THE SON SPIRIT RELATIONSHIP -

Modern Reductions and New Testament Patterns

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To understand the person of the Holy Spirit has always been something of a problem for Christian theology, not least because the question can be raised in two different senses which are sometimes confused with each other. On the one hand we may ask whether the action of the Spirit has a personal character, whether it is the action of a personal God, who speaks, leads, rebukes, restrains empowers and so on. In that sense the question is easy to answer with a whole host of New Testament quotations that give a firm foundation for an affirmative response. On the other hand we may ask a more subtle question: in order to do justice to the role of the Holy Spirit do we have to recognise him as a distinct person, hypostasis, source of personal action, alongside the Father and the Son? There the word person is used in a specifically trinitarian sense and it is that question, rather than the other, which I wish to take up in this article. What evidence is there of a personal distinctiveness about the work of the Spirit so that we have to distinguish him from the Father and the Son? Does he interact in a personal way with the Father and the Son and is that interaction constitutive for the way we understand him? Is the Spirit just an extension of the divine personality, like the word and wisdom of God in the Old Testament, or does he stand over against the Father and Son as person in his own right? In order to take account of the way the New Testament understands the Spirit do we need a fully trinitarian as against a unitarian or binitarian doctrine of God?

For the limited purposes of this article I want to ignore the Father-Spirit relation that would have to be discussed in any full treatment of a trinitarian understanding of the Spirit, and to concentrate instead on the most difficult and obscure area by asking whether the New Testament treatment of the Spirit requires us to recognise a two way personal interaction and therefore a hypostatic distinction between the Spirit and the Son. I am of course aware that the term person or hypostasis in this trinitarian context raises a whole host of extremely complicated and difficult questions, but perhaps for the purposes of this article I may be allowed to dodge these and give what is little more than an ostensive definition of hypostasis as 'source and centre of personal action'. That begs all the questions but in a common sense kind of way we know roughly what it means and it may for the moment serve our purposes quite satisfactorily.

In contemporary theology there are three proposals for the understanding of the Son-Spirit relationship in the New Testament, two of which are reductionist in the most literal sense of that term, in that they propose to reduce the two terms in our relationship, Son-Spirit, to one, whereas the third proposal is again in the most basic sense conservative in that it proposes to retain the two terms Son and Spirit in their irreducible integrity and entirety.

Proposal 1: is that the Son is to be understood without remainder in terms of the Spirit, that Christ-language can be translated without loss into Spirit-language.

Proposal 2: in contrast moves in the opposite direction, by suggesting that the Spirit is to be understood without remainder in terms of the Son, that Spirit-language can be reduced to Christ language.

Proposal 3: is the traditional and trinitarian one that insists that Son and Spirit, although sharing the same divine being, are to be personally distinguished from each other so that they interact with each other in a way that compels us to recognise both as distinct centres of divine life and activity.

The position within the New Testament itself is sufficiently fluid to provide, at least prima facie, a basis for all these proposals and our purpose is to ask which can most adequately deal with the main thrust of the New Testament evidence and the pattern of divine-human relations that it implies. But to begin with we need to outline the two more radical and modern proposals a little more fully.

1. That Son-language can be translated without loss into Spirit-language.
   Those who hold this view maintain that in Christ we have to do not with the divine hypostasis of the eternal Son made flesh, but only with a man possessed and indwelt by the Spirit of God to a unique degree. This is the position to which the late G.W.H. Lampe gave classical expression in God as Spirit. Such an approach removes any need to reckon with God the Son as a distinct hypostasis in the Godhead and so declares that the question of the hypostatic relation of Son and Spirit as understood in the context of a Trinitarian theology is a bogus problem. The only real question is about how the particular immanence of the Spirit in Jesus of Nazareth is related to the general immanence

of the same Spirit in all other men and in the natural world as a whole. And since, for Lampe, Spirit is a mode, or, better the mode of God's presence and activity in the world, there is no question of any hypostatic relation of Spirit and Father, but only a question about the relationship of God's transcendence to his immanence. The old fashioned unitarianism of the distant God outside and remote from the world has in effect been replaced by a much more dynamic and evolutionary unitarianism of the Spirit where the emphasis is upon God's presence in and interaction with the world. But unitarianism it undoubtedly is, because when, as in Lampe, the Son as divine hypostasis is removed Father and Spirit collapse into each other and our trinitarianism into unitarianism.

