Spirit Christology
and
Mission

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A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for Doctor of Philosophy at the University of Otago, 2010
ABSTRACT

It is largely acknowledged throughout the Western church that we now face various crises. Shrinking numbers and an increasingly secular society has led the church to face new questions. How do we conduct mission in post-Christendom Europe; how do we communicate the gospel in ways that will be meaningful to our hearers? In this thesis I contend that an effective model for mission in post-Christendom Europe will be a dialogical model of mission based on a theology of incarnation and anointing. Using Spirit Christology as a dogmatic foundation and drawing primarily on the work of Ralph Del Colle among others, I explore what it might mean to be effective witnesses to Jesus Christ in contemporary society. In recent years Spirit Christology has become a Christological perspective adopted by a number of theologians seeking to articulate a greater role for the Holy Spirit in our understanding of the person and work of Jesus Christ. It is still, however, a matter for considerable debate and discussion as to how exactly the relationship of Christ to the Spirit is to be understood. The dogmatic questions relating to this one issue, of the relation of Christ and the Spirit are numerous: the impact Spirit Christology has on models of the Trinity; the place of Logos Christology in relation to Spirit Christology; the Spirit and the doctrine of the two natures of Christ are just some. This thesis explores recent theological developments in Spirit Christology, focusing on orthodox Spirit Christologies from the Western tradition, with a view to discussing how it may serve as a dogmatic foundation for a theology of mission. I argue that Spirit Christology, with its dual emphasis on the missions of the Son and the Spirit in the world is perfectly placed to act as a doctrinal basis for a contemporary model of mission. In Part One I evaluate various proposals for a Spirit Christology, discussing some of the particular dogmatic issues in both Roman Catholic and Reformed Spirit Christologies, and highlighting some of the advantages for missiology that lie in a theology of the mutual, coinherent and reciprocal missions of Christ and the Spirit. The notion of the Spirit as the one who leads humanity back to the Father through the Son comes to the fore as the proper mission of the Spirit. I go on to discuss the way in which Spirit Christology, with its emphasis on the work of the Spirit in the humanity of Christ, becomes a model for us to understand the church’s existence and task as that of Spirit-filled humanity anointed to co-labour with God in his mission to the world. In Part Two, I discuss the question of mission, surveying first New Testament models of mission and then going on to consider various historical and contemporary models of mission, comparing them to a model of mission based on Spirit Christology. Throughout the thesis I highlight the numerous advantages of Spirit Christology for a theology of mission, developing a dialogical model based on the concepts of incarnation and anointing.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The writing of this thesis would have been impossible without the encouragement and support of so many friends and family members. First, I would like to thank Simon Downham, who was the first person to suggest that I pursue postgraduate studies in theology and who advised me to go to King’s College, London. I had no idea at the time quite what this would lead to. For ongoing conversation, encouragement, excellent questions, insightful comments, and for making theology far more fun than most people think it is, I would like to say a heartfelt thanks to Jonathan Chan, Oliver Crisp, Gavin D’Costa, Lindsey Hall and Alan Spence. All of them in different ways have been enormously encouraging over the years. Very special thanks goes to Gavin, for generously including me in various groups at the University of Bristol, for making me feel so welcome, and for asking me challenging questions. I am also especially grateful to Lindsey, for hours of her time, and for being on the end of the phone whenever needed which, it turned out, was remarkably often! Of all the theologians who have encouraged me over the years, however, my deepest gratitude goes to my supervisor, Murray Rae, who has been a great mentor as well as a friend. He believed that I could do this a long time before I did. For that confidence in me, for knowing that I would love theology, for his commitment to supervision over such a long distance and for wonderful family times in Dunedin, I am truly and profoundly grateful.

For giving me so much over the years, I wish to thank both my parents, Hugh and Claire Peppiatt. My mother filled the house with books, giving me a love of words and, by her actions, constantly reminds me of the importance of compassion and kindness. My father taught me how to think, to argue, and to stand up for what I believe in. All of this and their immense generosity to others, their steady, unwavering faith in God, and their belief in the value of academic study gave me such important foundations and values for studying theology. For these things I am enormously grateful. It is a great privilege to come from a large and loving family and I would also very much like to thank my three brothers and my sister, Stephen, Annie, Eddie and Jay. They will never let me be right and always make me laugh.

While working on my thesis, I worked with my husband, Nick Crawley, at Crossnet – our amazing little church. I have so much still to learn about mission and discipleship, but the challenges, joys, struggles, breakthroughs, tears, laughter, frustrations and surprises of church-planting in Bristol and trying to follow Jesus Christ have taught me so much. I would like to thank all those who have joined us along the way and been part of our endeavours to make the good news known to the people around us. I wish especially to thank those who committed themselves to joining in with our hopes and dreams for Crossnet, who made sacrifices to seek with us the leading of the Spirit, and who have truly become part of our family. The completion of this thesis owes much to them.

There are, however, no adequate words really to thank my own family, Nick, and my four sons, Seth, Harry, Roscoe and Jem. In the course of writing this thesis, they have been unerringly supportive of a wife and mother who was often distracted and slightly obsessed with theology. I have had the very best conversations at countless meals around our dinner table and have seen our sons blossom into interesting, thoughtful, amusing and slightly irreverent theologians. My children challenge me, inspire me and keep everything relentlessly real. This has been one of my greatest pleasures. My heartfelt and unceasing gratitude goes especially to Nick, for his patience, his support, his faith, his encouragement, his vast Bible knowledge,
his prayers, his love for the Lord, endless conversations, and his genuine and ongoing interest in such a long project. I am blessed to have all five of them in my life. I cannot think of any other people that I would rather live with, learn with and pray with. They are the best team ever and have taught me more about mission, discipleship and the adventure of living with our extraordinary God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, than they will ever know.
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SPIRIT CHRISTOLOGY AND MISSION

INTRODUCTION

In a recent theological forum on the work of the Spirit, Lyle Dabney asserted, ‘Christianity must ask the question of faith in Christ today: what does it mean to be Christian in the world post-Christendom? And what is authentic witness to Christ in such a world?’ He argues that the post-Christendom and the postmodern world poses a ‘new and complex set of considerations’ for Christian theology. In the light of these challenges, he goes on to ask, how does the church both affirm and contradict aspects of the society in which we live? How does Christian theology address itself both to ‘the church and to society in general, speaking to the question of the identity of the one and to the issue of engagement with the other’? Dabney himself argues that these questions should be answered by what ‘might be called a theology of the third article;’ a theology of the Holy Spirit. His plea is that Christian theology should now ‘start with the Spirit’. Dabney, of course, is not the first to call for a theology that encompasses or begins with a robust pneumatology, and his voice is now one among many. In this thesis I consider his questions in the light of Spirit Christology. Taking the newly named ‘doctrine’ of Spirit Christology, I go on to explore the implications of this for mission in contemporary Western Europe, assessing its usefulness for a model of mission in post-Christendom and postmodern society.

Where theologians considering aspects of pneumatology once prefaced their work with the observation that little attention has been paid to the person, work and role of the Holy Spirit, this is no longer the case. Pneumatology is not now a neglected area of theological study and reflection, but has come to the fore as a topic for discussion, reflection and debate, evidenced by the many books, articles and conferences devoted to the study of the Spirit. In addition to this, there has been a

6 Some examples among many publications include Bergmann, S., Creation Set Free: The Spirit as Liberator of Nature (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2005); Coffey, D., Grace: The Gift of the Holy Spirit (Sydney: Catholic Institute of Sydney, 1979); and idem, ‘The “Incarnation” of the Holy Spirit in
corresponding growing interest in other academic disciplines in the notion of ‘spirit’ as a category, which has contributed to contemporary discussions on what it means to consider the question of the S/spirit in the theological world. In systematic theology, a new perspective in one area of doctrine will have implications for all other doctrines. One of the corollaries of the interest in pneumatology and a theology of the third article, is the impact that this has had on the doctrines of creation, the Trinity, Christ, salvation, the church and so on, opening up fresh discussions and avenues for theological enquiry. One particular focus for a number of theologians is the relationship of Christ and the Spirit, and this has been developed into proposals for various forms of ‘Spirit Christology’. However, it is not simply that there is a renewed interest in pneumatology and pneumatic Christologies, it is also often

claimed by those who promote a theology of the third article that this, in some way, is, or could be, a more fruitful theological basis for reflection on and engagement with the post-modern world.

Amos Yong, for example, a Pentecostal theologian and proponent of Spirit Christology writes, ‘Spirit christology is a fully biblical but marginalized theological perspective that can speak to, and needs to be reappropriated for, our time.’7 Similarly, Philip Rosato writes, Spirit Christology, ‘might well allow Christian theologians to present Jesus Christ in a way more understandable to contemporary secular culture and also more appropriate to the current spiritual and pastoral needs in the Christian community.’8 Myk Habets argues that a trinitarian Spirit Christology presents ‘a Trinitarian theology that is faithful to Scripture, the Great Tradition, and one that is existentially viable.’9 It is his conviction that this in particular ‘holds out promise for the contemporary church in the world.’10 This is the central issue that I explore: the claim that a pneumatic Christology is more suited to addressing the exigencies of contemporary culture and modern or postmodern lives, and this with specific reference to the particularities of a Western European context. Can this claim be substantiated with respect to the church in mission? What is the ‘promise’ or ‘yield’ or ‘productivity’ of Spirit Christology for ‘our time’ in relation to missiology?

In 2001, Advents of the Spirit, a collection of essays considering the current state of research into pneumatology, was published. Although it is clear from this volume that interest in pneumatology is touching most aspects of theological research, Dabney notes in his preface that much more work needs to be done on the ramifications of a robust pneumatology ‘for evangelization, catechesis, and practices of faith.’11 It is the relevance and productivity of Spirit Christology to some of those very areas that this thesis addresses.

I follow Dabney’s lead, therefore, in utilizing the theology of the third article in relation to the person of Christ to answer the questions, what does it mean to be Christian in the European world post-Christendom, and what does authentic witness

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to Christ in such a world look like? Building on the work of selected systematic theologians and using Spirit Christology as a dogmatic foundation, I trace the implications for missiology, highlight some of the advantages of Spirit Christology as a theological basis for mission, and argue that Spirit Christology has much to offer that is of value to a contemporary model of mission.

**Developments in Pneumatology and Spirit Christology**

There are various reasons for the aforementioned burgeoning of interest in pneumatology. An obvious and important historical and ecclesiological development has been the growth of the Pentecostal church and the rise of the charismatic movement across the denominations. Thus, the ‘experience’ of the Holy Spirit in the lives of Christians is acting as a catalyst and foundation for theological reflection. Others propose that emphasizing the work of the Spirit in relation to Christ and the world is a much needed response to what they see as the Western tendency towards Christomonism and/or the subordinationist tendencies in the traditional Western model of the Trinity. Furthermore, the advocates of Spirit Christology argue that Logos Christology alone does not do justice to the breadth of the biblical testimony concerning the person and nature of Jesus Christ. They believe that Spirit Christology not only fulfils a more faithful witness to the biblical account of the soteriological significance of Jesus Christ, but that it also more fully completes our understanding of the trinitarian revelation of God. In addition to this, those interested in furthering the ecumenical dialogue see Spirit Christology as offering some hope for a meeting point on certain dogmatic issues. All of these are issues that will be considered in due course as we go on to discuss the work of specific theologians. Other reasons include the Western churches’ ‘encounter with the theology of the Orthodox churches, growing awareness of the theological significance of diverse spiritual traditions, and theological reflection on movements of the Spirit for liberation.’

It is not my intention here to summarise all the developments in pneumatology in the last thirty years. We do need to begin, however, with some attempt at

13 For a comprehensive study of the ‘many competing proposals for a Third Article Theology’ in recent years see Habets, M., *The Anointed Son: A Trinitarian Spirit Christology* (Eugene, Oregon: Pickwick Publications, 2010). In the course of arguing for a trinitarian Spirit Christology, Habets surveys
definition, albeit a somewhat elusive task in respect of ‘Spirit Christology’. In recent years there have been a number of proposals for a Spirit Christology put forward by various theologians. What exactly is meant by ‘Spirit Christology’ however, is not always clear as this term can encompass a broad range of Christological models. Spirit Christology has been used to describe certain early Christologies, denoting the ‘Two-stage Christology of the New Testament’; the Word being Spirit that became flesh.\(^\text{14}\) As Coffey points out, however, since the First Council of Constantinople when the distinct personhood of the Holy Spirit was affirmed, the term Spirit is used to describe, not merely the divine element in Christ, but the Holy Spirit.\(^\text{15}\) Thus in recent years, Spirit Christology has come to denote a Christology which seeks to articulate the role or personhood of the Holy Spirit more definitely in our understanding of the person and work of Jesus Christ. This can be explicated in a number of ways.

Habets divides Spirit Christologies into two models: those that build on the foundational principles of Nicaea and Chalcedon (orthodox) and those that draw on new definitions and categories and revise traditional trinitarian models (revisionary or revisionist).\(^\text{16}\) In general, as he notes, those offering the former model will regard Spirit Christology as a complement to Logos Christology and those offering the latter will view it as an alternative. Among revisionist Spirit Christologies are those that might be ‘post-trinitarian’: either equating the Spirit with the risen Christ, or even creating a pneumatonomism in place of a Christomonism, or those that abandon ‘the developments in Christological methodology, the relationship of Spirit Christology to Logos Christology, Christology in New Testament Scholarship, and developments in pneumatic Christologies as well as forming his own version of a trinitarian Spirit Christology ‘based upon a retroactive reading of Scripture.’ (p.175) For a different perspective and summary see Manohar, C., *Spirit Christology: an Indian Christian Perspective* (Delhi: ISPCK, 2009), pp.40-107 and for a brief summary of the development of pneumatology in Patristic writings and Syriac thought see McDonnell, K., ‘A Trinitarian Theology of the Holy Spirit?’ *Theological Studies* 46/2 (1985), 191-227.


\(^\text{15}\) Coffey, D., *Spirit Christology*, p.316.

traditional trinitarian language of “person” (*prosopon, hypostasis, persona*) “nature” (*natura*), and “essence” (*ousia, physis, substantia*).\(^{17}\) In this thesis I have chosen to consider those Spirit Christologies that claim to fall within the orthodox trinitarian category, those that see the necessity to build on the traditional creeds and formulae of the Christian faith. In other words, I do not discuss Spirit Christologies that offer a model in which the Spirit displaces the Logos as the divine element in the person of Christ, those which are some form of ‘degree Christology’, those that equate the Spirit with the risen Christ, or those that abandon the two nature definition of Chalcedon for a Christology of inspiration or adoption. The Spirit Christologies considered in this thesis are those that describe the Holy Spirit as an ‘explanatory principle’ for the person of Christ, ‘shedding light on the innertrinitarian nature of the trinity’ and of his person.\(^{18}\)

The definition for Spirit Christology in this thesis, therefore, following Ralph Del Colle, is one in which the Holy Spirit plays a constitutive role in the person and work of Jesus Christ, in his full theological and soteriological significance.\(^{19}\) In other words, a Christology in which ‘the Holy Spirit is a constituent agent in christology proper (the doctrine of the person of Christ in reference to the incarnation and the hypostatic union), soteriology (how Christ accomplishes and communicates salvation), and the theology of grace (as the basis for anthropology and the Christian life).\(^ {20}\) Thus, David Coffey outlines two guiding principles for a Spirit Christology. First, in the light of Luke 1:35, ‘it must appeal to the Holy Spirit as an explanatory principle in the divinity of Christ.’ Second, it must take Logos Christology into account; John 1:14 as the basis for Christ as the incarnation of the Logos is ‘non-negotiable for subsequent theological reflection’.\(^ {21}\) In an important sense, there is nothing particularly ‘new’ being proposed or offered by an orthodox Spirit Christology. Some of the claims by these proponents of Spirit Christology that we will go on to examine is that this is a traditional biblical truth revivified, a truth which


serves to give a broader, deeper and richer portrait of the person and work of Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit and the nature and economy of the triune God.

