, but

⁸⁰ Gary W. Deddo, "The Holy Spirit in T. F. Torrance's Theology" in *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology: Theologians in Dialogue with T. F. Torrance*, ed. Elmer M. Colyer (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2001), 96; T. F. Torrance, *God and Rationality*, 188-89; Torrance, *The Trinitarian Faith*, 230-31.

⁸¹ Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, 503.

⁸² George Hendry, *The Holy Spirit in Christian Theology* (London: SCM Press, 1957), 63.

⁸³ Anderson, *Historical Transcendence and the Reality of God*, 235.

this is “actually a quality of life intrinsic to the relation of Father and Son which is exemplified by the Son’s human obedience even unto death.”⁸⁴ The Holy Spirit, now “accustomed” (Irenaeus) to the humanity of Christ, “through intimate union of the Son with humanity, becomes one with the *kenotic* form as explicated by the Son in this humanity and thus creates a kenotic community.”⁸⁵ This is seen often in Jesus’ sitting down with the disreputable of society: “sinners” and “tax collectors” (Mark 2:15). Jesus is creating his *first community* here, not the church, but *the kenotic community*. This community is not based on a moral “principle,” but on the “intra-divine” community between the Father and the Son.⁸⁶ So the kenotic community means that life in the Spirit is an end in itself, a picture of communion, not upholding a moral principle to demonstrate one’s righteousness.⁸⁷

Life in the Spirit can easily be substituted for a religious-led life of “emptying” for the sake of self-centeredness, what Anderson calls “the kenotic way of life.” The vicarious humanity of Christ provides the foundation in Christology and soteriology to represent us and take our place in a radical sense in order to create what Anderson calls “the kenotic community,” a community not self-centered, but Christ-centered (Philippians 2:1-10).

Ministry as the Continuing Spirit-Led “Ek-static” Ministry of the Vicarious Humanity of Christ

All ministry must be Spirit-led. But we do not own ministries apart from Christ. There is one ministry, and that is Christ’s.⁸⁸ But even Jesus speaks of the Father sending him into the world as the paradigm of Jesus’ followers’ ministry in the world (“As you have sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world” - John 17:18). When the post-resurrection Jesus appears to the disciples, what is the message he first gives to them? “As the Father has sent me, so I send you” (John

⁸⁴ Ibid., 231-32.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 232.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 233.

⁸⁸ Anderson, “Ministry as Theological Discovery” in *The Soul of Ministry*, 3-16.

20:21). What follows immediately is remarkable: The account says “he breathed on them and said to them, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit’” (John 20:22). The Spirit is integrally connected with the resurrected Jesus. Acts tells us the final “instructions” of the ascending Lord were to “be my witnesses” (Acts 1:9), a theme mightily taken up by Karl Barth in *Church Dogmatics* IV/3 in terms of the overall subject of “Jesus Christ, The True Witness” (The Vicarious Humanity of Christ!). He is always the One who witnesses in the Spirit. This witness is even for the publicans and sinners.⁸⁹ It takes on their humanity, as judgment comes in the form of grace. Otherwise, the Spirit comes as just the raw power of deity, as we sometimes see in the Old Testament, or in many religious or philosophical concepts of “Spirit.”

The vicarious humanity of Christ must be recognized if concrete form is to be given to the Spirit in the kind of humanity that the Son both represents and takes the place of. So Anderson can say, with eyes on genuine Christian ministry, “When the Holy Spirit assumes the historical existence of the other man as the form of Christ for me, a cripple is no less real than a whole person.”⁹⁰ With “the kenotic community” Jesus sits with outsiders before he asks for a call to discipleship. There are no conditions here. Jesus is providing himself the appropriate human response on which all other human responses will be based, “so that the weakest of human flesh *already* possesses a place of participation, and then through the Holy Spirit who takes each person’s actual life into fellowship with Christ.”⁹¹ This is a dynamic way of speaking of the relation of Christ and the Spirit in the Eucharist as “presence as absence,” Ray Anderson suggests, building upon John Zizioulas.⁹² This is the Christ of the Incarnation, of Word (from God to us, a downward arrow, if you will), and Spirit (from us to God). The vicarious humanity of Christ is based on the bottom of that downwardness, to provide a foundation in the humanity of Christ for

⁸⁹ Barth, *CD* IV/3.2, 587-88.