At the centre of Lampe's reconstruction therefore is the assertion that Christ is to be understood exhaustively in terms of Spirit:

> We should recognise, not that we experience the presence of Christ through the Spirit, but rather that when we speak of the presence of Christ and the indwelling of the Spirit, we are speaking of one and the same experience of God: God as Spirit, who was revealed to men ... at a definite point in the history of man's creation in Jesus Christ ... We may if we wish call this contemporary, indwelling divine presence Christ... Yet this Christ is none other than the Spirit. The single reality for which these two terms stand is the one God in his relation to human persons.
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> (G.W.H.Lampe, God as Spirit (1978), 117-8)

If, as Lampe goes on to argue, we insist on affirming a pre- and post-existent divine Christ, we nudge the Holy Spirit into a secondary and ill-defined place as subsidiary mediator between God and men and, as a result we impose upon Christian experience a complication which it does not require.

> This does not correspond with Christian experience which is not an experience of Christ being presented to us by or through another divine agency but a simple experience which can be described interchangeably in 'Christ' terms or 'Spirit' terms. The attempted distinction is artificial. It leaves us with an insoluble problem of trying to translate it into a real distinction, whether functional or ontological

> between 'Christ' and 'Spirit': the 'Christ' who is made present to us, and the 'Spirit' through whom his presence is supposed to be mediated. (ibid. 117)

Such a statement raises all sorts of fascinating questions which we cannot stop to explore here about how the shape of our theology is related to the shape of our experience. We should however note that Lampe recognises that the New Testament writers, notably Paul and John, will not go all the way with him in his proposed conflation of Christ-experience and Spirit-experience, but that is because they have lumbered themselves with the doctrines of Christ's pre- and post-existence which, according to him, their Christian experience did not at its heart require. Lampe leaves us with the question whether such a twofoldness of Son and Spirit is an alien imposition upon Christian experience or the explication of something that is inherent in it and essential to it.

2. Before, however, we take up that question we should look at our second proposal which points in precisely the opposite direction. It has in common with the first an attempted reduction of the initial duality of Christ and Spirit, but differs from it in that it proposes to reinterpret Spirit-language in terms of Christ-language rather than the other way round. Here we are invited to see the Spirit as a mode of the presence and action of Christ rather than Christ as a mode of the presence and action of the Spirit. One representative of this view is Hendrikus Berkhof. On the one hand Berkhof in The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit is very positive about the contribution of Pentecostalism in emphasising that God works in the Church not just to justify and sanctify his people but also to empower them with gifts for mission, but, on the other hand, he wants to understand that empowering not as an independent work of the Holy Spirit but as that which, with justification and sanctification has its source in the risen Christ. Berkhof quotes Kasemann with approval as saying, 'The Spirit is the earthly presence of the exalted Lord. To say it more properly, in the Spirit the resurrected one is manifested in his resurrection power' to which Berkhof adds,

> The Spirit is the new way of existence and action by Jesus Christ. Through his resurrection he becomes a person in action, continuing and making effective on a world-wide scale what he began in his earthly life.

(H. Berkhof, The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit (1965) 26-27).

Berkhof will have nothing to do with the traditional hypostatic differentiation of the Spirit from Christ,

> This position is untenable ... if we face the fact that the Spirit in Scriptures is not an autonomous substance, but a predicate to the substance God and to the substance Christ. It describes the fact and the way of functioning of both' (ibid. 28).

We cannot quite say that 'the spirit is merely another name for the exalted Christ' since Christ transcends his activity towards us.

> The risen Lord transcends his own functioning as life-giving Spirit. He is eternally in the glory of the Father as the first fruits of mankind, as the guarantee of our future, as the advocate of his Church. His life ... is more than his function toward us. At the same time, however, we must say that the word 'function' is too weak in this context. Christ's movement towards us is not a mere action but his entrance into us in a special modus existendi, the mode of immanence, in which he nevertheless does not cease to remain transcendent as the exalted Lord (ibid 28-9).

Here, as in Lampe, Spirit denotes a mode of immanence, this time not the general immanence of God, but the particular immanence of the exalted Christ in his Church. The traditional distinction between Christ and Spirit becomes, on this view, a distinction between the transcendence and immanence of the same Christ.