My interests in this thesis are twofold. First, I examine various forms of orthodox Spirit Christology, assessing the claim that Spirit Christology is a viable, trinitarian Christology able to answer or accommodate the more problematic dogmatic questions of classical theology: the innertrinitarian relations and questions of origin, the monarchy of the Father and subordinationism, the taxis of the economic Trinity, the Filioque clause, the two natures of Christ and how they are related? How does Spirit Christology fit in with the maxim ‘omnia opera Trinitatis ad extra indivisa sunt’, how is it related to other doctrines and what light does it shed on the question of the personhood of the Holy Spirit? I will be considering these questions, exploring how they are answered by various contemporary theologians, who either specifically promote Spirit Christology, or privilege the work of the Spirit in trinitarian theology. Secondly, using Ralph Del Colle’s preliminary work on Spirit Christology and human concerns as a springboard, I go on to assess the usefulness of the ‘new’ insights afforded by Spirit Christology for a theology of mission in contemporary Western Europe.

**Spirit Christology: the theologians**

The starting point for this study is the Spirit Christologies of Ralph Del Colle and David Coffey. There are others who have made important contributions to the study of Spirit Christology, and still others who have contributed to the question of Spirit Christology and mission, some of whom we will refer to in the course of the thesis. Del Colle and Coffey’s work on Spirit Christology, however, remains seminal. My particular interest in their work lies in their development of a Spirit Christology within a trinitarian context. In other words, their models are neither pre-trinitarian nor post-trinitarian. Furthermore, Del Colle’s claims that Spirit Christology is a cogent and versatile Christological model on which to build a theological anthropology is worthy of further development.

In his major work, *Christ and the Spirit*, Del Colle devotes his last chapter to what he sees as the yield or productivity of Spirit Christology. Thus, having put forward a detailed and robust argument for Spirit Christology as a viable, and indeed, necessary Christological perspective, Del Colle finally turns in a short section to
‘Spirit-christology: Evaluation and Assessment’. In this chapter, he summarises his work, as well as going on to spell out some of the implications of Spirit Christology for various human concerns. These he outlines as ‘1) contextual issues of culture and human experience, 2) emancipatory concerns of social praxis and a just society, and 3) religious pluralism and the quest for dialogue.’ He goes on, ‘[e]ach will be examined in the light of Spirit-christology, particularly as the church’s witness to Christ and the Spirit is the foundation for its own mission and evangelization.’

Although it is in this chapter that he sets out to demonstrate the cogency and versatility of the Christological model, this section of his book is tantalizingly minimal. Del Colle begins to hint at some of the ways in which Spirit Christology might contribute to a theology of the concerns mentioned above, and although he covers a broad range of thought in a short chapter, the implications of his thought for church life and practice remain largely undeveloped. It is these themes in relation to mission that I seek to develop in the course of this thesis.

As mentioned above Del Colle’s particular interest is to situate Spirit Christology within the doctrine of the Trinity. He believes that Spirit Christology in the way he articulates it, maintains and even deepens ‘the integrity of the Christian trinitarian confession’. He relies heavily on the work of David Coffey for his own work, whose Spirit Christology he calls a ‘mature Spirit Christology in trinitarian perspective.’ This is a crucial dogmatic move in the development of a Spirit Christology. Sang-Ehil Han writes,

[i]t is critical to keep in mind…that Spirit Christology is essentially a Trinitarian (not a binary) construct. A pneumatological reading of Christology begins with the scriptural witness that Jesus has had first and foremost an intimate relationship with his Abba. After all, it was Christ’s responsive obedience to the Father concerning which the biblical testimonies speak of the intimate workings of the Spirit in him. … The biblical picture of Jesus in the

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power of the Spirit bears witness to the intimate union that Jesus shares with the Father.\(^{25}\)

These trinitarian concerns are developed with two further conversation partners, Thomas Weinandy and Colin Gunton, whose work is germane to any contemporary discussion of Christ, the Spirit and the Trinity within the Western theological tradition. Neither of them develop an explicit Spirit Christology, however, both theologians are concerned to address what they see as the neglect of the Holy Spirit and in so doing, construct a Spirit Christology by implication if not by intention. Despite the fact, therefore, that Weinandy himself in *The Father’s Spirit of Sonship* does not refer to Spirit Christology,\(^{26}\) his trinitarian theology is consonant with many of the concerns we will have covered via Del Colle and Coffey. Del Colle comments on his reconception of the Trinity, ‘Weinandy’s proposal certainly corresponds to the possibilities I intend by reference to Spirit Christology. The Spirit’s agency in the salvific event of the person of Jesus Christ as Spirit-bearer and Spirit-sender ought to be reflected in the immanent Trinity.’\(^{27}\) Based on the work of these theologians, we will begin to assess what impact these insights might have on a model of mission, one that will be predicated on Yves Congar’s axiom that there should be ‘no Christology without pneumatology and no pneumatology without Christology.’\(^{28}\)

The central dogmatic focus, therefore, will be a trinitarian model of mission based on the coinherent, mutual and reciprocal missions of the Son and the Spirit.

Initially, therefore, I engage with theologians whose primary focus is systematic theology rather than mission, but who all, in different ways, understand that their task as systematic theologians is to speak to the church in contemporary society. In other words, they are all theologians who go about the task of doing theology with a certain rigour and commitment to orthodoxy, but at the same time, do not see theology as divorced from contemporary human concerns, but as integrally


\(^{26}\) In his article ‘The Case for Spirit Christology: Some Reflections’ *The Thomist* 59/2 (1995), 173-188, Weinandy is very critical of Haight’s Spirit Christology, but this is on the grounds that his Spirit Christology does not conform to the criteria of orthodoxy and is, in fact, post-trinitarian.


bound up with the human, with church life and praxis, and with contemporary society. Kelly Kapic calls this ‘anthroposensitive’ theology: ‘a refusal to divorce theological considerations from practical human application, since theological reflections are always interwoven with anthropological concerns.’ Their insights in the theological realm will address and shed light on fundamental concerns of the human condition, and therefore their relevance to a theology of mission will emerge.

What will become clear in the course of the discussion is that the issue of differentiating between the person of Christ and the person of the Spirit and articulating how the missions of both are distinct and yet related is one of a very fine balance. There are those who manage to find this balance well, and can integrate both into a full and thoughtfully considered trinitarian framework. At the same time, however (and this is a subtlety that becomes more and more evident in the study of Christ and the Spirit), they are all theologians who would echo Del Colle’s concern that it is Christology and not actually pneumatology that is the ‘primary locus for reflection.’ He writes, ‘[r]eference to the Spirit is meant as a modifier to christology, evoking a certain type of christology.’ (my emphasis) This is in no way however, a theology in which the Spirit continues to be subordinate – quite the opposite. Others would take issue with this perspective on the grounds that the Spirit must now come first, however, I have leaned towards those who, with Del Colle, see the Spirit as a modifier to Christology and not the other way around.

In Chapter Three, I assess the implications of Spirit Christology for the doctrine of the person of Christ and theological anthropology, exploring specifically what this allows us to say about the humanity of Christ and the parallels that we may draw between Christ’s humanity and ours. Spirit Christology, as well as giving us a model for what it means to be truly human also enables us to give a strong account of human agency, and this in turn forms the basis for our understanding of mission as the church’s task of cooperating with the mission of God to the world. The idea of the Spirit working through our humanity in a way that is analogous to but not identical with the way the Spirit works in the humanity of Christ becomes central to the theology and practice of mission. For this, I engage with a number of theologians who

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have worked out a theological anthropology based on a theology of Christ and the Spirit: Coffey’s later work, Ivor Davidson, John Owen and Alan Spence’s use of his work. Although Owen may appear as an anomaly in what is otherwise a list of contemporary theologians, his early work on Christ and the Spirit foreshadows the present developments in Spirit Christology, especially in relation to the work of the Spirit in the incarnate Christ and therefore, for a theological anthropology.

In my choice of interlocutors I have drawn from both the Protestant and Roman Catholic traditions. I have not focused on contributions from Orthodox theologians in this field for two reasons. First, it is in the Western and not the Eastern tradition that we encounter the complaint that the neglect of the person and work of the Holy Spirit has served to attenuate the theological endeavour. Second, this thesis explores the critique of the Western tradition from within and considers proposals for revisions to the predominant Western trinitarian model. In the course of the discussion, however, it will become clear that recent thinking on Christ and the Spirit has been strongly influenced by Eastern Orthodoxy, this being especially true in the case of Del Colle and Gunton.

Spirit Christology ‘presupposes a robust pneumatology’, thus it is often difficult to draw a distinct line between advocates of Spirit Christology and those who argue that we should now ‘start with the Spirit’ as there will be a significant overlap between them. On the question of Spirit Christology and mission, there are those who have specifically explored this question including, for example, Jürgen Moltmann, Amos Yong, Donald Gelpi, Sang-Ehil Han, Gerald Hawthorne and Christina Manohar. There are also those, however, who claim that contemporary missiology should now begin with a theology of the Spirit, and this may or may not be specifically Christological. This would include Amos Yong’s earlier work and the work of Kirsteen Kim, Stephen Bevans, Frank Macchia, Roland Allen and Andrew Lord. As we progress I will engage with some of their ideas. Many of these thinkers inform my own project, but the distinctive contribution I hope to make is to examine some recent developments in studies of Spirit Christology in a trinitarian context in

32 Orthodox theologians who consider questions of the Spirit and Christology, ecclesiology and soteriology include Vladimir Lossky, Nikos Nissiotis, Boris Bobrinskoy and John Zizioulas. For an example of an Orthodox Spirit Christology, see Bobrinskoy, Boris ‘The Indwelling of the Spirit in Christ: “pneumatic Christology” in the Cappadocian Fathers’ St. Vladimir’s Theological Quarterly 28/1 (1984), 49-65.
33 Del Colle, R., Christ and the Spirit, p.3.
the West, with a view to tracing the implications of these for mission theology and practice in Western Europe.

**Spirit Christology and Western Mission**

In Part Two, I consider definitions of mission and evangelism as well as exploring various biblical models of mission. Missiologists have always claimed that any model of mission needs to take into account the regnant ideologies of the surrounding culture and so I give a brief outline of some defining features of the post-Christendom West, highlighting various characteristics of contemporary Western culture that we need to take into account in a contemporary model of mission. I examine various biblical models of mission from the New Testament, demonstrating the coinherent missions of the Son and the Spirit in the biblical witness and exploring the implications of these for a contemporary model of mission. Many argue, quite rightly, that our own particular Western European culture will require our mission to be characterized by witness, invitation, response, dialogue, the primacy of people over institutions, contextual evangelism and the preaching and practice of justice.\(^{34}\) I adopt these categories and with these in mind, I consider whether Spirit Christology can give us a robust trinitarian foundation from which to form models of mission to and dialogue with our contemporary, predominantly secular culture. I consider some contemporary models of mission and two in particular, both of which claim to be particularly well-suited to our times. Stephen Bevans offers a model that ‘starts with the Spirit’ while Frost and Hirsch construct an incarnational-missional model, based on the historical Jesus we meet in the gospels. I critique these models from the perspective of Spirit Christology, demonstrating how theology forms the basis for ecclesiology and thus informs missiology, and highlighting some of the lacunae in models of mission that divorce pneumatology from Christology or vice versa.

There are many questions exercising the church in the West in respect of mission as we face declining numbers, a growing apathy towards questions of faith, and a strong opposition in the ‘new atheists’. I argue that at a time when the church is searching for relevant and effective models of mission, we have in Spirit Christology, an invaluable resource at our disposal. In respect of mission, Spirit Christology gives

us a model which allows us to explore the work of both the Spirit and the Son in bringing humanity to the Father. It addresses the question of the distinct but coinherent missions of the second and third persons of the Trinity. It allows us to spell out the mission of the church in both christological and pneumatological terms, within the context of a balanced trinitarian framework. Dabney sees the shift from strict Christocentrism not as a move away from the centre of Christian worship and witness in Jesus Christ. ‘It is, rather, a search for a mode of witness to and worship of Christ that is more true to the biblical witness and the theological tradition than was much of earlier Christomonism – as well as more authentic to the rapidly changing social and intellectual world in which Christian theology now must render an account of faith in Jesus Christ.’

The question of mission in the West has to confront the notions of both pluralism and secularism. It is one thing to consider the relevance of the Christian gospel and how to communicate it to people groups who already have a developed understanding of their creeds, their identity and their community within the parameters of a different faith. It is another thing altogether to consider the questions of ‘evangelization, catechesis and practices of faith’ and their relevance to those who consider themselves as having no ‘faith’, or at least no institutionalized faith. What does it mean to communicate the gospel to those who might have no formalized creeds; who might have some sort of hybrid or personalised faith; who might have been taught that faith is essentially an irrational mindset fit only for the deluded and foolish?

Theological reflections on mission in the West have undergone some radical changes in the post-imperialist and pluralist societies in which we find ourselves. Many of these developments are to be welcomed: an appreciation of the process of indigenization, viewing mission as dialogue, encouraging the process of ‘listening’, the notion of ‘hospitality’ and other trends, all of which, it could be argued, have been spawned by the sense of marginalization and relativization experienced in the post-Christendom church. Nevertheless, there remains a persistent unyieldingness about the gospel, which for many ‘postmoderns’ has become a source of embarrassment and awkwardness. How is the steady, immutable, unchanging aspect of the Christian faith held together and communicated to a society which accommodates change with

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dizzying speed, grasping at and comprehending the next ‘new’ development with an agility lost to those of past generations? To those who are wary of institutions, cynical about ‘life-long’ promises and adept at forming relationships without the physical presence of the ‘other’ how do we speak of or communicate a sense of community, belonging and notions of covenant, and the integral part they play in living out the Christian faith? How does Spirit Christology help to address some of these issues? What does it mean to be considering the questions of evangelization and catechesis or mission and discipleship in this context? I argue that this mission will need to have a strong and equal emphasis on both ‘incarnation’ and ‘anointing’, on the notions of the inbreaking and immediate work of God in the Spirit and the mediated work of God through humanity and on divine initiative and the corresponding obedience of the church to the work of God. It will also need to be a model that is responsive to rapid cultural changes, while at the same time affirming the uniqueness of Christ in a relativistic world. I argue, with many others, for a dialogical model of mission, but one that is based on a theology of the coherently, mutual and reciprocal missions of the Spirit and the Son.

Some of the salient features of this model include an understanding of Jesus as the prototype of humanity, not only as the divine Son but as the Spirit-filled man; the relevance of human agency in the economy of God; the work of the Spirit, as the Spirit of Sonship, to bring humanity into a relationship with the Father as sons and daughters in Christ (Romans 8.14-17 being a seminal text); the transformation of the material world as the mission of the Son and the Spirit; the importance of community and human beings in relation, and a theology of the universal and the particular rooted both Christologically and pneumatologically, which in turn gives us a way of expressing both unity and diversity within church life and practice. The idea of the people of God as ambassadors of Christ and witnesses to him will come to the fore including, as it does, the question of integrity in the lives of believers as representatives of Jesus Christ in this world. In this way, we see that the question of discipleship is inextricably linked to the task of mission and cannot be divorced from it. As well as an emphasis on incarnation, and Spirit-filled humanity as the witness to Christ, I also consider the question of the leading of the Spirit in mission, and the unpredictability of the Spirit who blows where he wills as he leads the church in mission. In Chapter Six I consider in more detail what it means for the church for a model of mission to be truly dialogical.
The equal emphasis on the Christological and pneumatological allows for a model of mission which in turn has an equal emphasis on the mutual, coinherent and reciprocal missions of Christ and the Spirit, differentiating but not separating the two roles. This, I argue, is a particularly needed balance in the communication of the gospel and gives rise to a number of not just useful, but much needed revisions to the way the church goes about mission today. Among other things it is a model which can hold together the immutable and the flexible, the Christological aspects of the faith that are non-negotiable and the aspects of the Christian faith which must adapt to shifting perspectives as our cultures change, develop and transform throughout history. As cultures, societies, political regimes and philosophies change, so do questions of being: identity, belonging, personhood, the transcendent etc. In other words, mission is not solely the task of speaking the same message to generation after generation, but needs the gift of spiritual discernment to know how to speak that message to a particular generation. The communication and apprehension of this message can only be achieved in and through the Spirit. A pneumatic Christology gives room for a model of mission that can accommodate both the particular and the universal, one which resists some of the depersonalizing trends of the modern world both in society and in the church and recognizes the personal, the unique, the diverse. Yet at the same time, there is a centre, an orientation, a focal point, and an identity. Flexibility, change and movement are anchored and understood within the context of a centre which is Christ.