⁹⁰ Anderson, *Historical Transcendence and the Reality of God*, 234.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 235.

⁹² Ray S. Anderson, *On Being Human: Essays in Theological Anthropology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982, 177; John D. Zizioulas, “Human Capacity and Incapacity” in *Scottish Journal of Theology*, 28 (1975), 420; reprinted in *Communion and Otherness: Further Studies in Personhood and the Church* (London and New York: T & T Clark, 2006, 206-49 and as *The Meaning of Being Human* (Alhambra, CA: Sebastian Press, 2021).

a human response filled with the Holy Spirit, in the church, for the world. These two movements in the world, for Anderson, are marks of “visibility for the transcendence of God.”⁹³ The vicarious humanity of Christ is involved in both movements.

What Anderson speaks of as “the ek-static community,” the second movement, the community of *ekstasis*, that “stands out” from itself, can very well be the community of worship, the community of the “secret discipline” of the early church, of worship, as Bonhoeffer suggests.⁹⁴ Anderson disagrees, and believes the kenotic community becomes the ek-static community in being there for not just the world, our earth, but the cosmos!⁹⁵ Our position is more asymmetrical, building upon Bonhoeffer, based on the relationship between the Son and the Spirit. They are one substance or essence, as the *homoousion* teaches. But they are still distinct; so also the relationship between the deity and humanity of Christ. And so also the kenotic community, of both Christians and non-Christians, out of which comes those who respond to the call to follow Jesus, the church, which is the worshiping and ministering body. But the church should never forget that it is still a part of the result of that “downward movement” of grace that still exists, the kenotic community. In true Chalcedonian fashion, the Word and the Spirit are not to be “confused,” but also not to be “divided.” They reflect the one Jesus Christ, the one Incarnation. As Anderson stresses, “Because Word and Spirit can never be separated, the kenotic community is at the same time the ek-static community.”⁹⁶ Again, this is not to deny any *distinction*, as guided by Chalcedonian thinking. The ek-static community reveals our *incapacity* for community, which the Spirit reveals as grace. The kenotic community does not possess the distinction from the world that the ek-static community does. In contrast with Christ is our psychological problem, according to Ernest Becker, of dealing with the fears of life and death through what Freud called “transference,” transferring our values on a larger than

⁹³ Anderson, *Historical Transcendence and the Reality of God*, 235.

⁹⁴ Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, 365, 373.

⁹⁵ Anderson, *Historical Transcendence and the Reality of God*, 246.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 250. See also Zizioulas, “Human Capacity and Human Incapacity.”

life hero, such as an athletic or political hero.⁹⁷ They can do what we cannot. In a way, this is a "reverse" vicarious humanity of Christ! That is what weakness, "incapacity," if you will, brings out, in our attempt to deny our very genuine weakness, something only the power of the Spirit of the vicarious humanity of Christ can do.

The ek-static community, then, is the community of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit of the vicarious humanity of Christ. As Torrance puts it, "indwelling" is made possible only through Jesus Christ "the one Mediator."⁹⁸ Through his "atoning exchange ... the Holiness of God is brought to bear upon the ontological roots of our sinful being" and he "made himself the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit ... and now mediates him to us in the fulness of his divine presence and power."⁹⁹

The Holy Spirit as the Intercessory Power "Echoing" the Vicarious Humanity of Christ

The Holy Spirit is, as is well-known, a power, the power of the wind of Pentecost, enabling the lonely, weakened disciples in the upper room to bear witness to the risen Jesus. But what kind of power is the Spirit? Power in itself can be oppressive, exploitative, and demonic. As Barth reminds us, Hitler could easily speak of God as "the Almighty," for he, too, worshiped Power, with devastating consequences for humanity.¹⁰⁰ Anderson argues convincingly that original sin is based, not on the desire for self-fulfillment and pleasure, but on the will to power, to be able to control how one gains that fulfillment, regardless of whom it hurts.¹⁰¹ Power is not a neutral value.

⁹⁷ Becker, *The Denial of Death*, 173.