C.F.D. Moule is similarly inclined to a modalistic rather than a hypostatic view of the Spirit.

> When Spirit is the mode of God's presence in the hearts and minds of his people, then there is a good case for personal language. But this still does not forced upon us a third eternal person (in the technical sense) within the Unity. (C.F.D.Moule The Holy Spirit (1978) 50).

He does distinguish the mode of God's presence in Christ as Mediator from the mode of his presence among Christians, interpreting Christ and creating his likeness in believers, but he is hesitant about affirming the threefoldness of God that a hypostatic understanding of

this distinction would imply, 'Threefoldness is perhaps less vital to a Christian conception of God than the eternal twofoldness of Father and Son' (ibid. 51).

This last sentence clearly differentiates Moule and at least the earlier Berkhof from Lampe. They are not unitarian but binitarian; at the heart of the Gospel is the 'eternal twofoldness' of Father and Son, but they hesitate to take the first step that would recognise the Spirit as having his own hypostasis over against Christ, rather than being reduced to a mode of Christ's activity. Nor is this position as idiosyncratic and modern as that of Lampe. Eastern Orthodox theologians such as Vladimar Lossky have always alleged that Western theology is, except in the most formal sense, binitarian rather than trinitarian, because it has never been able to understand the Spirit other than as a relationship between Christ and his Father and Christ and his people. It helps to make their case that Berkhof can quote a theologian for whom Trinitarianism was formally central in support of his own binitarian position, namely Karl Barth, to the effect that the Spirit is

> no other than the presence and action of Jesus Christ himself: his stretched out arm; he himself in the power of his resurrection, i.e. in the power of his revelation as it begins in and with the power of his resurrection and continues from this point.
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> (Berkhof op.cit. 29, Barth, Church Dogmatics IV.2. 360-361 E.T.)

Here again Spirit is on the way for becoming simply a way of describing how Christ acts in the Church post-resurrection. The Western trinitarianism that with Augustine can see the Spirit as the nexus amoris within the life of God, a relationship between persons rather than himself person, finds it easy on the economic level to reduce the Spirit to a nexus between the person of Christ and the persons of his people. Against this the East has always protested and continues to do so. There the Spirit, while being homoousios with the son in the sense of sharing the same divine being and nature is hypostatically distinct from him and with his own complementary and distinctive work to fulfill. Eastern theologians maintain that, far from being an abstruse point of theology, this modalistic understanding of the Spirit in the West has dire practical consequences in the life of the Church and in the practice of the Christian life.

The question that we have to ask therefore is whether there are good biblical and systematic reasons for resisting both of these forms of anti-trinitarian reductionism, either by following Lampe in making Christ the archetypal expression of the Spirit or, with Berkhof and Moule, by making the Spirit the means by which Christ expresses himself in the Church after his resurrection. Does the New Testament witness at important points resist these reductions and has it good reason for doing so? We shall address ourselves first to the question as to whether the New Testament pattern is comfortable to the less radical but more seductive and seemingly harmless proposal of Berkhof, and then go on to do the same for the revolutionary thesis of Lampe.

It is not of course hard to point to passages in the New Testament writings that point to precisely the kind of identification of Christ and Spirit that Berkhof's proposal requires. In I Cor. 15.45b the last Adam is after his resurrection described precisely as 'lifegiving Spirit' Pneuma zoopoioun) and in Romans 8, 9-11 Paul can speak of being in Christ and being in the Spirit in a way that at first sight suggests that the two phrases are interchangeable and indeed identical in meaning. Commenting on I Cor. 15.45b James Dunn can write

> Immanent christology is for Paul pneumatology: in the believer's experience there is no distinction between Christ and Spirit. This does not mean of course that Paul makes no distinction between Christ and Spirit. But it does mean that later Trinitarian dogma cannot readily look to Paul for support at this point. A theology that reckons seriously with the egeneto of John I.14 must reckon just as seriously with the egeneto implied in I Cor. 15.45.
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> (James D.G.Dunn I Corinthians 15.45 - last Adam, life-giving spirit in Christ and Spirit in the New Testament ed. B.Lindars and S.S.Smalley, 1973, p.139).