The assumption in the New Testament is that the proclamation of the gospel will engender not just ‘converts’ but ‘disciples’. The expectation of the early church was that those who understood Jesus as kyrios would not just believe in him but would follow him. The question facing the church today in the commission to make disciples is fundamentally a question of meaning; it is a task, a challenge, an endeavour to make something understood. This is born out of God’s divine initiative, the missio Dei. It is however, a task that involves human beings, in the worlds which we inhabit, with the people with whom we share those worlds. Communication and meaning happens on a human level, between human beings in our embodied existence. A pneumatological model of mission will emphasize the dynamic of both

36 See Gunton, C., The One, the Three and the Many (Cambridge: CUP, 2002) for a theology of Christ and the Spirit through which Gunton argues we are able to resist the homogenizing tendencies of modern individualism.
listening to God and listening to others around us, of being in dialogue with God as well as with human beings. Dabney notes the advantages of the language of s/Spirit having become available for discourse. ‘It is the search for a mode of discourse that will better enable us to speak not just of the presence and activity of God in and with God’s church, but also God’s presence and activity in God’s world.’

Spirit Christology gives us a trinitarian framework for an understanding of the communication of the gospel that incorporates a more complex portrait of communication than simply the hearing or apprehension of a spoken or written word. Thus, our model of mission will incorporate and allow for both the inbreaking and pre-linguistic work of the Spirit as well as the embodied nature of human being and all that that encompasses: the particular, the material, presence, the non-verbal, touch, attitude, and all that makes communication personal.

Christoph Schwöbel notes, ‘The urgency of Christological inquiry lies in the fact that the identity of Jesus Christ determines our identity as Christians, that the being of Christ shapes the being of God and our being as human beings created in the image of God, and that his presence is the space in which our present is constituted.’

Christological enquiry, therefore, cannot be divorced from the fundamental questions of ‘being’ which in turn inform every other aspect of theological enquiry. Our trinitarian reflections are not just reflections on who God is but, necessarily, will mould our understanding of who God is pro nobis, for us. This necessity means there can be no significant developments in our understanding of the Trinity without corresponding developments in anthropology, ecclesiology, eschatology, missiology and more. If Christology forms the basis for our understanding of human being and our identity and task as Christians, Spirit Christology ensures that our attempts at describing this are always worked out only in the light of the reality of the Holy Spirit. Spirit Christology, although not entirely new as we have seen, offers a fresh perspective upon the Trinity and in turn, upon all areas of church life, including mission, catechesis and church practices.

Before proceeding further, it is necessary to address the problem of gendered language in speaking of the Spirit. After much deliberation and with some unease,

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when the use of a pronoun for the Spirit is appropriate, I have chosen sometimes to use ‘he’ and sometimes ‘she’. The unease springs from the fact that this might sound confusing and wavering. The decision however, springs from a reluctance to denote the Godhead in exclusively masculine terms: a problem which I find difficult to resolve. In English we are bound by the strictures of our language, and the other two options leave me feeling no less uncomfortable. To call the Holy Spirit ‘it’, rather than denoting someone of neutral gender depersonalizes the Spirit altogether which, in my opinion is wholly inadequate, and would be a deep irony in a work that seeks to describe the Holy Spirit in her full hypostatic individuation. To ascribe unqualified femininity to the Spirit by calling the Spirit ‘she’ consistently is tempting and I am in sympathy with those who do. However, I sometimes feel that by doing so, we endorse the idea that the other two persons of the Trinity are ‘masculine’ rather than defending the notion that God is neither masculine nor feminine in the way that we as creatures are. Thus I have chosen to alternate pronouns in order to avoid the risk of essentialising the gender of the Holy Spirit.
PART ONE: SPIRIT CHRISTOLOGY

CHAPTER ONE

SPIRIT CHRISTOLOGY: A NEW PERSPECTIVE

Introduction to Spirit Christology

In this chapter, I discuss the Spirit Christology of Ralph Del Colle, principally as it is developed in his book, *Christ and the Spirit: Spirit-Christology in Trinitarian Perspective*, and also that of David Coffey as it is found in his book, *Deus Trinitas* and in a number of his journal articles. Having assessed their work, we will begin to highlight the usefulness of Spirit Christology for a theology of mission and explore what the ‘yield’ of a pneumatic Christology is for our understanding of God’s mission to the world and the nature of the church’s participation in that mission.

Del Colle in his book *Christ and the Spirit* pursues a number of concerns. His aim is to construct ‘a theology of grace…that is able to negotiate the lacuna of pneumatological neglect characteristic of Western trinitarian theology.’\(^{39}\) As we have seen, his argument is that a fully trinitarian Christology faithful to the biblical witness must be formulated in the light of a robust pneumatology. Del Colle seeks to articulate the hypostatic differentiation within the Trinity, which he believes to have been undermined by the gradual displacement of early Spirit Christologies by the dominant Logos Christology.\(^{40}\) He considers a number of important dogmatic issues in relation to the Trinity, as well as beginning to explore the yield of Spirit Christology for theological anthropology and the church, thus providing a springboard for our discussion of mission. Del Colle’s Spirit Christology is reliant on the work of David Coffey and his ‘return model’, one of Coffey’s main innovations in trinitarian theology. It is Coffey’s return model in conjunction with his work on grace that leads him to a fully articulated Spirit Christology. As with so many of the theologians that we will refer to throughout this thesis, Coffey’s theology is motivated by what he sees

\(^{39}\) Del Colle, R., *Christ and the Spirit*, p.96.

\(^{40}\) Del Colle, R., *Christ and the Spirit*, p.92.
as the attenuated role of the Holy Spirit in traditional trinitarian theology. His response is to formulate what he calls the ‘bestowal model’ in his early work, later to become the ‘return model’ and even later, the ‘mutual-love’ theory. In this chapter, we will stay with the term ‘return’ model. Through this trinitarian model, Coffey emphasizes the reaching out of God to the world in Christ and the Spirit and the return of humanity to the Father through the Son, which for Coffey, is the proper mission of the Holy Spirit. The return model relates both to the inner-trinitarian life and to the work of God in the world. It is particularly interesting for a theology of mission in which we stress the coinherent missions of the Son and the Spirit, the distinct but inseparable role of the Spirit, and the return of humanity to God, in Christ, as sons and daughters.

Before we embark upon the study of their work however some introductory comments on the development of Spirit Christology are in order. Spirit Christology has developed in recent years as part of a greater focus in Western theology on the Spirit, and is concerned specifically to explore the person and role of the Spirit in relation to Christ. In the process of reconceiving the Spirit’s role in the divine economy, Christology itself is significantly reshaped. Spirit Christology is still a loosely defined concept and while there is much to be commended in this work, there are various versions of Spirit Christology that have been subjected to certain criticisms. In particular, critics have alleged that Spirit Christologies are prone to adoptionism, modalism and pneumatocentrism.

Adoptionism, the view that Jesus becomes the Son at his baptism or with the filling of the Spirit either at his conception or after his birth, is obviated by also adhering to Logos Christology, thus affirming that it is the pre-existent Son who becomes flesh. Yong points out that this ‘preserves the mystery of the incarnation and the inner-trinitarian relations that Spirit Christology on its own terms loses.’ Not only this, but he adds, ‘Logos christology protects Spirit christology from the reverse subordinationist tendency: that of subjecting the person and work of Jesus to the Spirit.’ Hence, the insistence of Del Colle and Coffey that Spirit Christology function as a complementary Christological model, one that sheds light on Logos

41 For a recent in-depth study of Coffey’s trinitarian theology and Spirit Christology see O’Byrne, D., *Spirit Christology and Trinity in the Theology of David Coffey* (Bern, Switzerland: Peter Lang, 2010).
42 Declan O’Byrne writes about Coffey’s work, ‘it is worth bearing in mind that his work can be read as a sustained attempt to establish a renewed trinitarian framework for reading the work of the Spirit of Sonship in the gracing of everyday realities, especially that of the church.’ *Spirit Christology*, p.23.
Christology, and not as an alternative model. Modalism, the conflating of the persons of the Son and the Spirit is also sometimes cited as a danger of Spirit Christology, as is pneumatocentrism, an overemphasis on the person and work of the Spirit at the expense of the Son. Del Colle and Coffey claim to be careful to differentiate between the persons and work of the Son and the Spirit while at the same time giving a fully trinitarian account of the indivisibility of the Father, Son and Spirit. Moreover, while not giving a pre-eminent role to the Spirit they aim to articulate the Spirit’s distinct personhood within the Trinity in a way that nullifies any hint of subordinationism. This means that these Spirit Christologies will be explicated in relation to a fully articulated trinitarian theology thus allowing us to explore doctrinal developments in the light of the convergence of pneumatology and Christology, and enabling us to express both the hypostatic individuation of the Son and the Spirit while at the same time, emphasising their interdependence. This then will form the basis for our theological reflection on soteriology, ecclesiology, anthropology and Christian praxis.

Advocates of Spirit Christology are not confined to one school of thought or theological tradition, but represent a broad range of church traditions and theological perspectives. Unsurprisingly, therefore, there is no blanket consensus on the dogmatic issues relating to Spirit Christology, but there are certain commonalities across the range of orthodox Spirit Christologies. These will become apparent in the course of discussion. What follows is a brief account of some of the main areas of agreement between proponents of orthodox Spirit Christology.

Despite a definite commitment to Logos Christology as non-negotiable for subsequent theological reflection, the proponents of orthodox Spirit Christology contend that Logos Christology on its own is not an adequate reflection of the biblical witness to the person and work of Christ. The scholars whose work we will be exploring argue that the Johannine Christology ‘from above’ should be balanced and complemented by the Christology ‘from below’ found in the Synoptic tradition. Such a Christology will reflect the full implications of the Spirit active in Jesus Christ from the beginning of his earthly existence. Habets argues for a methodology that unites the functional and the ontological approaches to Christology: two approaches that are traditionally understood to be in opposition. ‘If we construct our Christology firstly at the functional level and then onto the ontological level we end up with a Spirit Christology that is at once biblical, orthodox, and tantalizingly creative. The result is
a new paradigm for systematic theology.'

Advocates of Spirit Christology believe that it is only when the relation of Jesus and the Spirit is seen to be as important as the traditional focus upon Jesus as the Word made flesh that a properly trinitarian perspective is achieved. The Christology from below that is so characteristic of Spirit Christologies, is also reflected in trinitarian studies. Spirit Christologists share the commitment, now widespread in contemporary trinitarian theology, to begin with the Biblical witness to the economic Trinity rather than with metaphysical philosophy. Del Colle states that the ‘turn to salvation history as the starting point for dogmatic reflection cannot be overestimated.’

From there we move to a consideration of the inner trinitarian relations, rather than the other way round.

Another area of agreement among the Spirit Christologists that we consider is their view that the traditional procession model of the Trinity (that the Father sends the Son, and together they send the Spirit) either needs to be revised or at least complemented by a trinitarian model that also explains how Christ is ‘of the Spirit’. Although criticism of traditional trinitarian thought is not reserved solely for the Western tradition, most of the current proponents of Spirit Christology come from this tradition, either as Roman Catholics or Protestants, and critique their own tradition from within. One of the impetuses for the formation of Spirit Christology was the response in the Western tradition to what is perceived as a lack of attention to the person and work of the Holy Spirit in Western thought. The dual emphasis on Logos Christology, at the expense of the role of the Spirit in the life of Christ and, for some, upon the Filioque (giving rise to the charge of subordinationism) has caused many theologians to re-think trinitarian and christological models focussing anew on the relation of Christ and the Spirit. Del Colle writes, ‘Spirit-christology addresses directly the charge that something is lacking in the church’s understanding and faith if in theory and praxis the basic Christological confession is not informed by pneumatology.’

Our four main interlocuters in Part One are all concerned to do two things: to give proper space to the Holy Spirit in Christology and trinitarian theology and to articulate not only the identity between Christ and the Spirit, but also the hypostatic distinction between them, thus avoiding modalism. For Del Colle this

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46 Del Colle, R., *Christ and the Spirit*, p.3.
requires a particular type of precision which, he argues, can be found in neo-

scholasticism.47

Having noted some areas of agreement, there are also some crucial differences
between contemporary Spirit Christologies. Del Colle and Coffey for example, are
keen to construct a trinitarian model while maintaining the Filioque whilst Weinandy
(to some extent), and Gunton (definitely) dispense with it and introduce a different
model of procession. The response to the Eastern Orthodox tradition is varied. So, for
example, while Del Colle bases his theology on Eastern insights, and sees the
tradition in a positive light, Weinandy takes issue with the predominant models of the
Trinity in both the Western and the Eastern traditions. This is something we will
consider further as we progress.

Ralph Del Colle: Christ and the Spirit

Del Colle first addresses the critique of the Western trinitarian tradition by Eastern
Orthodox theologians, particularly the charge of Christomonism and subordinationism
perceived to be enshrined within the Filioque. He goes on to consider the role of the
Spirit in the incarnation, the question of unity and distinction between the second and
third persons of the Trinity, the missions of the Spirit and the Son and the question of
distinguishing between them. One of his main concerns is that Spirit Christology is
related to some theory of trinitarian construction where the unity and distinction of the
divine persons has been thoroughly formulated.48 He addresses the question of how to
adhere to the maxim, omnia opera Trinitatis ad extra indivisa sunt - all the works of
the Trinity in the world are undivided - whilst at the same time articulating a proper
mission of the Holy Spirit. He writes, ‘[i]f the persons of the trinity cannot be
distinguished on the basis of the divine operation ad extra, where the relationis
oppositio does not function since the work of God is common to all three persons,
then how are the persons distinct in their respective missions, since they are an ad
extra manifestation of the divine working?’49

Working from and within the Roman Catholic tradition, Del Colle argues that
straightforward Thomist trinitarianism is not a sufficient foundation from which to

47 Del Colle, R., Christ and the Spirit, p.147.
develop a Spirit Christology. There have been, however, a number of neo-scholastic scholars whose interests were to develop the pneumatological aspects of incarnation and grace and whose work Del Colle draws on in order to weave together a Spirit Christology within the Roman Catholic tradition. He examines the work of Matthias Scheeben, Emile Mersch, Maurice de la Taille, Malachi Donnelly, Karl Rahner and David Coffey among others (although Coffey eventually goes beyond neo-scholasticism). While not agreeing with all their conclusions, Del Colle also engages with the work of James Dunn, Friedrich Schleiermacher, Paul Tillich and Geoffrey Lampe. In the first half of the book, he discusses the question of the missions of the Spirit and the Son and the notion of grace using the neo-scholastic rubric and engaging with neo-scholastic categories and nomenclature. In developing his Spirit Christology, he relies on the work of Coffey, whose work we will go on to consider. Del Colle and Coffey both argue that it is possible to formulate a Spirit Christology that is able to accommodate and answer some of the more complex trinitarian dogmatic issues, and to offer a Christology of both ‘incarnation and inspiration’.  

Del Colle identifies two major problems for an orthodox Spirit Christology in the Western tradition, namely,

1) How are the Son and the Holy Spirit adequately distinguished in the trinity so that the proper hypostatic character of the latter is fully revealed in the divine economy?

2) Where does the Holy Spirit figure in a Christological construction that is thoroughly pneumatological without confusing the third person with the Son/Word?

In the next two chapters we will consider the various ways in which Spirit Christology may answer these questions and the extent to which these answers are adequate.