⁹⁸ T. F. Torrance, "The Goodness and Dignity of Man in the Christian Tradition," *Modern Theology* 4:4 (July, 1988), 320-21.

⁹⁹ Torrance, "The Goodness and Dignity of Man in the Christian Tradition," 320-21.

¹⁰⁰ Barth, *Dogmatics in Outline*, 48.

¹⁰¹ Ray S. Anderson, *Self-Care: A Theology of Personal Empowerment and Spiritual Healing* (Wheaton, IL: Bridgepoint, 1995), 101-2.

The power of the Spirit is the power of *intercession*, a *vicarious* power. Paul makes this plain in Romans 8: "Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him" (8:9); "If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit that dwells in you" (8:11); and most of all, notice 8:26-27 (emphases mine):

Likewise the Spirit helps us in our *weakness*; for we do not know how to pray as we ought; but that very Spirit *intercedes* with sighs too deep for words. And God, who searches the heart, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit *intercedes* for the saints according to the will of God.

Notice the connection between the Spirit and our weakness. What seems at first to be our weakness, our powerlessness, which can give way to the desire for omnipotence, is actually the context for the Spirit's intercession.¹⁰² As Torrance stresses, "that Spirit of intercession echoes the intercession of Christ, is poured out upon his church so that the church become one body with Christ is given to *echo* [emphasis mine] in its prayers the intercession of Christ himself."¹⁰³ Note Torrance's use of the word "echo" in this collection of his Dogmatics lectures. This relation between the Spirit and Christ can also be found in his 1959 writing, *The School of Faith*: "Advocate" and "Intercessor" can be applied to be Christ and the Spirit, as the Spirit "applied" the work of Christ and "echoed [emphasis mine] in our invocation to God, because through the Spirit, Christ dwells in us and we in Him in a new relation of being."¹⁰⁴ Thus, it is right, with Torrance, and against George Hunsinger and Dick O. Eugenio, to speak of Christ Jesus as "the One Mediator between God and humankind ... himself human" (1 Timothy 2:5) and not of a

¹⁰² James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 1-8, Word Biblical Commentary* (Dallas: Word Books, 1988), 493.

¹⁰³ T. F. Torrance, *Incarnation: The Person and Life of Christ* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster and Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2008), 136.

¹⁰⁴ Torrance, "Introduction" in the *School of Faith*, cv-cvi.

“mediation of the Spirit” apart from that which “echoes” Christ (Romans 8).¹⁰⁵ The vicarious humanity of Christ maintains that. The ministry of Christ continues through the Spirit: even as the heavenly Christ who poured out the Spirit (Acts 2:33) “always lives to make intercession” (Hebrews 7:25), so also “that Spirit ... continues to echo in our stammering prayers on earth the compassionate intercession, in the sympathetic intervention of Christ.”¹⁰⁶ So Paul can say in Philippians 4:13: “I can do all things through him who strengthens me.” Here is “the grand paradox,” according to Hawthorne.¹⁰⁷ “The secret of Paul’s independence was his dependence upon Another” (cf. Ephesians 6:10; 1 Timothy 1:12; 2 Timothy 2:1; 4:17). The basis for this “independence, yet dependence” is the vicarious humanity of Christ. Torrance calls our attention to the *vicarious* work of the Spirit in this passage, doing for us what we are unable to do in our weakness.¹⁰⁸ The vicarious humanity of Christ, in fact, is the foundation for the work of the Spirit. And the work of the Spirit is the continuing reality of the vicarious humanity of Christ. Listen to Torrance: Paul uses

the very terms used to speak of the vicarious humanity of Christ. Through the Holy Spirit the heavenly advocacy and intercession of Christ our great High Priest are made *to echo inaudibly* [emphasis mine] within us, so that our praying and worshipping of God in the Spirit are upheld and made effective by him through a relation of God to himself.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁵ T. F. Torrance, *Trinitarian Perspectives: Toward Doctrinal Agreement* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1994), 12; George Hunsinger, “The Mediator of Communion: Karl Barth’s Doctrine of the Holy Spirit” in *The Cambridge Companion to Karl Barth*, ed. John Webster (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 179; Dick O. Eugenio, *Communion with the Triune God: The Trinitarian Soteriology of T. F. Torrance* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2014), 145.