On the showing of such a statement Dunn would have to be ranged with Berkhof and Moule. Spirit is the mode of action of the post-resurrection Christ, and in view of the text he is expounding that is a credible conclusion. However casting his eyes more widely over the Pauline writings Dunn in Jesus and the Spirit reaches a conclusion that is much more sympathetic to a fully trinitarian understanding of the Spirit:

> As far as Paul is concerned there is what might be called a 'Trinitarian' element in the believer's experience. It is evident from Paul that the first Christians soon became aware that they stood in a dual relationship - to God as Father, and to Jesus as Lord. This relationship and awareness of it was attributed by them to the Spirit (Rom 8.15: I Cor. 12.3). That is to say, Christians became aware that they stood at the base of a triangular relationship - in the Spirit, in the sonship to the Father, in service to the Lord.
> (Dunn: Jesus and the Spirit, 1975, 326).

Thus alongside texts which assert the identity of Christ and Spirit like I Cor. 15.45, Dunn draws our attention to passages in Paul that provide a basis for a distinction between Christ and Spirit, like Rom 8.15 and I Cor 12.3. If we look closely at these latter passages and compare them with those in other parts of the New Testament that make the same sort of distinction, we shall discover that they tend to occur in confessional and doxological contexts. In Cor 12.3, for example, the distinction between Jesus and Spirit becomes clear because in the confession 'Jesus is Lord' Jesus is the object of the confession, the one who is confessed, who stands on the other side of the relationship from the believer who confesses him. The Spirit is not the object of the confession, but stands on the side of the one making the confession, enabling him to make it. We do not confess that the Spirit is Lord; rather the Spirit opens us up to confess one who is distinct from us and also distinct from the Spirit. It would of course be going too far to infer that Paul was implying anything like a distinction of persons here, but he does imply a distinct divine presence at both ends of a relationship, The Lord who is confessed and the Spirit who enables the confession. The Spirit is in the closest relationship to Christ but here distinguishes himself from him in an action that has Christ as its object but the Spirit as its enabling subject.

A parallel and even more explicit contrast may be discerned in Matthew 16.17, where in response to Peter's Caesarea Philippi, Jesus responds, 'Blessed are you, Simon bar Jona, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you but my Father in heaven'. The confession is about Jesus and in response to Jesus . Jesus does not make it. He asks his question: 'Who do you say I am?' and the answer to it is Peter's own. Nevertheless, although the confession is Peter's he is not the only or ultimate source of it. In the confession of Peter, Jesus discerns not

the human insights of the flesh and blood of the disciple, but the revelatory activity of his Father, which he himself does not control. The trouble with this passage for our purposes is that it attributes the revealing activity to the Father rather than the Spirit, perhaps in line with Matthew 11.27 where Father and Son have the exclusive ability of making each other known. However, the parallel with I Cor. 12.3 is still significant in that both speak of a Christ who is confessed and a divine revelatory activity which is independent of him but which alone allows the confession to be made.

The same distinction is present even more explicitly in the Johannine Paraclete passages in the same confessional and doxological context, where the enabling of the confession and glorification of Jesus is explicitly attributed to the Paraclete/Spirit. So in John 16.14, the Spirit is said to have both a doxological and revelatory function over against Jesus, 'He will glorify me' and 'He will take from what is mine and make it known to you'. All this is the distinctive work of the allos parakletos, the 'other Counsellor' who is personally distinct from Jesus and who indeed comes when and because Jesus returns to the Father (John 14.16, 16.7). It is to this passage that Pannenberg turns in his own attempt to find a basis in the New Testament for the trinitarian distinction between Son and Spirit. Commenting especially on 'He will glorify me', he says:

> Was not Jesus the recipient partner with regard to the glorification as it was granted to him by the Father in the exaltation of the crucified and resurrected Lord? And is he not the recipient partner in his glorification through his believer's confession? Is not the glorification something that happened to Jesus from outside himself? If this notion proves itself sound, then one can perhaps justify the step to the dogma of the Trinity in 381 that called the Holy Spirit the third 'Person' in God alongside the Father and the Son. (W. Pannenberg, Jesus God and Man, E.T., 1968, 179).