Del Colle: East and West

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51 Del Colle, R., Christ and the Spirit, p.22.
Del Colle begins by comparing the Eastern trinitarian model to that of the West, considering whether the Orthodox model can be ‘grafted onto the Roman Catholic theological tree with its own long and revered tradition of Latin patrology and scholasticism.’ Del Colle values the Eastern tradition: the emphasis on the Son and the Spirit as ‘the two hands of the Father’, the equal weight given to Christology and pneumatology and the greater precedence given to the distinct hypostatic being of each of the trinitarian persons. A very common criticism among the proponents of Spirit Christology is that the traditional procession model of the Trinity has significantly attenuated our understanding of the Spirit as a distinct hypostatic being. This complaint is echoed by some Eastern Orthodox theologians. Del Colle cites and, to some extent, accepts Lossky’s critique of the Roman Catholic and Western tradition, namely his belief that the Filioque undermines the full equality of the Holy Spirit within the Trinity and that the Western church suffers from excessive Christocentrism. Del Colle compares Eastern and Western trinitarian theology and trinitarian models. In his view, the problems associated with distinguishing the Son and the Holy Spirit (so that the proper hypostatic character of the Spirit is fully revealed in the divine economy) do not arise within Orthodox pneumatology. With the Eastern emphasis on ‘relations of origin’, the Son and the Spirit are clearly differentiated in their relation to the Father. Because of the different paradigm of intra-trinitarian distinctions, this ‘lends a distinctly pneumatological cast to christology as well’ and therefore, Del Colle finds much within the Eastern tradition which is favourable to his own position, utilizing the Irenaean picture of the Son and the Spirit as ‘the two hands of the Father’ and summarizing the Orthodox position as he sees it, with a view to then formulating this within the Latin paradigm. The following is a summary of his position:

our original Irenaean theme (“the two hands of God”) is thoroughly played out in Orthodox christology and pneumatology. Neither hand is subordinate to the other and neither replaces the other. The Spirit was present in the Son’s incarnation, baptism, ministry, death, and resurrection and because of this is now sent by the risen and exalted Christ. The pentecostal Spirit, however, is

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34 Del Colle, R., *Christ and the Spirit*, p.22.
neither a substitute for Christ...nor merely the instrument of his presence....Rather, the Holy Spirit is the person of the trinity who “forms Christ within us and renders Him present to us,” and by preparing us for Christ “achieves in us the Parousia, the eternal coming and Presence of Jesus the Lord.” Without the Spiritus praesens the reality of the Christus praesens would be an exercise in pious imagination instead of the communication of the divine being.\textsuperscript{55}

Del Colle does not question the adequacy of the Eastern model for expressing the hypostatic individuation of the Son and the Spirit and favours the analogy on the basis that “[n]either hand is subordinate to the other and neither replaces the other”,\textsuperscript{56} thus emphasising the distinct missions of the Son and the Spirit. However, despite Del Colle’s endorsement of the ‘two hands’ analogy, it remains somewhat limited in relation to Spirit Christology and to all that we wish to say. The two hands analogy illustrates the distinctiveness and at the same time the togetherness of the Son and the Spirit, as well as communicating a sense of equality between them and their connectedness with the Father. However, it is not particularly communicative of the hypostatic individuation of the Spirit or of any real constitutive role of the Spirit in the person of Christ. Weinandy is more critical of the Eastern model, believing it to be based on Neoplatonic ideas rather than the biblical witness, resulting in the Spirit being ranked third in the hierarchy, so that the Spirit cannot be ‘perceived as the breath of the Father in whom the Word is spoken.’\textsuperscript{57} Coffey too is not convinced that the Eastern model of procession is an adequate alternative. With the two hands analogy, there is no room for a representation of the relationship of the Son and the Father mediated by the Spirit, which some are concerned to articulate.

Del Colle refers to the criticisms levelled at the Western tradition and perhaps especially at the Roman Catholic tradition by Orthodox theologians, namely the charge of excessive Christocentrism and the subordination of pneumatology to Christology. He cites Lossky in particular whose criticisms focus on the Western view of sanctification which Lossky believes is distorted by excessive Christomonism at the expense of a fully articulated pneumatological and trinitarian understanding of the

\textsuperscript{55} Del Colle, R., \textit{Christ and the Spirit}, p.27.
\textsuperscript{56} Del Colle, R., \textit{Christ and the Spirit}, p.27.
\textsuperscript{57} Weinandy, T., \textit{The Father’s Spirit}, p.77.
work of God in the life of the believer. Lossky’s criticism of the Roman Catholic Church is that the pentecostal aspect of the church is ‘relegated to an ancillary function vis-à-vis that of Christ.’\textsuperscript{58} He contends that in the Roman Catholic tradition, the church is understood as being taken up into the one hypostasis that is Christ, and therefore, the uniqueness and diversity of human beings, rather than being emphasized is absorbed by the concept of the uniformity of conforming to the one person of Christ. Lossky’s alternative view is that the members of the Church are united in Christ’s name, while maintaining their diversity, which in turn is sanctified by the Holy Spirit.\textsuperscript{59} Del Colle objects to Lossky’s specific criticism of the Roman Catholic church on the grounds that it is overdrawn, but it is interesting that Del Colle, Coffey, Weinandy and others all respond to this particular criticism concurring that the solution lies in a more robust pneumatology to balance and complement Christology. Whether Lossky’s particular point is defensible is not really the point here. Western theologians are expressing an unease with traditional ways of describing the Trinity, because they believe the models proffered endorse a hierarchical view of the Trinity in which invariably the Holy Spirit is depicted as the least, the lowest, or the last, contrary to the orthodox understanding of the Trinity. Moreover, in agreement with Lossky’s principle, the Western view is seen by some to have a deleterious affect on church praxis. For example, Miroslav Volf writes, that in his view, ‘a hierarchical notion of the Trinity ends up underwriting an authoritarian practice in the church.’\textsuperscript{60} As we will go on to see, whether the \textit{Filioque} is a contributing factor to this false ‘hierarchy’ is highly contested and Spirit Christologists may be found on both sides of the debate.

**A Catholic Pneumatological Christology**

As we have noted, although Del Colle values the Eastern tradition and wishes to incorporate certain aspects of this theological perspective, his task is not to abandon his own tradition but to work within it. One of the defining features of both his and Coffey’s theology is that they both wish to maintain the \textit{Filioque}, thus the constructions of the Trinity that they work with need to accommodate this. Notably,

\textsuperscript{58} Del Colle, R., \textit{Christ and the Spirit}, p.10.
\textsuperscript{59} Del Colle, R., \textit{Christ and the Spirit}, p.11.
\textsuperscript{60} Volf, M., \textit{After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity} (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1998), p.4.
this is in contrast to the theologians we shall consider in the next chapter, who see no need to retain it and indeed, view the Filioque as a stumbling block to constructing a fully articulated Spirit Christology. Del Colle and Coffey both base their Spirit Christologies on an essentially Augustinian model, whilst Gunton and others, as will be discussed below, are highly critical of Augustine and his legacy. Del Colle develops his argument in the following way. Having considered the Eastern position, he turns to the work of various Catholic theologians including Scheeben, Mersch, Donnelly and Rahner, discerning patterns in their work which collectively provide him with the basis for a Spirit Christology ‘within the broad scholastic tradition of Roman Catholic theology and one that is compatible with the pneumatological christology of the Orthodox tradition.’ Del Colle utilizes scholastic concepts and categories such as ‘processions, relations, properties, notions and appropriation’ and applies this to an understanding of the specific missions of the Son and the Spirit. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to consider Del Colle’s engagement with neoscholasticism in great detail. We will note, however, some of his adaptations of the scholastic model and some of his insights and conclusions vis-à-vis the missions of the Son and the Spirit, and in turn, look at the Spirit Christology of Coffey, whose work Del Colle refers to in the second half of his book.

Del Colle’s work takes into consideration the following dogmatic issues in relation to the missions of the Spirit and the Son and Spirit Christology, some of which are more specific to the Catholic tradition than others. He considers the task of differentiating between the invisible and visible missions, how that might be articulated and whether or not the invisible mission of sanctification and divine inhabitation is ascribed to the Holy Spirit or to the Son as well ‘and that by either appropriation or propriety.’ Secondly, he asks, ‘are the two temporal missions simultaneous or sequential?’ and thirdly, how is Christ, “of the Spirit”? He outlines four areas of enquiry relevant to the construction of a Spirit Christology: the importance of the hypostatic presence of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost as well as that of the hypostatic presence of the Son in the incarnation, the complementarity of the missions of the Son and Spirit and the coinherence of those two missions, the ‘propriety’ of the Spirit’s presence, in other words, ‘what is uniquely characteristic of

61 Del Colle, R., Christ and the Spirit, p.91.
62 For a fuller discussion of the scholastic paradigm see Del Colle, R., Christ and the Spirit pp.19-22.
64 Del Colle, R., Christ and the Spirit, p.28.
the Spirit’s ministry and person’, and from a Catholic perspective, the need for a correlation between ‘differentiation in missions and the differentiation in processions.’ On the question of the uniqueness of the Spirit’s ministry and person, Del Colle’s view is that in the Orthodox tradition this is adequately answered by the independent procession of the Spirit. By maintaining the *Filioque* of the Latin tradition, however, Del Colle has to find other ways of expressing this. His view is that in order for a Catholic theology to be able to articulate a distinct mission for the Spirit, there needs to be a reformulation of the traditional Roman Catholic conceptions of ‘grace’ and ‘appropriation’. The importance of Del Colle’s work is that it is not simply an exercise in ‘pious imagination’, but is very much focused on the question of how we may know God. How is it that we may say that humanity can know God and be drawn into the life of the Trinity through the missions of the Spirit and the Son? This is clearly a central missiological concern and we will consider this below. First, however, we will discuss Del Colle’s work on grace.

**Grace and the work of the Spirit**

Del Colle’s concern is that the traditional scholastic understanding of grace allows no room for the work of grace in the believer’s life to be recognised as a work of the Spirit, whereas his argument is that ‘the divine inhabitation of the just’ is precisely this. As he draws on the work of Coffey for this, we will refer to Coffey’s views as well in this section. Catholic theology maintains that because God is good in being and in act, his creation too, therefore, will be essentially good and oriented towards him. This is not to deny the reality or destructiveness of sin, but as Dabney puts it, the emphasis is on the yearning for God in human nature, which seeks fulfilment of being ‘by ascending to God through a receiving of an infusion of grace which the Father has provided in Christ through the church, an infusion beginning as operative grace progressing to habitual grace and leading finally to co-operative grace.’ Scholasticism does not define nature and grace as over against each other, but ‘rather orders them in an unbroken hierarchical relationship.’ He goes on to write,

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Its clear tendency, then, is to posit a fundamental continuum between nature and grace, the Creator and the created, creation and redemption; for it is a theology of nature fulfilled by grace. Thus the representative affirmation of medieval Scholasticism was: “Grace does not destroy, but rather presupposes and perfects nature”.

Del Colle is not prepared to abandon all the classifications of neo-scholasticism in respect of the notion of grace as he still values what he sees as the precision and clarity of scholastic nomenclature. So in order to work within this tradition, and its classifications, to describe a distinct proprium of the Holy Spirit, Del Colle utilises the work of other scholars to re-examine the concepts of created and uncreated grace, the threefold distinction of the grace of union, habitual grace and the grace of headship, efficient and formal causality and the Rahnerian concept of ‘quasi-formal causality’.

Del Colle begins with the work of Matthias Scheeben, and considers Scheeben’s ‘pneumatic theology of anointing’, with a view to demonstrating the full participation of the Spirit in every aspect of the economy of salvation. He identifies the first innovation of Scheeben’s as articulating the role of the Spirit in the forming of Christ the God-man, in other words, in Christology proper. This then enables us to view the Holy Spirit as a constituent agent in the person of Christ and consequently in his work of salvation. This has implications for the second innovation in the Catholic theology of grace: the work of the Trinity in humanity and the question of sanctification. The traditional Catholic understanding of the work of grace in the life of a believer is described by ‘created grace’. Created grace ‘emphasizes that the divine self-communication must be received by the creature under the conditions of the creature’s own metaphysical structure of being. The transformation of the sinner can only take place within the contingent realities of the human condition hence, ‘created grace.’ In neoscholasticism, the relationship between the divine persons and the creature is thought to be possible through ‘efficient causality and created grace’, meaning that ‘the creature knows God primarily through the created effects of divine working’ but that this divine working is ‘common to the entire Godhead and in which

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the individuality of the divine persons is not discernible.’\textsuperscript{68} In other words, there is no specific place for the work of the Holy Spirit in the divine habitation of the just. Del Colle, on the other hand, contends that we can ascribe a proper mission to the Holy Spirit in precisely this work of God in humanity. Christ and the Spirit work together in all aspects of salvation.

This linkage neither confuses the persons nor obscures their presence. Both Christ and the Holy Spirit fully stand out as missions of divine revelation and salvation and are intrinsically related in the very event that marks out the particularity of the Christian gospel. If \textit{Christus pro nobis} lies at the center of Christian creedal confession, then Christ is for us and our salvation only through the agency and power of the Holy Spirit. Such is the case because Christmas and Easter are as pneumatically informed saving mysteries as is Pentecost.\textsuperscript{69}

Del Colle adopts Scheeben’s understanding of the work of the Spirit; the Spirit is not present through ‘gifts’ but present in the creature ‘as hypostatic identity’. The Spirit therefore is to be viewed as present not just as a ‘donation’ but as a person. All the workings of grace in the life of believers can and should be ascribed to the one person of the Spirit. If we express this in neo-Scholastic terminology,

the Spirit is not only the efficient and exemplary cause of our sanctification through the mediation of sanctifying or created grace, but also the formal cause in terms of the divine giftedness (pledge of the divine love between Father and Son) and indwelling – i.e., uncreated grace. This proper or formal indwelling is not separable from union with Christ, for it makes us sons and daughters in the Son.\textsuperscript{70}

The second innovation therefore is that Scheeben and those following him argued that the real basis for the differentiation of the work of the Spirit lies in the explication of the work of grace in the life of a believer as the mission of the Spirit.

\textsuperscript{68} Del Colle, R., \textit{Christ and the Spirit}, p.92.
\textsuperscript{69} Del Colle, R., \textit{Christ and the Spirit}, p.48.
\textsuperscript{70} Del Colle, R., \textit{Christ and the Spirit}, p.44.
Del Colle develops these ideas in relation to the Thomistic categories of causality basing his argument on the work of Mersch and Rahner. The concept of causality and the distinctions drawn by scholastics between the different types of causality are used to describe the work of God in humanity; in other words, to explain how the human being receives or is infused with the grace of God. Del Colle articulates a fully pneumatological understanding of the different workings of grace categorized in scholasticism in respect of the hypostatic union and the sanctification of individuals, with a view to drawing parallels between the two, and thereby linking the work of God in the human nature of Christ with and in our own human nature. It is beyond the scope of this chapter and outside our interests to rehearse Del Colle’s argument in detail, so we will simply highlight some of his conclusions. Having drawn on Scheeben’s view of the Spirit, Del Colle refers to Mersch, and his emphasis on the filial nature of grace which is a dominant theme in Del Colle’s work.

The Holy Spirit is an agent in the constitution of the God-human through the act of the incarnation and the sanctification of the assumed nature. Christ is the bearer and sender of the Spirit in the saving events signified from Christmas through Pentecost. Finally, Christians are joined to Christ and share in his saving work through the Spirit, who is spirated and sent…[Mersch’s] insight that the event, act, or state of grace must be ‘filial’ in character implies that the Christian experience of God is itself trinitarian.