¹⁰⁶ Torrance, *Incarnation*, 137.

¹⁰⁷ Gerald F. Hawthorne, *Philippians: Word Biblical Commentary* (Waco: Word Books, 1983), 201.

¹⁰⁸ Torrance, *Mediation of Christ*, 117.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

At one point, Torrance can speak of knowledge of the Spirit as “mediated and actualized” through the “presence and activity” of the Spirit.”¹¹⁰ It is Christ who “mediates the Spirit to us through himself.”¹¹¹ Jesus Christ, the Spirit-led Believer, enables our receiving of the Spirit because he has received the Spirit. This is a “vicarious receiving of the Spirit by Christ himself,” in which we can share and participate. That indwelling of the Holy Spirit which exists in the Holy Trinity eternally, that was involved with the Virgin Birth, the baptism, and the ministry of Jesus, now lifts us up to participation in God’s life, to be a “partaker in the divine nature” (2 Peter 1:4); this is the doctrine of *theosis*, the fruit of union and communion with God.¹¹² This is the Spirit, not as offering another, superior revelation or reconciliation, but offering us “participation in the vicarious and intercessory activity of Christ,” what it means for “the presence of the Spirit as actualizing within us the intervening and reconciling work of Christ....”¹¹³ This is the “inaudible echo” again: Those adopted as sons and daughters of God (*theosis!*) in union with Christ through the Spirit experience an “echo inaudibly in our hearts” between Christ and the Spirit, as “the Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God” (Romans 8:15).

God is still *present*. God is still with us. Christ is still working vicariously on our behalf in the midst of our weakness. In the same way, the Holy Spirit is “humanized” by being the bearer of the vicarious humanity of Christ. Therefore, the Spirit is neither an abstract concept (Hegel) nor a divisive and triumphalistic spiritual power (sometimes in Pentecostalism and the charismatic movement), but our entrée into the triune life of God. As Ray Anderson remarks, the “naked,” rampaging power of the Spirit in the Old Testament has now been “clothed,” (“domesticated,” or can we even say “housebroken,” as Anderson said in

¹¹⁰ Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, 147.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 148.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 153.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*

a lecture, with a twinkle in his eye!), clothed with the humanity of Christ.¹¹⁴ The vicarious humanity of Christ represents the response of the Spirit-filled Son to the Father, sending the Spirit back to the Father so that the Spirit of Pentecost may be spread upon the church (Acts 2:33). This, Hans Urs von Balthasar contends, means that the incarnate Son is the way by which “the Spirit has acquired a kind of earthly experience,” and thus a new unity between the Son and the Spirit.¹¹⁵ A “new form” is also created that “unites the bodily and the spiritual.”¹¹⁶ As Paul reminds us, “The Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deeps for words” (Romans 8:26). As von Balthasar adds, “Christ knew well what he meant by the Father’s ‘name,’ his ‘kingdom,’ and his ‘will,’ but do we really know what this means?”¹¹⁷ The Spirit enables us to participate in the Son’s knowledge of the Father’s “name,” “kingdom,” and “will” (Matthew 11:27; Luke 10:22).

A new understanding of the power of God can lead to re-imagining the nature of our responses to God. This is one way to respond to frequent critiques of Torrance’s doctrine of the vicarious humanity of Christ that it has no place for our subjective response of faith and obedience, if Christ has already responded for us. The baptism of Christ as the foundation for our baptism is instructive for Torrance, for in it we have the Son’s obedient reception to the Father’s voice and the bestowal of the Spirit as a vicarious act, taking the place and on behalf of sinners (Matthew 3:13-17; Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:21-22). John was surprised that Jesus wanted to be baptized and would have prevented him, saying “I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?” (Matthew 3:14). But baptism was for sinners, not for Jesus, unless one sees Jesus’ baptism as a *vicarious* act. But being vicarious does not preclude his followers’ action, even in baptizing. They are commanded, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, *baptizing* them in the

¹¹⁴ Ray S. Anderson, “Christian Community and the Kingdom of God,” lecture notes, Fuller Theological Seminary, 1980: Anderson, *Historical Transcendence and the Reality of God*, 232. See Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, ANF 3.17.1: “accustomed” to our humanity.