In confessing and glorifying Jesus, we stand over against him. He is the recipient of the worship that he receives from his Church, but the one who acts in the Church and enables him to be confessed and worshipped is the Spirit. The Spirit is not himself properly the object of any confession or worship. We do not glorify the Spirit; if we know him, it is not as the object of our knowledge but as an agent who enables us to know the Father and Son. That is not too far from what

Paul is saying in I Corinthians 2.12,

> We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us.

Our worship is not the self-glorification of Christ, any more than what happened at Caesarea Philippi is the self-confession of Christ. He is worshipped and confessed, as Pannenberg puts it, 'from outside himself' but the origin of these acts is not wholly in the human worshippers and confessors but rather in the Spirit who is at work within them. That is a situation with which the binitarian approach of Berkhof is not able adequately to cope.

When one adds to these passages the triadic formulae in which Paul regularly distinguishes the action of the Spirit from that of Christ, one sees there is a good basis for a triadic rather than a merely diadic view in Pauline theology. To the Spirit there are attributed actions appropriate to the immanent action of God within the body of Christ. In I Cor. 12 the Spirit is the immanent distributor of the spiritual gifts within the body, whereas Christ is the Lord transcendent to the body which is to be served by the right use of these gifts (I Cor. 12, 5-6). In II Corinthians 13.14, the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ is that which is to be shared, but the Holy Spirit is the one who effects the koinonia, the participation in that grace. In Christ, God gives himself: in the Spirit we receive what he gives.

It is significant that it is once again in the realm of worship that the action of Christ and the action of the Spirit are most clearly differentiated by Paul, who in Romans 8 speaks of two acts of intercession for the Church - one transcendent to it where Christ intercedes at the right hand of God (8.34) and the other immanent where the Spirit at the heart of God's people intercedes for them with groanings that words cannot express (8. 26-7). The fact that the contrast may be quite undeliberate only strengthens the case that in making it Paul is giving expression to distinctions that were inherent in his experience of worship rather than imposed upon it. We might note in passing that Lampe can fit Romans 8. 26-27 into his own unitarian scheme only by saying in effect that it is not the Spirit who intercedes for us, but we who are inspired to intercede for ourselves, which makes nonsense of the very point Paul is making, that our resources for prayer are not just our own but that another than ourselves is involved in the intercession with us.

We have noted passages in the New Testament in which Christ and Spirit are in effect identified, and other passages where they execute complementary but distinct functions that imply a hypostatic differentiation between them, the distinction being more implicit in Paul and more explicit in John. We should note also Luke/Acts which makes perhaps the sharpest distinction of all between the two. In the Lukan nativity stories the Son is born but the Spirit is the agent of his conception. In the baptism story the Son receives the Spirit from the Father and who will baptize others with the Holy Spirit, although it is never quite clear to what extent at that stage Spirit is being thought of in a personal way (Luke 3. 22, 16). At the beginning of Acts the coming of the Spirit follows upon the departure of Jesus; the Spirit rather than the ascended Christ is the present acting agent in the mission of the first community, and the action of the Spirit is seen in more fully personal terms.

We should not however overemphasise the element of separation which is undoubtedly present. The Spirit has been poured out by Jesus (Acts 2.33), is himself the Spirit of Jesus (16.7) and his mission is to give witness to Jesus (1.8, 5.32). Nevertheless a Damascus road confrontation with the risen Christ is different from being filled with the Holy Spirit. Here quite evidently the precise relationship of Christ and Spirit has not carefully been worked out but the contrast between the ascended Christ and the present Spirit is quite clear and, as we have seen, is never entirely abandoned in the rest of the New Testament tradition. Even in passages where the work of the Spirit is seen as almost inextricably bound up with the work of Christ, there often comes to expression an awareness of the reality of the distinction between them, so that each does things that are not appropriate to the other.

We would therefore want to maintain that the binitarian reduction proposed explicitly by Berkhof but to some extent latent in the Christological orientation of the Western tradition, is resisted by important elements in the New Testament understanding of the Spirit that appear in several of the New Testament sources. Indeed the more the first Christians reflected on the matter the more they became aware that the Christ whom they confessed and worshipped and to whom they bore witness is to be distinguished from the Spirit who made that worship, confession and witness possible and fruitful. Of interest here is Pannenberg's suggestion that as the expectation of the imminent parousia subsided, the more the Church became aware of Christ's absence

and the Spirit's presence as in some sense taking his place - ideas prominent in Luke but also in John. The longer the time of his absence, the more they became aware that he had gone to the Father and so of the otherness of the Paraclete whom he had sent (Pannenberg op. cit. 178-9).