The indwelling of the Holy Spirit is linked with Christ’s presence and efficacy in the hypostatic union. It is the ‘overflow of the Spirit in Christ…that is the predicate for the gift of the Spirit to believers. Or, in the language of grace, Christ’s habitual grace (gratia habitualis) becomes the grace of headship (gratia capitis) for the members of

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71 Del Colle follows Mersch in the use of ‘quasi-formal causality’ to describe the nature of the working of the Spirit in human nature, both Christ’s and ours. He writes, ‘[b]y quasi-formal causality Mersch means the actuation of being that does not communicate form (as in formal causality) but does impart subsistence. So, with respect to the hypostatic union, the Divine Word as the assuming agent formally actuates the subsistence of the human nature in the divine personality of the Word. As a quasi-formal cause the divine action does not constitute the human nature per se – this would be an exercise in efficient causality – but it does actuate and constitute the union so that the human nature is in fact the humanity of God vis-à-vis the person of the Son. In the same manner Christ through sanctifying grace quasi-formally constitutes the church as his mystical body. The church subsists in him so that one can say that Christ and his mystical body constitute the whole single Christ. In a very real sense, the church as mystical body is a sort of prolongation of the incarnation.’ p.51.

his mystical body (their own sanctifying grace).”\textsuperscript{73} Del Colle concludes that, ‘the revised model is that created grace is the \textit{consequence} and not the basis of the presence of divine persons, based as it is on the metaphysical reconstruction of the divine-human relations exemplified by “created actuation by uncreated act” or “quasi-formal causality.”’\textsuperscript{74} In this way, the work of the hypostatic identity of the Holy Spirit comes to the fore, as we are no longer reliant on the concept of created grace for the notion of the divine inhabitation of the just.\textsuperscript{75}

Del Colle also refers to Coffey. Coffey also argues that the work of grace should be attributed to the one work of the Spirit. In his article, ‘The Gift of the Holy Spirit’ Coffey writes,

\begin{quote}
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\text{[i]t is the contention of this essay that the concept of divine formal causality in the context of the Blessed Trinity is patient of still further development, in which it can be shown that the works of this causality (of which there are, and can be, only two) must in each instance be attributed to \textit{one divine person alone}, so that sanctifying grace not only is, but must be, the Gift precisely of the Holy Spirit. It is further contended that this task must be undertaken if we are both to avoid a unitarian or only nominally trinitarian conception of grace and to attain a genuinely Trinitarian conception of it.}\textsuperscript{76}
\end{quote}

Coffey makes a decisive move away from scholasticism in his later work and it is his work on Spirit Christology that leads him away from the scholastic paradigm. In his article ‘A Proper Mission of the Holy Spirit’ he discusses the Rahnerian concept of ‘quasi-formal causality’ which Del Colle relies upon as an explanatory principle for the work of the Spirit in humanity. Coffey writes,

\begin{quote}
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\text{[h]istorically, it was the development of the idea of a divine formal causality (by which God communicates \textit{Himself} to creatures), as distinct from divine efficient causality (by which He posits in existence something other than \textit{Himself}), that led Rahner to his great synthesizing idea of the self-}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{73} Del Colle, R., \textit{Christ and the Spirit}, p.77.
\textsuperscript{74} Del Colle, R., \textit{Christ and the Spirit} p.92, (my italics).
\textsuperscript{75} Del Colle, R., \textit{Christ and the Spirit} p.92.
communication of God, and later in expounding this idea he had recourse to this scholastic category. But it was like a ladder, which, having given access to a new high point, could be kicked away, for the theology of the self-communication of God does not require it...No-one needs to be told that the day of scholastic theology is over, and so a discussion today centering on quasi-formal causality would be regarded in most circles as irrelevant.77

Similarly, in his article, ‘The Theandric Nature of Christ’ where he offers a revised understanding of the hypostatic union based on the doctrine of enhypostasia, he obviates the concept of habitual accidental grace altogether, on the understanding that the human nature of Christ is divinized by the ‘grace of union’78 again unifying the concept of grace under the work of the Spirit. In contrast, Del Colle ultimately views the philosophical and linguistic distinctions of scholasticism as useful, precise and clarificatory. Coffey takes a different view in respect of scholasticism, but is still concerned to explicate a Catholic Spirit Christology. The key point here however is that both Del Colle and Coffey unify the concept of grace in a believer’s life under the work or ‘proper mission’ of the Spirit, both in the gift of grace to humanity by God and in the reception of that same grace by humanity.

**Del Colle’s Spirit Christology**

Del Colle’s Spirit Christology depends on maintaining the Filioque. Crucially, for Del Colle, the Filioque is precisely the theological principle by which we are able to root pneumatology firmly in Christology, and link the work of the Spirit in humanity through Christ. The Filioque safeguards the concept of the filial nature of the work of the Spirit and the sending of the Spirit by the Son is seen to be crucial in this regard. Therefore, Del Colle continues to maintain that the work of the Spirit is in some sense posterior to that of the Son, and that there is a way in which the work of the Spirit is sequential to the work of the Son. The question of the Filioque will not be resolved easily. Those who would retain the Filioque tend to rely on the sending of the Spirit by Jesus in John 20:22 and the sending of the Spirit at Pentecost as a subsequent event

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to the sending of the Son in the incarnation. Those who see it as less important or even redundant focus on the mutual sending of the Son and the Spirit as depicted in the Lukan accounts (cf. Luke 1:35, 3:22, 4:1, 4:18). There are Scriptural arguments for both positions. Nevertheless, in the light of the role of the Spirit in the Synoptic Gospels there are calls among some contemporary Western theologians to abandon the *Filioque* on the grounds that it is in danger of diminishing the role of the Spirit and communicating a passivity about his work. Does the *Filioque* fail to communicate the sending work that is unique to the person of the Spirit and depict the Spirit as only the one who is sent? If so, is that a lesser role? Does it fail to account adequately for the Spirit as the giver as well as the gift? We will examine, but not resolve, some of these questions in due course.

The second Catholic doctrine that Del Colle believes needs to be revised is that of ‘appropriation’ as he views this doctrine as standing in the way of understanding a proper mission of the Holy Spirit. Appropriation is ‘a mode of predication in which the activity of God *ad extra* that is common to all three persons can on the basis of a similarity between the activity and the property of a person be non-exclusively attributed to one of the persons.’

Thus, in the traditional scholastic tradition the theory of appropriation was adequate for distinguishing the prominence of any one of the three persons of the Trinity in the economy and meant that all three persons are involved in the work of God through ‘common efficient causality’. However, Scheeben queried whether appropriation theory alone was adequate to express the christological and pneumatological missions. If the incarnation belongs to the Son exclusively, then what are the implications of this for the Holy Spirit?

This theme is also taken up by Coffey in his article, ‘A Proper Mission of the Holy Spirit’ where he argues that the West has found it hard to accept a proper mission of the Spirit. He, like Del Colle, claims that the ‘normative theological axiom “*omnia opera Trinitas sunt indivisa*”’ seems to stand inexorably in the way of a proper mission, the problem being that the West allows a mission of the Holy Spirit

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80 Henri Blocher in his essay ‘Immanence and Transcendence in Trinitarian Theology’ makes the point that this maxim mostly comes in its truncated form and omits the second part which continues, *servato discrimine et ordine personarum* (the distinction and order of the Persons being preserved). Vanhoozer, K.J. (ed.) *The Trinity in a Pluralistic Age* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1997), 104-123, p.120. In other words, the maxim should be quoted in full to safeguard forms of modalism. This is the problem that Coffey identifies.

by appropriation, but not a \textit{proper} mission. For Coffey this is not an acceptable solution. Appropriation puts all three persons on the \textit{same real level} as it only singles out a particular person of the Trinity in order of predication. In other words, this could just be a subtle form of modalism. Coffey claims that this fails to express the role of the Holy Spirit in the life of Christ, at Pentecost, and in the life of the individual believer and the Church, and is therefore a \textquote{reduction of the content of the deposit of faith}.\footnote{Coffey, D., \textit{A Proper Mission}, p.228.}

Del Colle addresses this issue via a discussion of the difference and relations between the \textit{Christus praesens} and the \textit{Spiritus praesens}. He argues that whereas in one sense we cannot separate the two, that they are coinherent, thus adhering to the indivisibility of the work of the Trinity, nevertheless, it is necessary to differentiate the two to uphold the integrity of the distinct persons. He writes,

\begin{quote}
the communication of divine life is predicated on the temporal missions of both the Son and the Spirit. This means quite logically that the mission of Christ in the incarnation – the most obvious example of a proper mission of a divine person – is necessarily complemented by a proper mission of the Holy Spirit. While it is true that the Holy Spirit is sent \textquote{after the Word}…, it is equally true that faith’s reception of the Christological mission is only in the Holy Spirit. (1 Cor. 12.3).\footnote{Del Colle, R., \textit{Christ and the Spirit}, pp.28-9.}
\end{quote}

Gunton reviews Del Colle’s work favourably. First he notes that Del Colle’s proposal is a welcome move against the reductionism of some Spirit Christologies where pneumatological considerations act as a substitute for the filiological relation of Jesus to the Father, rather than serving to enhance it. Moreover, in Gunton’s view, Del Colle’s work signals a \textquote{reconciliation of traditions} echoing, as it does, the much earlier work of the English puritan, John Owen, among others, as well as being a move towards Orthodox trinitarian theology. His own critique of Del Colle’s work is put in the form of two questions. First, he asks of the Augustinian tradition, upon which Del Colle relies, whether \textquote{the conception of the Spirit’s function as primarily or largely unitive and of his action largely in terms of indwelling} is adequate.\footnote{Gunton, C., \textit{Review of Christ and the Spirit}, p.472.}
Gunton’s own view, as we will enumerate in a later chapter, is that the Augustinian model of the Trinity diminishes the personhood of the Spirit. Thus his critique of Del Colle is that something more needs to be said about the ‘transcendence’ of the third person.\textsuperscript{85} Gunton’s own response to this is to abandon the Filioque, ascribing a less ‘passive’ role to the Spirit, who then is not defined solely by his unitive function. He also emphasizes the eschatological role of the Spirit in the economy of salvation. This important aspect of the Spirit’s work is certainly something that is developed more in Gunton’s work than in Del Colle’s, and one which we will discuss in Chapter Two. Gunton’s second question of Del Colle is in respect of the principle \textit{omnia opera Trinitas indivisa sunt}. As we have noted, Del Colle is concerned to adhere to this maxim, while also emphasizing a proper mission of the Spirit. In Gunton’s opinion, we should say that the external actions of the Trinity are inseparable, but not bind ourselves to the indivisibility principle. He also questions whether, despite Del Colle’s protestations that we should adhere to this principle, he has not in fact, through his work on Spirit Christology, already begun to undermine his own principle, clearly earning Gunton’s approval who adds, ‘and for that we can be most grateful.’\textsuperscript{86}

As Gunton acknowledges, Del Colle is fully aware of the dangers of modalism in relation to Spirit Christology and discusses in detail the issue of how to articulate a distinct mission for both the Spirit and the Son without slipping into a modalist way of thinking. Del Colle notes that part of the problem that we encounter is that the Christian experience of grace includes ‘coterminous reference to both Christ and the Spirit without at the same time providing an adequate theological construct that is sufficiently able to distinguish the two.’\textsuperscript{87} The key question therefore is whether the risen humanity of Christ is a function of the Holy Spirit or whether the Holy Spirit is a function of the risen Christ? His answer is that we must not conflate the presence of the Spirit into that of the Son causing the Spirit to become nothing more than the presence of Christ, or conflate the person of the Son into that of the Spirit. Rather, we must distinguish between the two, at the same time demonstrating that they are inseparable. Gunton’s caution, therefore, that the emphasis must be on the

\textsuperscript{85} Gunton, C., Review of \textit{Christ and the Spirit} p.472.
\textsuperscript{86} Gunton, C., Review of \textit{Christ and the Spirit}, p.472.
inseparability of the missions of the Son and the Spirit and not the indivisibility is already addressed by Del Colle.

Del Colle’s work is a detailed and rigorous account of the convergent and coherent, and yet distinct persons and missions of the Spirit and the Son. It is an enormously valuable foundation for any work on Spirit Christology, seeking to take a broad view and incorporate work from a range of traditions, and is a strong and persuasive basis for a Spirit Christology within the Roman Catholic tradition. His view is that the missions of the Spirit and the Son are at once simultaneous and sequential, which is a necessary view if we maintain the Filioque. On the one hand we want to say that the Spirit’s mission did not start only at Pentecost when the Son’s mission ended because the Spirit was active in the life and mission of Christ before that time. On the other hand, we must acknowledge that Pentecost ushered in a new age of the Spirit.  

This view is not always shared by others as we will go on to note in Part Two.

Del Colle’s project is not only to articulate a proper mission of the Spirit but to relate that mission to the humanity of Christ in the hypostatic union or in other words to relate it to Christology proper, in order to form a Spirit Christology. In addition to this he seeks to relate the mission of the Spirit to our humanity while at the same time differentiating between the humanity of Christ and our own. He writes, ‘In this way the proposal remains within the scope of Catholic orthodoxy and on the speculative level requires that the construct be related explicitly to the theology of the intra-trinitarian relations.’ Del Colle’s work serves as a valuable resource, not only because of his rigour in answering some of the problems associated with Spirit Christology, but also because of his emphasis on the reaching out of God to the world in the Incarnation and the gift of the Spirit. Del Colle’s theology has a decidedly missiological slant to it, emphasising as he does the transforming work of the Son and the Spirit in humanity. Throughout his work, he seeks to articulate how we might express the distinct but inseparable roles of the Son and the Spirit in what he calls ‘created reality’. In this final section on his work, I summarise the topics he raises at the end of *Christ and the Spirit* in respect of the yield of Spirit Christology and the human sphere. His concluding comments will then act as a springboard for a more

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detailed discussion of Spirit Christology and mission, as in the course of the thesis, I explicate the themes that arise from his work.

**The Yield of Spirit Christology**

First Del Colle reiterates the importance of his method, that of starting with the ascending Christologies in the New Testament; the work of Christ and the Spirit in the economy, to shed light on the innertrinitarian life. Secondly, in the explication of the roles of the Son and the Spirit in relation to human concerns he stresses the centrality of both the filiological and pneumatological dimensions of the divinity of the incarnate Christ. Jesus is both the Son in relation to the Father and the anointed one, who in his humanity, therefore, has both a mediatorial and an exemplary role for the church, revealing both the mystagogical and apostolic ‘dimensions of the divine election of humanity in Christ.’

Here Del Colle demonstrates his commitment to both Logos and Spirit Christology; one is not to the exclusion of the other. Moreover, with his emphasis on the distinction of the *Christus praesens* and the *Spiritus praesens* he affirms the mutually dependent roles of Christ and the Spirit in the church and the world while preserving the uniqueness of their temporal missions. Thus worship, witness and the knowledge of God is also understood in both Christological and pneumatological terms.

He then turns to contextual issues of culture and human experience, emancipatory concerns of social praxis and a just society, and the question of religious pluralism, with the aim of exploring whether Spirit Christology provides an accessible dogmatic model to address these issues, as ‘the Church’s witness to Christ and the Spirit is the foundation for its own mission and evangelization.’

His first section on human experience and culture explores the crucial question of how a theology of the Spirit in relation to human experience avoids the risk of being reduced merely to anthropology. How do we speak of the relationship of the Holy Spirit and the human spirit and the nature of religious experience without reducing pneumatology to anthropology? He also questions, in the relation of God to the world in the missions of the Son and the Spirit, who might we say are the agents of

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transformation? Is it Christ, the Spirit, the human? These are key questions in respect of Spirit Christology and mission. Del Colle gives a brief summary of how a theology of culture might be developed in the Spirit Christologies of Friedrich Schleiermacher, Paul Tillich and Tom Driver, but it is his own conclusions regarding Spirit Christology and culture that are significant.

In order to develop his theological anthropology he appeals to the work of Walter Kasper and Franz Jozef van Beeck, S.J. On the grounds that a theological anthropology should begin theologically and not anthropologically, he develops van Beeck’s threefold relation of the anthropological to the christological in his (van Beeck’s) language of conversion using the rhetoric of ‘inclusion, obedience and hope.’ The process begins with a series of partial discernments of the risen Christ (inclusion), moves to the conversion of those discernments to his presidency (obedience), and finally culminates in a christological confession of Jesus in ultimate terms and in reference to the totality of meaning (hope). For van Beeck, this is also a pneumatological process. Those who come to name Jesus as Lord do so in the Spirit, thus the Christian is one who in confessing Christ ‘speaks in the Spirit.’ The following quote is Del Colle’s account of the roles of Christ, the Spirit and the human in the relation of Spirit Christology to cultural context.

The strictly christological mission opens up the possibility for the inclusion of human and cultural concerns into the divine/human relation of which the incarnation is the basis. The Holy Spirit is the agent of that inclusion, first in the life and ministry of Jesus and now through the agency of the risen Christ who with the Father is the sender of the Spirit. Van Beeck’s accounting of being “inspired” in worship and witness is focused on the process by which human concerns are accepted, converted, and transfigured by the eschatological gift of the Spirit. This process distinguishes each of the agents: Christ, the Spirit, and believers.

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This threefold model of agency will form the basis of our model for mission. ‘Jesus Christ, crucified and risen, is the human ground in God for the ultimate transfiguration of created reality.’ The Spirit who is both the Spirit of Sonship in Christ and in believers, is sent so that ‘the agency of the risen Lord is all-embracing and fundamental’ and ‘so that humanity may be fully pervaded by the mystery of God and…may fully commune with God.’ The Holy Spirit then is the agent of inclusion, conversion and transfiguration, the means by which the human is united to Christ, and the means by which the inculcated and historically specific concerns of humanity are transformed. Human agency however, is also significant. Human beings are first the object of divine salvation, but also ‘those who are anointed with the Spirit even as Jesus was so anointed. As bearers of the Spirit they enter into this process of inclusion, conversion, and transfiguration, in a fundamental sense through their identification with Christ in baptism…and in a processive and discrete sense through their immersion into and life in the Spirit.’ Through this we will develop a transformational model of conversion that will be applied to all aspects of life.