¹¹⁵ Balthasar, *Theo-Logic*, 175.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Balthasar, *Theo-Logic*, 374.

name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit ..." (Matthew 28:19). A "genuine reciprocity" of the vicarious humanity of Christ is being established in humanity, creating a unity of divine and human agency.¹¹⁸ As Alexandra Radcliff observes, "For the Torrances, the Holy Spirit is the means by whom humanity is unconditionally adopted into the divine life, with liberating, intimate, and transformative implications."¹¹⁹

Yet our human responses, the baptism of Christ teaches us, do not infringe upon the sovereign free act of God. Except for the very rare "believer's Baptist," we *do not baptize ourselves*.¹²⁰ Instead, we are baptized in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19). With the Spirit, it is emphasized that baptism is something the Spirit continues to do, just as Jesus was continually led by the Spirit during his earthy life and ministry, a point stressed by contemporary "Spirit Christology" (Matthew 4:1; Luke 4:1). What does the Holy Spirit do? He unites us to Christ so that we might continually participate in the only perfect faithfulness and obedience, that of the Son sent by the Father. This is the genuine "power" of God, that is both cross and resurrection. Barth can speak of this in Augustinian terms of the divine love between the Father and the Son in the Spirit, as "our action" as a genuine action, but still "a reflection of His eternal love," made manifest in the vicarious actions of Christ:

As God is Spirit, the Spirit of the Father and the Son, as He gives Himself into human life as Spirit, and as He bears witness as Spirit to our spirit that we are His children (Rom. 8:16), God gives us to participate in the love in which as Father He loves the Son and as Son the Father, making our action a reflection of His eternal love, and ourselves those who may and will love.¹²¹

¹¹⁸ Torrance, "The One Baptism Common to Christ and His Church," 102.

¹¹⁹ Alexandra S. Radcliff, *The Claim of Humanity in Christ: Salvation and Sanctification in the Theology of T. F. and J. B. Torrance* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2016), 85.

¹²⁰ Torrance, "The One Baptism Common to Christ and His Church," 103.

¹²¹ Barth, *CD IV/2*, 778-79.

This is the nature of communion. Atonement creates, Torrance contends, "the pure objectivity of love ... in which God does not override man but recreates, reaffirms him and stands him up before himself as his dear child," to liberate man "from himself that he can love his neighbour objectively also."¹²² This "opened up heaven for earth," establishing communion so that God "is free really to give himself to man," and coming *into* man in the Holy Spirit "opens him *out* for God."¹²³ But this is only because "at the very heart of the movement is the act of God in which he became man in order to take man's place, and give man a place within the communion of the divine life."¹²⁴ The substitutionary life and work of Christ, in all of the depth of its vicarious humanity, is the basis of this communion. The Spirit then pours the love of God into our hearts (Romans 5:5)

not simply as the actualizing within us of what God has already wrought for us in Jesus Christ once and for all, but as opening us up within our subjectivities for Christ in such a radical way that we find our life not in ourselves but out of ourselves, objectively in him.¹²⁵

This "dimension of depth," Torrance contends, is also true in the constant nourishing of the life of the Spirit in the Christian life found in Christ's presence in the Eucharist.¹²⁶ No mere remembrance of Christ, the Eucharist is our participation in union with "the mind and will of Jesus" through the Spirit.¹²⁷ The vicarious humanity of Christ is still in effect, even in the life of the Spirit, and especially in our partaking of the Eucharist through its "Godward," "upward" movement of worship. Christ is the One who is the "Offerer and the Offering": this is the vicarious worship by Christ seen in Chrysostom's liturgy. This is said right in the middle of

¹²² Torrance, "The Relevance of the Doctrine of the Spirit for Ecumenical Theology," 237.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 238.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*

¹²⁶ See especially T. F. Torrance, "The Paschal Mystery of Christ and the Eucharist" in *Theology in Reconciliation*, 106-38; See also George Hunsinger, "The Dimension of Depth: Thomas F. Torrance on the Sacraments" in Colyer, *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology*, 139-60.