But if the New Testament will by no means let us all go the way with Berkhof's reduction of the Spirit to a mode of Christ, neither will it authenticate the opposite and more radical proposal of Lampe to replace the person of the Son by the person of the Spirit. In other words Lampe pushes the Lukan tendency to separate Christ and Spirit to its ultimate conclusion so that Jesus (who for Lampe has only doubtfully risen and certainly not ascended) disappears as do all other men into the mystery of unreachable eternity and we are left with the Spirit who once expressed himself in an archetypal way in the historical Jesus and now wants to express himself in a similar way to us. What in Luke is the eschatological distance of the ascended Jesus has become in Lampe his absolute disappearance. He has as little use for Christ's post-existence as he has for his pre-existence. Lampe recognises quite freely that he has departed radically from the New Testament witness in all its forms at this point. He sees that the post-existent Jesus and the continuing relationship of believers to him is central for Paul, and it is precisely for that reason that apostle speaks in a twofold way of Jesus and the Spirit rather than simply of the Spirit who for once was in Jesus. He admits that to identify Jesus and the Spirit would have been impossible for Paul and John,

> Paul and John and the other New Testament writers were unable to do this because they wished to affirm the personal pre-existence of Jesus as Son of God, the personal 'post-existence' of Jesus Christ as Son of God and also experienced by present believers, and the future return of the ascended Christ in glory. (Lampe op.cit. 119)

If we will agree to jettison all this, Lampe promises us a much more coherent and unitary view of the action of God as Spirit and an escape from the perpetual subjection of pneumatology to christology, which, he claims is an inevitable consequence of Nicaean trinitarians.

But there can be no doubt, that if Paul or John had been offered such a gain at such a price, they would have reckoned it far too high. Whatever may be said about his pre-existence and his parousia, Christ's ascended presence at God's right hand and his living presence as the

central focus of the life of the believing community is so constitutive of the New Testament witness that without it the heart of the gospel has gone. Christians are people who have begun to share Christ's risen life with him, for whom indeed he has become the source and centre of life so that he lives in them and they in him. When they seek the living water of the Spirit, it is not to the Spirit himself that they turn but to the living Christ who calls them to come to him and drink (John 7. 37-39). His presence now is different from both his presence before the resurrection and his presence after the parousia, but his presence now is real presence, the presence of the same Christ in the Spirit, not his absence being replaced by the Spirit. The Spirit is not his vicar who substitutes for him when he is gone, but precisely the one in whom he is present to his people in a way that is appropriate to his post-ascension and pre-parousia relationship to them. The continuing life-sharing identification of Christ with his people, although it never becomes the merging of the one in the other, is the very esse of the Pauline gospel: we are where he is, (Ephes 2.6) and he is where we are (Gal 2.20).

Lampe writes as if his proposal to excise all that from the Christian message would ease our thinking but otherwise make little difference to the life of the Church and the believer. He could hardly be more mistaken. Our living relationship with the living Christ is the basic presupposition of practically every page of the New Testament, its reality but enhanced by the diversity of the ways in which it is expressed by the various writers. Our being in the Spirit is the way in which we are in Christ, not something that takes the place of being in Christ. It is precisely for that reason that Paul can move so freely from Christ-language to Spirit-language and back again. It is not that the two languages are alternative ways of saying the same thing, so that we can choose the one that makes things simpler for us, as Lampe would have it. Rather being in Christ and being in the Spirit are distinguishable in meaning, but inseparable and coincident in the sense that the one implies the other and they always happen together. We can be in Christ only through the action of the Spirit; the whole direction and thrust of the Spirit's work is to bring us into relationship to Christ. Lampe's proposal is unacceptable to the New Testament gospel and the faith that is based upon it, because the relationship to the post-existent Christ is not a secondary feature that can be removed without serious disturbance, but the source and centre from which everything else takes its character and in which it finds its life, its meaning, its sustenance and its renewal.