Finally, in this section, Del Colle makes the distinction between Spirit Christology and Christic-pneumatology, making it clear that his position is aligned with the former and not the latter. With Spirit Christology, the christological dimension is determinative ‘of the interaction between the changing human context and the divine’ and with a Christic-pneumatology, it is simply descriptive. Del Colle asks which is ‘best able to answer the implications of a changing and pluralistic context for dogmatic reflection.’ This is a key question and one that we will return to in the course of the discussion as there are those who argue, contrary to Del Colle, for the pre-eminence of the Spirit in mission, precisely on the basis that it is a better starting point for a pluralist society. There are those who reject trinitarian models that give pre-eminence to Christ and/or are based on any form of sequentialism that is evident in Del Colle’s scheme, based as it is on the Filioque. In addition, there are those who take issue with Del Colle’s view of Christ as the one who justifies and the Spirit as the one who sanctifies. Yong, for example, argues that Spirit Christology allows us to view soteriology as overtly pneumatological from beginning to end and contrasts his application of Spirit Christology to theologies that ‘tend to bifurcate the work of the Spirit and Christ’, where ‘Christ provides salvation objectively in

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justification and the Spirit accomplishes salvation subjectively in sanctification as in the case of Protestant scholasticism.\textsuperscript{99} From his perspective therefore, Del Colle might be viewed as not having gone far enough in articulating a fully relational, mutual, and reciprocal understanding of the Son and the Spirit.\textsuperscript{100} These are all topics to which we will return.

Del Colle is clear, however, in his emphasis on the pre-eminence of Christ, but always with the work of the Spirit in view. The particularity and the proclamation of the crucified and risen Jesus is central to the evangelical narrative. Nevertheless, he sees this neither in a totalitarian sense, as a truth that forecloses meaning, nor as a homogenizing principle, eclipsing diversity.

We conclude, then, that it is Jesus Christ, whose identity is still eschatologically outstanding and therefore does not entirely foreclose the meaning of that identity in continued Christian confession, who is both of the Spirit (the basis of Spirit Christology) and the sender of the Spirit. He it is who now invites and seals the many with the diversity of all their concerns in the return of all things to God who will be all in all (1 Cor. 15:34).\textsuperscript{101}

As we proceed, we will develop all these themes in a theology of mission: the role of experience in relation to the Spirit and Christ; the process of conversion including an ethical dimension and obedience to Christ; the nature of the proclamation of Christ in a pluralist world; the relationship of Logos Christology to Spirit Christology; the roles of the Son and the Spirit; human agency; human beings as the one anointed with the Spirit for witness; the particular and the universal; unity and diversity.

In his second section, emancipatory concerns of social praxis and a just society, Del Colle explores the tension between history and eschatology in relation to the temporal missions of the Son and the Spirit. ‘Both the Son and the Spirit actualize their missions historically in the power of eschatological fulfilment.’\textsuperscript{102} The mission of the Son is rooted in the history of Jesus of Nazareth, but this history has a future eschatological dimension as we await the coming again of the Son of man in glory.\textsuperscript{103}

\textsuperscript{99} Yong, A., \textit{The Spirit Poured Out On All Flesh}, p.82.
\textsuperscript{100} Yong, A., \textit{The Spirit Poured Out On All Flesh}, pp.110-111.
\textsuperscript{101} Del Colle, \textit{Christ and the Spirit}, p.206.
\textsuperscript{102} Del Colle, \textit{Christ and the Spirit}, p.207.
\textsuperscript{103} Del Colle, \textit{Christ and the Spirit}, p.208.
In the resurrection, history takes a turn, so to speak, surpassing history in eschatological fulfilment, although even here there exists a temporal/historical tension between the risen Christ and the parousial Christ, at least in the ecclesial witness to Christ with its implications for sanctification (1 Jn. 3:2). Christ still has a future, one that is inseparable from the Body, the church, and from the eschatological renewal of all creation.\textsuperscript{104}

Although there is no incarnation of the Spirit, the Spirit’s involvement in the mission of the Son and in forming the church also exemplifies the tension between history and eschatology. However, here Del Colle reverses the order. In the Spirit’s mission at Pentecost, ‘the Spirit as gift and ecstatic love of God (Rom 5:5) intensifies the tension between the eschatological already and the historical not yet.’\textsuperscript{105} The history of the church is the history of Christian witness and mission, made possible by the eschatological gift of the Spirit. ‘The witness and deeds of the church in mission are human actions that participate in the agency of the risen Christ through the energizing power of the Holy Spirit.’\textsuperscript{106} The liberating and perfecting work of the Spirit for creation is something we will go on to discuss in later chapters.

Finally, in a very short section, Del Colle raises the issue of religious pluralism and dialogue but fails to develop this in any way. He briefly comments on the question of how we might understand the work of the Spirit outside the church, proposing that as well as speaking of the work of the Spirit in Christ we can also speak of the Spirit’s work ‘in creation, Israel, the secular order, and in other religions even as we still confess the unique work in Jesus Christ.’\textsuperscript{107} However, he takes this no further. (In his article, ‘The Holy Spirit: Presence, Power, Person’ he takes up this theme in a different way arguing against immanentist accounts of the Spirit in the world.\textsuperscript{108} Despite various impersonal terms for the Spirit, i.e. fire, wind, breath, Del Colle argues for the understanding of the Spirit as person and as gift and not simply as an immanent presence in creation.) His comments on dialogue with those of other faiths are similarly brief. He simply advocates being led by the Spirit in self-

\begin{footnotes}
\item[104]\textsuperscript{104} Del Colle, \textit{Christ and the Spirit}, p.208.
\item[105]\textsuperscript{105} Del Colle, \textit{Christ and the Spirit}, p.208.
\item[107]\textsuperscript{107} Del Colle, \textit{Christ and the Spirit}, p.212.
\end{footnotes}
emptying, humility and wisdom. I will go on to explore Del Colle’s themes in
greater detail: the idea of the church in mission as participating in the agency of the
risen Christ, empowered by the Spirit, and what it means for a model of mission to be
truly dialogical.

**David Coffey: The Return Model**

As we have noted, Coffey’s trinitarian return model, on which Del Colle relies, is
particularly interesting for a theology of mission in which we stress the coinherent
missions of the Son and the Spirit, and in which we wish to articulate a distinct but
inseparable role of the Spirit. Not only does Coffey emphasise the reaching out of
God to the world in Christ and the Spirit, but he also highlights the return of humanity
to the Father in Christ, which for Coffey, is the proper mission of the Holy Spirit, and
through which we becomes the sons and daughters of God. Thus the return model
relates both to the inner-trinitarian life and to the work of God in the world.

The return model begins with the idea that ‘the Son goes forth from the Father
and returns to him in the power of his love, the Holy Spirit, which he, the Son, has
made his own.’ Further, it includes the reception of grace by humanity and the
return of humanity to God. Del Colle comments on Coffey’s work, ‘[o]nly if the
Father and Son mutually bestow the Spirit on one another is there a basis in the
immanent trinity for this economic manifestation of the divine persons, wherein
pneumatology is the key for the return of all things to God.’

The return of all things to God in the Spirit is crucial to a pneumatological model of mission and one that we
will return to in later chapters. Del Colle notes at the time of writing *Christ and the
Spirit* that Coffey does not use the term ‘Spirit Christology’. Although this is true of
Coffey’s earlier work, his later work, developed in various articles and culminating in
his book *Deus Trinitas* becomes a fully articulated Spirit Christology, which he also
reiterates and summarizes in “*Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?*”
**Some Basic Questions for Pneumatology.**

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110 Coffey, D., ‘Spirit Christology and the Trinity’ in Hinze, B., & Dabney, D. Lyle (eds) *Advents of the
Spirit*, p.326.
111 Del Colle, *Christ and the Spirit*, p.103.
112 Coffey, D., “*Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?*” *Some Basic Questions for
Coffey is critical of the Western model, but unlike Del Colle, he extends these criticisms to the Eastern model. On the one hand he sees a need to balance the procession model and the Filioque with a corresponding role for the Spirit (although he continues to view the Filioque as ‘an essential element of Christian faith.’)\textsuperscript{113} On the other, he wants a model that will guard against any charge of Monopatrism. His criticism of the Eastern model is over the issue of procession. Coffey claims that the Eastern view of the Spirit proceeding ultimately from the Father alone is a ‘one-sided’ view. His alternative proposal is that there needs to be a balance and mutuality encompassing and including the three persons of the Trinity in any explanation of origin and relation. He writes, ‘a more balanced statement would be that “the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and receives from the Son.”’\textsuperscript{114} His project is to formulate a trinitarian model that will address the questions of both the origins of the Son and the Holy Spirit and the manner of operation of the Trinity in the economy; a task for which he claims the traditional models are inadequate.\textsuperscript{115} Coffey’s method, like that of Del Colle, is to begin with the biblical ‘doctrine’ of the Trinity, proceed to the immanent trinity and from there to the economic trinity. For this, Coffey places great weight on the beginning of Jesus’ life and ministry and the Lucan material that relates to Jesus’ conception through the power of the Spirit, his baptism, his anointing by the Father with the Spirit and his ministry.\textsuperscript{116} He describes his theology as ‘an economic application of St. Augustine’s understanding of the Holy Spirit as the mutual love of the Father and the Son, the bond of love in the Trinity.’\textsuperscript{117}

Coffey argues that the procession model has become the dominant trinitarian model based on a simple inversion of the experience of salvation; that humanity comes to the Father, through the Spirit and in Christ as expressed in Ephesians 2.18.

The Christian experience in the Spirit of Christ as the saving revelation of God – Spirit, Son, Father – is inverted in an effort to understand the nature and being of the triadic identity in God – Father, Son, Spirit. This leads to the traditional filioquist model of intra-trinitarian relations. To summarize, the givenness of the missions of the Son and the Spirit lead one to infer that the

\textsuperscript{113} Coffey, D., \textit{Did You Receive}, p.43.
\textsuperscript{114} Coffey, D., \textit{Deus Trinitas}, p.5.
\textsuperscript{115} Coffey, D., \textit{Deus Trinitas}, p.4.
\textsuperscript{116} Coffey, D., \textit{Deus Trinitas}, p. 105.
\textsuperscript{117} Coffey, D., \textit{Deus Trinitas}, p.148.
Son proceeds from the Father and the Holy Spirit from both the Father and the Son.\textsuperscript{118}

His contention is that theologians have reversed the epistemological order of how humanity is ‘assimilated’ into the life of the Trinity to form the traditional taxis of Father, Son, Spirit, but that there are in fact two taxes in the gospels (if we take the synoptic Gospels into account as well as Johannine Christology) and that a trinitarian model needs to be faithful to both.

Coffey’s innovations in terms of Catholic theology, therefore, are in his method and his Christology. Coffey draws the distinction between ‘ascending’ and ‘descending’ Christologies, Synoptic and Johannine respectively, and between the ‘functional divinity’ of Christ associated with the biblical understanding of Christ’s divinity and what he calls ‘ontological divinity’ that which was developed later by the patristic church.\textsuperscript{119} His particular interest is to look at the synoptic tradition in order to explain the work of the Spirit in the humanity of Christ, and from there to develop a Spirit Christology. He writes,

… for the synoptic tradition (as distinct from the Johannine) sees the Holy Spirit bestowed directly on Jesus by the Father in an act that brings him (or his humanity, as we must say in the light of later knowledge) into existence as the unique (“beloved”) Son of God. Here the taxis is Father – Holy Spirit – Son. There is no way in which this can be explained in terms of an inversion of the traditional taxis.\textsuperscript{120}

Coffey, in line with other proponents of Spirit Christology, sees Jesus as first recipient and then sender of the Spirit upon the church, in the model of an ‘ascending, synoptic Christology.’\textsuperscript{121} The key passages of Scripture for Coffey are Luke 1.26-38 and Matt. 1.18-25, the bestowal of the Spirit not just at the baptism of Jesus but at his conception being crucial. His aim is to construct a trinitarian model that will explain the two taxes in the economic Trinity of Father, Son, Spirit and Father, Spirit, Son in

\textsuperscript{118} Del Colle, R., \textit{Christ and the Spirit} p.101.
\textsuperscript{119} Del Colle, R., \textit{Christ and the Spirit} p.99.
\textsuperscript{120} Coffey, D., \textit{Deus Trinitas}, p.36.
\textsuperscript{121} Coffey, D., \textit{Deus Trinitas}, p.4.
the incarnation. Coffey argues that it is at the incarnation that the Spirit is given ‘without measure’, first to Christ, who himself then becomes the sender of the Spirit.

This is the basis for Coffey’s return model in which the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and receives from the Son, but also has a distinct role in the Trinity, of returning the Son to the Father, as the very love between them. Del Colle points out that it is in keeping with Augustine’s model of the Spirit as the ‘bond of love’ and therefore consonant with a Latin perspective, but is also more ‘conducive to an Orthodox understanding of the intra-trinitarian distinctions because it starts with the divine persons.’ Del Colle summarizes Coffey’s bestowal model as follows:

[the Father loves and bestows that love on the Son, with the Son answering in love to the Father. The Spirit as the mutual love between Father and Son exists differently as person than either the Father or the Son, the Spirit not being an active agent of love but love itself. This corresponds to the notional attribute of the Spirit in the procession model that is strictly passive in nature – i.e., passive spiration. The two models complement one another, and in regard to a comprehensive doctrine of the trinity the bestowal model completes the procession model by emphasizing the self-enclosure and self-sufficiency of the trinity vis-à-vis the mutuality of its relations, mediated by the person of the Holy Spirit, by which the Father loves the Son and the Son loves the Father. In other words, as Coffey claims, it gives meaning and purpose to the procession of the Holy Spirit, who is breathed forth not into a void but in the mutuality of love terminating “at the Father (in receiving the bestowal of the Son’s love), from whom it began (in generating the Son).”

This model therefore, is clearly a development of the traditional procession model rather than an alternative. Coffey claims that his new model complements the older one, accounting for aspects of the divine economy that are not ‘sufficiently explained by the inherited paradigm.’ Coffey’s trinitarian theology then is the basis for his argument for a ‘proper mission’ of the Holy Spirit and for a Spirit Christology. For Coffey, therefore, that the Holy Spirit is the love between the Father and the Son defines both his personhood and his mission. This then has the dual purpose of

clarifying the distinct mission of the Holy Spirit while at the same time leading to the development of a Spirit Christology.\textsuperscript{124}

[T]he Father bestows the Holy Spirit on Jesus as his love for him in a uniquely radical way in which Jesus is brought into human existence as his beloved Son. Jesus further appropriates this unique Gift of the Spirit and the divine Sonship which it brings about, in the course of his life through his unfailing obedience and answering love of the Father, and in his death definitively returns to the Father in love by returning the Holy Spirit to him (though not thereby losing it himself). From this truly biblical theology the Holy Spirit emerges as the mutual love of the Father and Jesus Christ, his Son, even though, as Augustine pointed out, nowhere does Scripture actually call the Spirit love.\textsuperscript{125}

In his essay, ‘Spirit Christology’, Coffey discusses the proper mission of the Spirit in intra-trinitarian relations and in the economy. The Father’s love for the Son is the Holy Spirit and rests on the Son as its sole proper object. The Father’s gift of the Holy Spirit brings about the incarnation of Jesus, the Son, in the economy with the result that the Son then returns this love, his own theandric love, which is the Holy Spirit, to the Father.\textsuperscript{126}

Coffey goes on to argue for an inseparable relation of the love of God and the love of one’s neighbour in the world. This is his development of Augustine’s view of the Spirit as ‘love’. Augustine writes,

\begin{quote}
[a]s, then, we call the only Word of God specially by the name of Wisdom, although universally both the Holy Spirit and the Father Himself is wisdom; so the Holy Spirit is specially called by the name of Love, although universally both the Father and the Son are love. But the Word of God, i.e. the only-begotten Son of God, is expressly called the Wisdom of God by the mouth of the apostle, where he says, “Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.” 1 Cor. i. 24 But where the Holy Spirit is called Love, is to be
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{124} Del Colle, R., \textit{Christ and the Spirit}, p.96.
\textsuperscript{125} Coffey, D., \textit{Deus Trinitas}, p.41.
\textsuperscript{126} Coffey, D., ‘Spirit Christology’ in Hinze, B., & Lyle Dabney, D., (eds.), \textit{Advents of the Spirit}, p.327.
found by careful scrutiny of the language of John the apostle, who, after saying, “Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God,” has gone on to say, “And every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not, knoweth not God; for God is love.” Here, manifestly, he has called that love God, which he said was of God; therefore God of God is love. … God the Holy Spirit, who proceedeth from the Father, when He has been given to man, inflames him to the love of God and of his neighbor, and is Himself love. For man has not whence to love God, unless from God; and therefore he says a little after, “Let us love Him, because He first loved us.” 1 John iv. 7–19

The Apostle Paul, too, says, “The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us.” Rom. v. 5

The Holy Spirit inflames us to the love of God and of our neighbours and is himself love. Against those who view the Augustinian view of the Spirit as passive and impersonal, Coffey argues that the Spirit is ‘the love of God in person ... who is poured out into our hearts by Christ.’ He also develops the idea of the Holy Spirit as ‘agent’, the Holy Spirit ‘as trinitarian person’ and the ‘activity’ of the Spirit. Coffey articulates the proper mission of the Spirit in such a way as to portray the Spirit not only as active, but also as having an outward focus viz. reaching out to humanity as the love of God, not just the love between the Father and the Son. He writes, ‘[t]herefore in Jesus’ love of God, the Holy Spirit now becomes “Spirit of Jesus” or “Spirit of Christ” but is also the love with which he loves his fellow human beings.’ He concludes, ‘[t]hus, I submit, are we to understand the sending of the Holy Spirit by Christ upon the Church, i.e. as the opposite side of the coin of his love of God.’ The sending of the Spirit by Christ is his bestowal of the Holy Spirit, or his bestowal of himself in the Holy Spirit, to humanity. Coffey equates the love of Jesus with the Spirit of Jesus by which he remains present to his community after his death and as a result of the resurrection. Basing his arguments on Romans 5.5, Galatians

129 Coffey, D., Did You Receive, p.39.
130 See Coffey, D., Did You Receive.
5.22 and Romans 15.30, he says that ‘it is the Holy Spirit as the bond of love between the Father and his Son Jesus Christ that explains both the Father’s love for us (in Christ) and our consequent Christian love for each other.’