¹²⁷ Torrance, "The Paschal Mystery of Christ and the Eucharist," 118.

the liturgy of Eastern Orthodoxy.¹²⁸ Here is the power of God today, Christ the Word of God, effected by the Spirit of God.

Such an understanding of power defines our understanding of weakness as well. Bonhoeffer can hold to Christ as “the weak Word,” and still criticize the church for “exploiting human weaknesses” by always presenting God as only the resource when our resources fail.¹²⁹ No, the church should not stand “at the boundaries where human powers give out, but in the middle of the village.”¹³⁰ The “middle of the village” is the Incarnation, “the Word” who “became flesh and lived among us” (literally, “tabernacled,” as God did with Israel, Psalm 78:60 LXX) (John 1:14).¹³¹ How the church does this is to participate in the continuing life of Christ and his life of vicarious humanity, which provides the response we are unable and too weak to give.

Such a way of thinking can help us in re-evaluating our own weakness in terms of how God has used weakness in himself. This should not be done in thinking that, again, Christ is only an example of how to be “powerful in weakness.” No, the vicarious weakness of Christ is unique. But it does encourage us not to count our inabilities and failures as limitations to the grace and love of God. Often we are constricted by what we think that God can do. Torrance cites the church father Hilary of Poitiers’ argument that divine power should not be viewed in terms of what we think God can do, but what he has *actually done* in Jesus Christ.¹³² Here we have a power in weakness that we cannot grasp, Torrance exclaims: “That God Almighty should become so little, poor and helpless, all for our sake, while remaining who he eternally is as God, was an act of indescribable majesty and

¹²⁸ “The Prayer of the Cherubimic Hymn” in “The Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom,” Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America, *Service Book of the Holy Eastern Orthodox Catholic and Apostolic Church*, tenth edition, 1971 (1997), 105.

¹²⁹ Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, 265-66, 366-67.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 366-67.

¹³¹ Karl Barth, *Witness to the Word: A Commentary on John 1*, ed. Walther Fürst and trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), 94.

¹³² Hilary of Poitiers, *On the Trinity*, *NPNF*, 3:1-5. Cf. 1:5; 2:33, cited by Torrance, *The Trinitarian Faith*, 82.

power beyond anything that unaided human reason could grasp."¹³³ That kind of power is the freedom of God.¹³⁴ The Spirit joins with the Father and the Son in the triune identity of God. That is why Barth argues that the Trinity speaks of God as Lord.¹³⁵ Such a Lord comes to us through his Spirit to help us in our weakness, even our inability to pray, to be spiritual (Romans 8:26-27). The power of the Spirit is this kind of intercessory ministry, a participation in the continuing vicarious humanity of Christ.

The *promise* of the Holy Spirit, Barth contends, is rightly how the Spirit continues to live today, in an eschatological sense. This is no weakening form of the Spirit to speak of it as "promise."¹³⁶ We live in the "promise" today because there is a future to our time, as much as the last time has been inaugurated by the death and resurrection of Christ. We live now this "dying and rising" with Christ (Romans 6), union with Christ as inseparable from his vicarious humanity. This living in the future is spectacularly portrayed in Romans chapter eight, where we are adopted as sons and daughters through the Son, borne witness to by the Spirit (8:15-16).¹³⁷ We have the vicarious intercession of the Spirit (8:26-27), which "will give life to your mortal bodies" (8:11), the bodies of "the glory about to be revealed to us" (8:18), "the redemption of our bodies" (8:23). This goal is "to be conformed to the image of his Son" (8:29; cf. 1 John 3:2: "when he appears we shall be like him" and Colossians 3:3: We are "hidden with Christ in God").¹³⁸ For Christ is the One who, having risen and ascended, did not forsake his humanity, and having poured out his Spirit upon us (Acts 2:33), is now our Priest, interceding for us (Hebrews 7:25). It might even be said, James Torrance suggests, that the purpose of the incarnation, death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ was that we might receive

¹³³ Torrance, *The Trinitarian Faith*, 82. Cf. Hilary, *On the Trinity NPNF*, 2.24-27; 3:20; 9.4-14.