We have therefore to reject both the modern proposals for reduction from which we started as being inadequate to and inconsistent with important aspects of what the New Testament says about the relationship of Christ and Spirit. We may not absorb Christ into the Spirit with Lampe or the Spirit into Christ with Berkhof. Though their action in believers is always co-ordinated, it is never identical; though they always act in unity, they themselves are differentiated two, not undifferentiated one.

Is there any way in which we can understand the relationship between them in a more systematic way? L.S. Thornton holds that even in the Pauline contexts where the identification of Christ and Spirit appears to be closest, it is possible to make a systematic differentation between them. Both Christ and the Spirit, he explains, indwell the Church but in different ways: Christ indwells as the content of the new life, whereas the Spirit indwells as the 'quickening agent' of the new life. We are to be conformed to the image of Christ rather than to the image of the Spirit, we are to 'put on' Christ, not the Spirit.

> The Spirit is never regarded as the content of the quickened life. He is the agent of revelation who brings the content of truth to the spirit of man ... Through his instrumentality a variety of charismata are bestowed upon the members of the new community. He is the energising agent who produces these gifts.

He goes on to comment on Ephesians 3. 14-17,

> In Ephesians the distinction between the indwelling of Christ and the indwelling of the Spirit is clearly marked in one sentence. The writer prays for his readers 'to the Father' 'that he will grant you according to the riches of his glory to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell through faith in your hearts'. This text exactly agrees with the distinction which has already been drawn out. The bestowal of the Spirit by the Father is to have the effect of strengthening the inner life. The Spirit is the quickening cause; and the indwelling of Christ is the effect of this quickening.
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> (L.S.Thornton, The Incarnate Lord, 1928, 324)

Thornton's way of making the distinction between Christ and Spirit is open to criticism on two grounds. A.W. Wainwright says that it is too rigid to contain the many variations of expression that Paul uses and that it imposes a systemisation that may be present in John but is not to be found in Paul (A.W. Wainwright, The Trinity in the New Testament 1962, 218-9). Nevertheless, it could still be held that Thornton helps to make explicit a factor that is implicitly present in Paul and that is of great significance for our subject.

My own criticism of Thornton would be on rather different grounds, that the distinction between Christ as content of the renewed life and the Spirit as its empowering agent does not do justice to the New Testament material. In particular it makes the role of Christ too passive and indeed impersonal. Christ is not just the passive content who is to be transferred to us by the activity of the Spirit; rather he is the one who himself establishes and maintains the relationship that we have with him, and who most actively goes on giving himself to us. I would want therefore to translate Thornton into more dynamic and relational language.

Christ indwells us and we him, in the sense that we live our renewed life in organic and continuing relationship with him. That relationship is the constituting and controlling factor. We die Christ's death, we live his life, we share his sufferings and his victory, we pursue his mission in participation in his risen humanity and its love and power. And this is all by his initiating will and self-giving grace. Christ is the one to whom we are so related, but the Spirit is the one who stands with us on our side of the relationship and gives us the openness and receptivity of faith to be able to make our own what Christ gives. In terms of this relationship Christ is over against us as the partner to whom we are related, but the Spirit is at work with us on our side of the relationship, enabling us to receive, to confess and to give glory to the Lord.

This way of thinking about Christ and Spirit in their distinctive activity on each side of an I-Thou relationship lets us see how the personal distinction between Christ and Spirit leaves room for and supports the integrity of the personal distinction between Christ and those who believe in him. He is not merged in us nor are we merged in him. He does not take us over and we do not take him over, but he and we each remain ourselves within the context of the close relationship in which he has bound us to him.

Where the action of the Spirit is not properly distinguished from the action of Christ, there is a danger that he can be seen as imposing himself upon us from the outside in heteronomous authoritarianism, or else merging us with him in a mystical absorption, with the result in both cases that our personal integrity over against him is thrown into doubt. As Lossky puts it,

> This raises again the question of the place of human persons in this union: either they would be annihilated in being united to the Person of Christ, or else the Person of Christ would be imposed upon them from without. In this latter case grace would be conceived as external in relation to freedom, instead of as being its inward flowering. But it is in this freedom that we acknowledge the Deity of the Son, made manifest to our understanding through the Holy Spirit dwelling in us.
> (V.Lossky, The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church, 1957, 169-70)

When we fail to distinguish the activity of the Spirit within us from the activity of Christ over against us and see Christ as both the one who is received and the one who enables our receiving, we may very easily come to think of his authority over us in far too external a way, witness the catholic authoritarianism of 'the Church says' and the Protestant authoritarianism of 'the Bible says', both which Lossky traces to the failure of Western Christendom to leave room for the inner opening and freeing work of the Spirit over against the givenness and completeness of Christ.