We will note further on that there has been some criticism of this particular aspect of Coffey’s work, but what is of interest for this thesis is the emphasis that Coffey places on the outward movement of the Spirit which is the love of God for the world which also becomes the means by which humanity is drawn back to the Father. The advantage of retaining the Augustinian model of the Spirit as love and working with this idea is that we are then able to emphasise the love of God in the Spirit at the heart of the outward movement of God to the world. As David Bosch writes, ‘[t]o participate in mission is to participate in the movement of God’s love toward people, since God is a fountain of sending love.’ Any model of mission will need to articulate the centrality of the love of God in the sending of the Son for the salvation of the world.

The Return Model and Humanity

Coffey’s project therefore, like Del Colle’s, is not simply an exercise in speculative theology in respect of the notions of relation and origin within the Trinity, but an attempt to apply those insights to the extension of the love of God to the world. The Spirit’s mission is not just in the bestowal of divine Sonship on Jesus, but also extends to the adoption of humanity as sons or daughters of God. So although Jesus is the ‘sacramental mediator’ between humanity and God, and by redemption and forgiveness enables the participation of humanity in the life of the Trinity, it is wholly pneumatological in nature. For Coffey, the Holy Spirit emerges as the ‘agent of divine operation toward created reality’ intrinsic to the salvation offered to humanity. Pneumatology and soteriology become inseparable. Coffey bases his theology on the fact that the New Testament is ‘none other than the witness to Christ, and to him as being “for us and for our salvation.”’ He goes on to discuss the consequences of this pro nobis presentation of Christ in relation to Christ and the Spirit and puts considerable emphasis on the experience of salvation.

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133 Coffey, D., Deus Trinitas, p.31.
134 Bosch, D., Transforming Mission, p.390.
135 Del Colle, R., Christ and the Spirit p.133.
136 Coffey, D., Deus Trinitas, p.33.
In his later work, “Did You Receive the Holy Spirit When You Believed?”
soteriology and mission emerge again as prominent themes. He writes, ‘[i]ndeed, for
us today the burning question is not the lot of those living before Christ, but that of
these others, our contemporaries, who belong to religions other than Christianity or to
no publicly recognized religion at all.’ As we have noted, Coffey’s soteriology is
developed both Christologically and pneumatologically. Christ is the mediator of the
Spirit with the Father as the ultimate source, thus Coffey proposes one sending with
the Father and the Son as the two coordinated senders of the Spirit. The salvation
brought by Jesus is extended to all humanity through the power and activity of the
Holy Spirit in the church. ‘The Holy Spirit, received in the past directly from God, is
now received through the active mediatorship of Christ, principal recipient of the
same Spirit in his lifetime. The event thus spoken of is the “mission” of the Holy
Spirit.’ It is through the Spirit that humanity is taken up into the life of the Trinity.
The Spirit unites us with Christ, allowing us to share in his divine Sonship and
through him to have fellowship with God. In Did You Receive, he links the mutual-
love model of the Trinity and the theology of the Holy Spirit as entelechy (a
Rahnerian term that Coffey defines as ‘a vital force that directs an organism towards
self-fulfillment’). The Spirit as entelechy elevates and impels the human spirit to
the person of Jesus Christ.

the Spirit who rests on the Son in the immanent Trinity, draws into union with
the Son in the economic Trinity. Thus we were able to see that the return
model and the theology of entelechy support and illuminate each other.
Further, we saw how self-emptying the Holy Spirit is in the economy, for only
indirectly is the experience of the Spirit himself. Directly, it is the experience
of the Christ to whom he is oriented in his whole being. None saw this more
clearly or expressed it more pungently than Barth. It allows us to understand
in what sense the Holy Spirit’s unique role in the world and the Church is to
sanctify, for to sanctify is nothing other than to lead men and women to Christ
and unite them with him who is “called holy” (see Luke 1:35). Thus, finally,

137 Coffey, D., Did You Receive, p.93.
138 Coffey, D., Deus Trinitas, pp.33-34.
139 Coffey, D., Did You Receive, p.76.
140 Coffey, D., Did You Receive, p.93.
the Holy Spirit is able to present them – that is, us – to the Father, whose very name is holy (see Luke 1:49,11:2).\textsuperscript{141}

Coffey views salvation as transformative of human lives, and this as achieved by the power of the Spirit. When people turn to Christ, the transforming power of the Spirit works in them to refashion them into more ‘perfect images of the glorified Christ.’ 2 Cor. 3.13-18.\textsuperscript{142} This pneumatological view of salvation is one which is echoed among most Spirit Christologists and a theme that we will pick up in subsequent chapters. In the introduction we noted that Romans 8:14-17 is one of the paradigmatic texts for a Christological and pneumatological theology of soteriology and mission. Coffey himself places great weight on the work of the Spirit as the one who forms humanity as sons and daughters in the Son. Moreover, he also stresses the Pauline theology of new creation and the Johannine idea of rebirth in the Spirit. He weaves these ideas together arguing that rebirth in the Spirit is to be viewed as above all, sonship and daughterhood of God, bringing about faith, love for the brethren, inspired witness and the forgiveness of sins.\textsuperscript{143}

In respect of Spirit Christology and anthropology, one of the potential weaknesses of Spirit Christology is that so much emphasis is placed on the continuity between Christ’s humanity and ours, and the view that the work of the Spirit in Christ is somehow analogous to the work of the Spirit in humanity, that we lose sight of the differences between sinful humanity and the sinless Saviour. Coffey and Del Colle recognise the necessity to differentiate between the giving of the Spirit of Sonship to Jesus and the giving of the Spirit to believers. Whereas the creating of sons and daughters of God among humanity is a work of the Spirit, it cannot be simply equated with the work of the Spirit in the Son as the difference is one of kind and not just degree. Del Colle, following certain aspects of Coffey’s work prefers the language of scholasticism to express the two types of sonship; the language of being and operation, substance and accident. The two processions of the Spirit are distinguished by their difference in operation in Jesus and in humanity. The first (\textit{a processio operati}) leads to a unity of being (the hypostatic union) and the second (\textit{a processio operationis}) the operation of grace which constitutes the believer’s sonship or

\textsuperscript{141} Coffey, D., \textit{Did You Receive}, p.114.
\textsuperscript{142} Coffey, D., \textit{Did You Receive}, p.81.
\textsuperscript{143} Coffey, D., \textit{Deus Trinitas}, p.36.
daughterhood.\textsuperscript{144} Divine sonship therefore is sacramental for believers but non-sacramental for Christ as Christ himself is the sacrament. Salvation is ‘sacramentally enfleshed in the crucified and glorified Christ’ and the Spirit enables believers to participate in that salvation. So the Holy Spirit is the necessary medium and bond between believers and the Father. This means that the Spirit of Sonship is sent by the Father not only through the Son (\textit{per filium}) but also with the Son (\textit{Filioque}) in the indissoluble union of the Son with his sacred humanity or in other words, through the sacramentality of the Son. This in turn expresses the inextricable link between the Son and the Father. As the Son is already \textit{homoousios} with the Father, the revelation of the Son is seen as the self-communication of the Father.\textsuperscript{145} In this way, he links together the mysteries of the trinity, the person of Christ and the life of grace. Coffey sees humanity as sons and daughters ‘in the Son’. The same Spirit that as bestowed upon Jesus by the Father in his humanity is also bestowed upon us, offered to humanity in the sacrament of Christ.\textsuperscript{146} Unlike Christ, ‘we never become sons and daughters in our own right’ but only through the Son in the Spirit.\textsuperscript{147}

This differentiation between humanity and Christ is the particular mark of a Spirit Christology that adheres to Logos Christology. Sang-Ehil Han commenting on the early development of Logos Christology notes that it ‘provided a helpful theological defense to preserve the uniqueness of Jesus Christ, namely his ontological union with, as well as personal distinction from, other persons of the Trinity.’ This was critical, not only for questions of ontology, but for the question of salvation. ‘What remains significant with Logos Christology is the theological commitment behind its origin and development that seeks to locate human salvation in the uniqueness (or the particularity) of Jesus Christ.’\textsuperscript{148} As we have noted, Logos Christology on its own can be interpreted as placing more emphasis on the divinity rather than the humanity of Christ. However, Logos Christology serves as a necessary corrective when constructing a Spirit Christology, because as Declan O’Byrne points out, it protects ‘against any form of “degree” Christology.’\textsuperscript{149}

\textsuperscript{144} Del Colle, R., \textit{Christ and the Spirit}, p.118.  
\textsuperscript{145} Del Colle, R., \textit{Christ and the Spirit}, p.118.  
\textsuperscript{147} Coffey, D., \textit{Did You Receive}, p.34.  
\textsuperscript{149} O’Byrne, D., \textit{Spirit Christology}, p.59. An illustration of this principle is Paul Newman’s Spirit Christology. Newman’s Spirit Christology is based on Lampe’s and is what he calls an interpersonal
The Sonship of Jesus for Coffey is radically different in his sinlessness and is marked out by his uncompromised fidelity and lifelong obedience culminating in his death on the cross, but is also shaped by the Spirit. It is the gift of the Spirit, the answering love evoked from him, that enables him to live his whole life in dedicated obedience to the Father’s will. This is epitomized in Jesus’ consciousness of God as Abba, Father. ‘Here we see at once a sense of unique intimacy and love, but also the supreme authority to which total and lifelong submission is due.’\textsuperscript{150} So both these aspects of Jesus’ existence are a work of the Spirit. Moreover, the union between the Son and the Spirit is an ‘intrinsic radical bond’, not an external or legal one, so that the Spirit ‘enters into his very constitution’ and ‘in handing [the Spirit] on he hands on his own self.’\textsuperscript{151} Coffey equates love with the very gift of oneself, so then if Christ gives himself to us in the Spirit, the Spirit becomes Christ’s love for us. ‘In the sacramental structure of the twofold (but one) giving of the Spirit, of which we spoke earlier, the visible gift of love by Christ becomes the sacrament of the invisible gift of love by the Father, in which he loves us in Christ.’\textsuperscript{152} Coffey calls this the ‘Christological character’ of the Holy Spirit.

We can summarise his position in the following way. The beginning of what he calls the ‘incarnation’ of the Spirit took place in the life of Jesus at his conception, this also being ‘the ultimate ground of his human freedom, his perfection of charity, his exemption from concupiscence, and his impeccability.’\textsuperscript{153} Christ sends the Spirit to believers and it is through this that he is present and active in the world, hence being at the same time the recipient and the sender of the Spirit. The granting of the Spirit to believers then is a rebirth on the basis of faith and conversion and as an adoption to divine sonship and daughterhood. In Coffey’s model, the Father’s love which is the Holy Spirit is actualized or realized fully only as we respond. It is a human love, enabled, elicited, and sustained by the Holy Spirit active within us,

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\textsuperscript{150} Coffey, D., \textit{Deus Trinitas}, p.37.  
\textsuperscript{151} Coffey, D., \textit{Deus Trinitas}, p.38.  
\textsuperscript{152} Coffey, D., \textit{Deus Trinitas}, p.38.  
which has already been realized in Christ.\textsuperscript{154} Thus he makes the link between the Father, the Son, the Spirit and between Christ’s humanity and ours. We will pick up on Coffey’s understanding of the ‘theandric’ nature of Christ in Chapter Three. Coffey thus formulates his immanent trinitarian model on an economic understanding of the Trinity. So whereas the procession model is based on distinction, the return model is based on the concept of union, not only of the three persons of the Trinity, but including the participation of humanity. The corresponding missions of the Spirit and the Son are incarnation and grace. The incarnation is the self-communication of the Father to the world in Jesus Christ, and grace is the self-communication of the Father and Christ his Son to us, in the person of the Holy Spirit.\textsuperscript{155} The work of grace is thoroughly trinitarian, the gift of the Spirit to unite us to Christ and thus to bring us into union with the Father. His view of grace and personhood is that grace brings us into a relationship of daughterhood and sonship which is at once unique to each of us and becomes the definitive expression of authentic personhood.

\textbf{Incarnation and Grace}

Coffey, like Del Colle, wrestles with the tension between wanting to adhere to the maxim that all the works of the Trinity in this world are undivided whilst at the same time wishing to ascribe particular missions to the Son and the Spirit. He notes that unless we can demonstrate that while all three persons are included in a particular work of God, that work remains specific to one person, then this stands inexorably in the way of a proper mission of the Spirit. However, just as we accept that it is only the Son who becomes incarnate, we also understand the incarnation as a work of the Father and the Spirit. Both logically and actually the incarnation will \textit{include} all that pertains to a work of God in the world, but in itself is something \textit{more}. ‘In the work of God in the world, it is the work of all three persons. In so far as it is something \textit{more} it is the work of the Son alone.’\textsuperscript{156} He then goes on to ask ‘[c]an we say something similar about grace as proper to the Holy Spirit and at the same time involving the Father and the Son.’\textsuperscript{157} Coffey describes the incarnation as a work of all three persons,

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{154} Coffey, The “Incarnation” of the Holy Spirit, p.475.
\item \textsuperscript{155} Coffey, D., \textit{Deus Trinitas}, p.65.
\item \textsuperscript{156} Coffey, D., A Proper Mission, p.229.
\item \textsuperscript{157} Coffey, D., A Proper Mission, p.229.
\end{itemize}
but on the other hand, the act of assimilation or assumption of the sacred humanity into the Trinity is a union with the Son. This involves two aspects of love, creativity and assimilativity, or the inward and outward movements of love both expressed in the incarnation which is the most radical self-communication of God to a creature. He argues, against Aquinas, that it is only the Son and not the Father or the Spirit who can become man.\(^{158}\) As we have already seen in his bestowal model, ‘the basic love which Christ returns to the Father will be the Holy Spirit, now seen as the love of the Son for the Father, but as it were “incarnate” in human love.’\(^{159}\) This then leads on to his question about whether we are able to say something similar about the Spirit. For Coffey, we are drawn into the life of the Trinity by the word of Christ, which is the love of God, the Holy Spirit conveyed to us sacramentally. So linked with Christ through faith in his word, we become sons and daughters of the Father (in the Son). He writes, ‘Christ’s offer of the Holy Spirit is for us the sacrament of the Father’s bestowal of the same Spirit. But the creation and assimilation which happen to us are not as radical as with Christ. We are re-created in grace, which is the work of all three persons of the Trinity’ This brings us into union, not unity with the Son, and hence with the Father. The incarnation terminates ‘in unity of person with the Son, while grace terminates in union, and this directly with the Holy Spirit, and only thus with the Son.’\(^{160}\) Thus he articulates a proper mission of the Holy Spirit.