¹³⁴ Barth, *Dogmatics in Outline*, 47.

¹³⁵ Barth, *CD I/1*, 306.

¹³⁶ Barth, *CD IV/3.1*, 295.

¹³⁷ Radcliff, *The Claim of Humanity in Christ*, 85.

¹³⁸ Marc Cortez, *Theological Anthropology: A Guide for the Perplexed* (London and New York: T & T Clark, 2010), 8.

the Holy Spirit, in order to have communion with God.¹³⁹ We pray to Christ our High Priest in the midst of our weaknesses. We can only do this in the Spirit.¹⁴⁰

To acknowledge our weakness, however, and then to embrace the power of the weakness of Christ, is not the end point. To participate in Christ's weakness means to participate in his *continual* suffering for others. Eberhard Bethge boldly states that Christ as "the weak Word ... touches on the most profound idea ever expressed by Bonhoeffer: discipleship as participation in Christ's suffering for others."¹⁴¹ For Bonhoeffer, what he calls *Stellvertretung* (first translated as "deputyship" and now as "vicarious representative action") is do for others what they cannot do for themselves.¹⁴² This is different from the kind of patronizing liberalism which is so prevalent in the churches. Bonhoeffer's deputyship is based on Christ's vicarious humanity, in which he became *and remains* the Deputy for us. Our participation in his life is more than just following his example ("What would Jesus do?"). We care to ask, where is Christ suffering vicariously *now*? Bonhoeffer's *Discipleship* puts it plainly:

The life of Jesus Christ here on earth has not yet concluded. Christ

¹³⁹ James B. Torrance, "Prayer and the Priesthood of Christ" in *A Passion for Christ: The Vision That Ignites Ministry*, 59.

¹⁴⁰ Torrance, "Prayer and the Priesthood of Christ," 64.

¹⁴¹ Eberhard Bethge, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer: A Biography*, revised edition, revised and edited by Victoria J. Barnett (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), 456.

¹⁴² Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works, Volume 6, ed. Clifford J. Green, trans. Reinhard Krauss, Charles C. West, and Douglas W. Stott (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), 257-60 for Bonhoeffer's most mature discussion of *Stellvertretung*, his understanding of the vicarious humanity of Christ. According to Bonhoeffer scholar Clifford Green, this is "one of Bonhoeffer's central theological ethical ideas" (Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 257, n.38), first developed in his initial doctoral dissertation, *Sanctorum Communio: A Theological Study of the Sociology of the Church*, Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works, Volume 1, ed. Clifford Green, trans. Reinhard Krauss and Nancy Lukens (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998), 120, 155-56, 184, 191. Clifford Green, editor in 10, n.29: "*Stellvertretung* is one of Bonhoeffer's fundamental theological concepts throughout his writings. Literally the word means to represent in place of another – to act, advocate, intercede on behalf of another; we translate this as 'vicarious representative action.' As a theological concept in the strict sense it is rooted in Christology and refers to the free initiative and responsibility that Christ takes for the sake of humanity in his incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection – it is not just a soteriological concept applied only to the cross (as 'vicarious' might suggest). By anthropological analogy, *Stellvertretung* involves acting responsibly on behalf of others and on behalf of communities to which one belongs."

continues to live it in the lives of his followers. To describe this reality we must not speak about our Christian life but about the true life of Jesus Christ in us. 'It is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me' (Gal 2:20).¹⁴³

Conclusion

In an age of new attention to the Holy Spirit and spiritual formation, T. F. Torrance's doctrine of the vicarious humanity of Christ provides an important contribution in maintaining a Christocentric theology while acknowledging the importance of the Spirit. He provides a radical representation and substitution of our humanity as the substance of the Christian life. To acknowledge the Jesus of the Gospels as a Spirit-led believer is one step in constructing a robust "Word/Spirit" Christology which is neither "Logos" exclusive nor "Spirit" exclusive, but reflects the Incarnation of the Triune God. That is the basis then for the Christian being led by the Spirit of the Son of the Father.

¹⁴³ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Discipleship*, Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works, Volume 4, eds. Geoffrey B. Kelly and John D. Godsey, trans. Barbara Green and Reinhard Krauss (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001), 286-87.