To return again to the model of Matthew 16, it is Christ who raises the question, 'Who do you say that I am?' But it is not he who provides or imposes the answer to it. He leaves room for Peter to make a discernment and a response which is his own over against Christ, and yet that Christ recognises to have its ultimate origin not in Peter but in a divine activity that is distinct from his own. It is this latter divine activity which is in the developing tradition ascribed to the Holy Spirit.

Where Christ and Spirit are not so differentiated, the alternative danger is that of a Christ-mysticism, where Christ does not merely impose himself upon us but absorbs us into himself, so that our freedom over against him and the personal nature of the relationship that we

have in him is, in Lossky's word, annihilated. Pannenberg makes the same point in his own way,

> The differentiation of the Spirit from Father and Son thereby prevents our taking the wrong path, pantheism, which appears to lie close at hand. The Spirit of the knowledge of God in Jesus is the Spirit of God only insofar as believers distinguish themselves in such knowledge from God as creatures and from Jesus Christ as 'servants' of the Lord: precisely in the humility of this self-differentiation from God that avoids all mystical exuberance, believers prove themselves to possess God's Spirit and thus to participate in God himself (W. Pannenberg, Jesus, God and Man, 1968, 175-6)

In other words, the hypostatic distinction between Christ and Spirit undergirds and supports the distinction between believers in whom the Spirit works, and Christ and the Father as the objects of their believing.

The distinction between Christ and Spirit avoids heteronomy or absorption from the side of Christ, but it also avoids autonomy on the side of the believers as if their response to Christ could be seen as their own human work that has its ultimate ground in themselves. I must indeed know Christ for myself and appropriate to myself all that is in him for me and, as we have seen, exercise my freedom of response over against him. As a certain kind of evangelical is never tired of reminding us, the door on which he knocks must be opened from the inside. Nevertheless the faith that opens the door and receives Christ, though it is authentically ours, does not have its source in us; not our work, but God's gift. In relation to Christ our response is ours and not his, yet what we bring to him is created in us and given to us by the Spirit of faith at work in us. We respond to him for ourselves, but not by ourselves. The faith by which we trust Christ, the hope by which we look expectantly to Christ, the love by which we are bound to Christ, the power by which we serve Christ, are the gifts and fruits of his Holy Spirit within us. We bring them to Christ, but we receive them from God.

Such a doctrine of the Spirit as distinct hypostasis does justice both to our freedom over against Christ and to our dependence upon the Spirit of God as the creative source of the act of faith and all that follows from it. To use Tillich's terms in a way rather different from

his own, it delivers alike from both authoritarian heteronomy and a synergistic autonomy, into a genuine theonomy where God as Son and God as Spirit is at work at both ends of our relationship with Christ, but in such a way as to preserve the personal integrity of the relationship and both of the partners to it.

To sum up then, we have found good reason, both on biblical and systematic grounds to question the adequacy not only of Lampe's unitarianism of the Spirit but of the binitarian proposal of Berkhof and Moule, which of course stands much nearer to the mainline trinitarian tradition. If the Son is absorbed in Spirit or Spirit seen as adjectival to the Son, the basic New Testament pattern of our relationship with Christ is in danger of being distorted with consequences that are practical as well as theological. There is good reason to maintain that the New Testament writers in their different ways affirm the essential oneness of Son and Spirit but also, with varying degrees of explicitness, are aware of a personal distinction against them. When the Fathers later spoke of the homoousios of Son and Spirit and of the distinction in hypostasis, a good case can be made for maintaining that they were simply explicating in their own terms patterns in God's action towards us in Christ of which the New Testament writers showed themselves to be already aware, and that therefore the New Testament gospel requires the framework of a trinitarian, rather than a unitarian or binitarian doctrine of God in order to be itself.

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