**An ‘orthodox’ Spirit Christology?**

We have surveyed two examples of a Catholic Spirit Christology, but are they viable Spirit Christologies? Paul Molnar is a fierce critic of Coffey, so we will consider some of his criticisms in assessing Coffey’s work. Molnar is particularly harsh, justifying Coffey’s complaint that he has been accused of ‘almost every major heresy in the books.’\(^{161}\) As far as Molnar is concerned there is nothing right in Coffey’s method or content: his dependence on Lonerganian epistemology,\(^{162}\) his biblical

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\(^{158}\) Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* 3a.3.5.


\(^{162}\) Coffey argues that his methodology of starting with the biblical Trinity and moving from there to the immanent Trinity and then to the economic Trinity is justified on the basis of Lonerganian epistemology. Lonergan contends that there are three levels of cognition, the first being ‘experience’, and the second ‘understanding’ which give rise to the third, ‘knowing’. Coffey uses this as a basis to
exegesis, his failure to make a proper distinction between the immanent Trinity and the economic Trinity, his failure on the one hand to distinguish between Christ’s humanity and his divinity, and on the other, to see them as unified in an orthodox manner and his view of humanity, nature, and grace. According to Molnar, these all lead to a docetic understanding of the atonement and have a comprehensively inimical effect on Coffey’s theology.

We noted in the beginning that one of the persistent dangers of Spirit Christology is that it may be deemed to be adoptionist which, according to Molnar, is precisely one of the greatest failings of Coffey’s scheme. In Molnar's view, although Coffey insists that the Holy Spirit ‘created Christ’s humanity, sanctified it and united it hypostatically to the pre-existent divine Word’ as we have noted, Coffey also claims that ‘[i]n the Synoptic theology the unique divine Sonship of Jesus is brought about by the bestowal of the Holy Spirit on him by the Father.’ As Molnar notes, that is hardly a clear statement of what Coffey insists on above, that Logos Christology is non-negotiable for subsequent theological reflection. The problem with Coffey’s work is that there is some ambiguity on this issue. Coffey insists that his Christology is not adoptionist and that he painstakingly reiterates this, yet at times, his statements appear to contradict this. There are times when Coffey appears to imply that Jesus’ ‘Sonship’ was brought about at his conception, but he does not deny the pre-existence of the Son. His Christology is not strictly adoptionist, but his distinctions do occasionally lack clarity and, as we will see, his view of the incarnation based on his exegesis of John 1:14 is not orthodox.

Coffey’s exegesis of John 1:14 is that the Word became ‘flesh’ but not ‘human’ because in his view, the Word was ‘already and always a human, the divine, pre-existent man who had lived with God from eternity in the sphere of the Spirit but who at a certain point exchanged this mode of existence for that of mortal men and women, the sphere of the flesh.’ Coffey believes that there is only a “functional” and not an “ontological” incarnation in the New Testament, and that there is no ‘metaphysical incarnation’. As Molnar notes, this leads to a number of problems.

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164 Coffey, D., Deus Trinitas, p.37.
166 Coffey, D., Deus Trinitas p.13.
First, it creates problems for how we are able to view the humanity of Christ in relation to his divinity, and it also affects our view of the immanent Trinity; two of the subsequent criticisms of Molnar’s. If the traditional exegesis of John 1:14 is that the Word assumed sinful human flesh in order to redeem it, we have to hold on to the idea that the Son ‘is in a unique relationship to the Father in eternity which is now revealed and actualised in history.’\(^{167}\) Thus, there would then be no ‘ambiguous inference that Jesus’ human relation with God in the Spirit is the foundation of christology and soteriology’\(^{168}\) (my italics). In this Molnar is correct. However, Del Colle does not identify this as a significant problem in Coffey’s work. Molnar claims that Coffey’s Christology is, at heart, a ‘degree Christology.’ This, I think, is a misreading of Coffey’s use of Rahner. Coffey is well aware of the dangers of claiming that Jesus is a human like us only moreso, and is at pains to emphasise the difference between the sinless humanity of the incarnate Son and our sinful humanity. As we noted above, he writes, ‘[t]he Father makes other men his sons also, but in a much humbler sense viz. sons in the Son, by bestowing on them the same Spirit, who is offered to them in the sacrament of Christ.’\(^{169}\)

There are other issues at play in the Molnar/Coffey debate. Coffey and Molnar adopt theological methods which have often been placed in opposition to each other, as with the Barth/Brunner debate over natural theology which is mirrored here. Molnar writes that he is advocating a theology that ‘begins and ends its thinking with the Word incarnate in such a way that one thinks continually from a centre in God and not from a centre in oneself.’\(^{170}\) He accuses Coffey of ‘not allowing Jesus Christ himself to be the starting point and criterion for what is said about God and God’s relations with us.’\(^{171}\) Molnar is critical of any Christological method that starts from below. He is doubly critical of Coffey however, for his employment of Lonerganian epistemology, and for his understanding of ‘grace’ and ‘human nature’. Molnar criticizes Coffey’s use of Rahner’s supernatural existential on the grounds that it ‘universalizes grace precisely in such a way as to make the historical Jesus

\(^{167}\) Molnar, P.D., Some Dogmatic Implications, p.42.
\(^{168}\) Molnar, P., Some Dogmatic Implications, p.42.
\(^{170}\) Molnar, P., Some Dogmatic Implications, p.41.
\(^{171}\) Molnar, P., Some Dogmatic Implications, p.45.
irrelevant…If grace and revelation are not detached from the historical Jesus, as they should not be, then one cannot ascribe them to any human existential without falling into universalism and the kind of Pelagianism which suggests that we have the capacity for revelation and faith built into our human existence.172

In Molnar’s view, such thinking only serves to negate our need for grace and undermines our ‘ability to distinguish nature and grace by failing to acknowledge that, in light of revelation, we know that our orientations are ambiguous and may or may not point toward the triune God.’173 Molnar goes on to imply that Coffey does not understand human nature Christologically or in the light of the divine acts of creation and redemption. On this subject, Coffey writes, ‘Thus, human nature receives its meaning from Christ himself, who has reoriented humanity toward God precisely in and through his atoning sacrifice, by living a life of perfect obedience as the Son of God incarnate.’174 Molnar, however, believes that Coffey’s theology denies this and ultimately leads to ‘a docetic understanding of the Atonement.’175 We have already noted in detail Coffey’s very careful re-working of the traditional Catholic understanding of ‘grace’ as entirely a work of the Spirit, thus a work of God in creation, originating only in him and given only as gift to his creation. We have also noted above that both Del Colle and Coffey view the work of grace as a work of the Spirit, both as gift to humanity and as creating the ability within humanity in the reception of grace. The work of the Spirit in humanity is not located in the human nature qua human nature, but is the consequence of grace at work in human nature.

Coffey’s response is the following. In an article responding to criticisms from Donald Gelpi, he explains his use of Rahner’s supernatural existential. He reiterates that he does not see this as a ‘natural’ part of human existence, but ‘supernatural’, that is, ‘above the level of nature, transcendent, already belonging to the sphere of grace.’ It is something already ‘implanted by divine providence in each person’s make up, calling for ratification in a human decision, but not dependent on one.’176 He sees it as

172 Molnar, P., Response to David Coffey, p.63.
173 Molnar, P., Some Dogmatic Implications, p.35.
174 Molnar, P., Some Dogmatic Implications, p.35.
175 Molnar, P., Some Dogmatic Implications, p.35.
176 Coffey, D., ‘Vive la Difference – A Response to Donald Gelpi’ Pneuma 29 (2007), 113-130 p.125. Gelpi’s criticisms of Coffey’s work are spelled out in “David Coffey’s Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed? ” a Review Essay Pneuma 28/2 (2006), 322-334. His main criticisms of Coffey are regarding his methodology and his use of the Augustinian view of the Spirit. Rather than the ‘speculatively dated language of scholasticism’ Gelpi chooses instead an alternative philosophical system based on the work of C.S. Peirce; a fallible, relational and functional account of reality, which
the true starting point of a theology of grace, ‘In other words the theology of grace begins not with justification (which comes later), but with the moment of creation of every individual human being, who enters this world not just affected by original sin, but also with an eternal destiny marked already by sovereign grace.’

But as we have also noted in his work, for Coffey this work of the Spirit flows from the atoning work of Christ. The difference between Coffey and Molnar here is one of tradition, Coffey adhering to his Catholic tradition and Molnar adopting a Barthian stance. It does not mean, as Molnar believes that Coffey’s theology is at heart Pelagian.

Perhaps though on the question of whether an innate capacity for revelation and faith, if given by God, denies the need for the atonement of Christ, we are at an impasse. One criticism that Molnar makes that does need some clarification is the question of the relation of God’s love for humanity and human beings’ love, one for another. It is very difficult to ascertain whether Coffey is actually claiming that love of God and love of neighbour are exactly the same thing or not. Coffey’s way of describing the two loves is to call them two ‘distinct but inseparable’ dimensions of a single love.

There is a further difficulty because at times it seems as if Coffey is saying that if we know the love of a neighbour this can then be a way of knowing and loving God. I understand that for Coffey he sees this as indirectly Christological as we have seen from his return model, however, it still remains problematic, and in need of clarification. That said, the strengths of Coffey’s work for a theology of mission are numerous, as we will summarise in the final section.

The Missions of the Spirit and the Son

he believes gives a better account of the work of the Spirit both in the humanity of Christ and our humanity. Gelpi therefore gives a relational and experiential account of the work of the Spirit in the life of a human being. He argues that the incarnate Son of God ‘during his mortal ministry understood his relationship to the Father through the illumination of the Spirit.’ (p.331) As with the life of Jesus, we experience the ‘graced transformation of our experiences persuasively in the Spirit, not efficaciously in either the Father or the Son, since our gracing as human persons requires us to collaborate autonomously, as human persons, with the Spirit’s gracious illumination.’ pp.329-330. Coffey does not accept Gelpi’s criticisms either of his use of Augustine whom he believes Gelpi misunderstanding or on his choice of theological method. He in turn disagrees with Coffey’s choice of Peircean pragmatism on the grounds that ‘a philosophical system based on the empirical observations of physical science cannot, by this criterion, be the best vehicle, even relatively speaking, for the articulation of theological ideas.’ Coffey, Vive la Différence, p.116.

In Did You Receive Coffey makes it clear that ‘coming to’ Christ is not something that a human being is capable of performing out of his or her own resources. Instead he sees this as a work of the Spirit, which is also Christological. pp.82-84.

Coffey, D., Deus Trinitas, p.39.
In conclusion, we have examined how Coffey and Del Colle articulate distinctive but co-inherent missions of the Spirit and the Son, and posit a proper mission of the Spirit. The mission of the Spirit is first the radical bestowal of the Spirit on Christ bringing the sacred humanity into existence *ex nihilo* and bringing about unity with the Son, and then in the case of grace, the bestowal of the Spirit effecting re-creation of humanity, the creation of sons and daughters through union with the Son.\(^{180}\) Coffey argues that this view of the distinct missions of the Son and the Spirit and of their ‘mutual relationship is a departure from both Catholic theology and general Orthodox theology. In the former, a proper mission is not acknowledged at all and in the latter, the two missions are understood to be successive, that the mission of the Spirit begins at Pentecost replacing the mission of the Son.\(^{181}\) Spirit Christology provides a dogmatic foundation to understand the missions as converging at the beginning of Jesus’ life, in a dynamic of mutual causation. Furthermore, during the life and ministry of Jesus on earth it is the Spirit that sustains and empowers this life as he is in permanent dependence on the Spirit. For Coffey, there is a progression during Jesus’ lifetime in which the Spirit is sent in a partial sense, but then at his death, at the point where his humanity is fully realized, Jesus then pours out the Spirit, which is his Spirit, fully on the church and on the world. This gives rise to some questions over whether this is some form of degree Christology, despite Coffey’s commitment to Logos Christology. In terms of the mission of God to the world, Coffey concludes that those encountering the Holy Spirit are encountering the Spirit of Christ, through whom they are drawn into the filial relationship with the Father. This is the foundation of our understanding of mission.

Coffey holds to a pneumatological transformational view of salvation; a theology of re-birth and re-creation in the Spirit. Human beings are re-born and re-created in the Spirit as sons and daughters of God the Father, sons and daughters “in the Son,” Jesus Christ.\(^{182}\) The Spirit is always mediated to humanity by the Son, and therefore, the encounter with God will always be a trinitarian encounter and not a simple inversion of the procession model. Thus in this ‘mission’ model of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit cannot be seen to have a secondary or derivative role. The divine self-
communication is mediated through the two temporal missions of the Son and the Spirit which bear distinct manners of operation. Both Del Colle’s and Coffey’s work become a significant departure from the Thomistic theology of grace and trinitarian missions due to their point of departure being the work of God in the economy and their understanding of the work of the Spirit as the basis for the reception of the work of God in created reality. It is the co-presence of the persons in the working of the economic Trinity that reflects their circumincession in the immanent Trinity.\(^{183}\) Del Colle writes of Coffey’s work,

by beginning with the temporal missions he has ensured that the distinctions proceed from the reality of the divine economy. More specifically, since the economy is communicated in the Spirit, he has constructed his proposal on the basis of a sound and thoroughly retrieved pneumatology. Such a pneumatology is inclusive of the proper mission of the Holy Spirit, one in which the full personhood of the Holy Spirit is manifested, the alternative of a strictly appropriated mission being for Coffey “a reduction of the content of the deposit of faith”\(^{184}\)

Del Colle explores the difference between the missions of the Spirit and the Son in terms of the *Christus praesens* and the *Spiritus praesens*. He asks whether the distinction between the two is nothing more than a nominal predication on the part of the theologian or whether we can seriously hold to the hypostatic differentiation of the trinitarian persons in Christian practice.\(^{185}\) As we have seen, he does this by way of a theology of presence, into which he also incorporates notions of identity, agency and memory. He draws a distinction between the presence of Christ in the church (ecclesial community) which is actualized in faith, hope and love or what he views as the tangible responses to Christ. This faith becomes the ‘actualization of the memory of Jesus through proclamation that is contemporaneous’\(^{186}\) and has two aspects to it: memory and knowing. These are mediated by the Holy Spirit, who brings to mind the words of Jesus (Jn. 14.26) and in whom the risen Lord exists (1 Cor. 15.45, 2 Cor 3.17). Del Colle makes much of the distinction between the anonymity of the Spirit

\(^{184}\) Del Colle, R., *Christ and the Spirit*, pp.132-133.
\(^{186}\) Del Colle, R., *Christ and the Spirit*, p175.
and the corporeality of the risen Christ. There is a somatic dimension to the agency of Christ that does not exist for the Holy Spirit and he spells this out via a Eucharistic theology, of anamnesis and epiclesis. One is not collapsed into another. Del Colle emphasises the ‘hiddenness’ of the Spirit in his work, writing of the ‘hidden manifestation of the hypostatic identity of the Holy Spirit within the divine economy’ as a way of differentiating between the missions of the Spirit and the Son. He points out that the revelation of the Holy Spirit is more obscure than the revelation of the Son, the former being transhistorical and invisible, while the latter is accomplished historically and visibly. Thus, ‘incarnational language should only be predicated of the Holy Spirit in an indirect and qualified sense.’ Coffey makes a distinction between the ‘epiphany’ of the incarnation, which can only rightly be attributed to the Son as there must be an incarnation in a strict sense for an epiphany, and ‘revelation’ which can be attributed to the Spirit to assist and promote the epiphany of the divine Son. Finally, as we have already noted, Del Colle touches on the eschatological aspects of the missions of the Son and the Spirit, and the truth that the fullness of the revelation of God is yet to be disclosed. He writes, ‘[i]f Christ is yet to be fully known, the Spirit is yet to be fully experienced.’ Thus Del Colle and Coffey draw out the non-identical but inseparable roles and missions of the Spirit and the Son from the biblical witness, weave them into a theology of innertrinitarian relations and apply them to the work of God in the world.

Spirit Christology is one in which the Holy Spirit is viewed as a constitutive agent in the person and ministry of the Son. Through our survey of the Spirit Christologies of Del Colle and Coffey, we have demonstrated that they both have a distinct emphasis on the missions of the Son and the Spirit to the world, and on how those missions draw humanity into relationship with the Father, which is the concept that we place at the heart of mission. Both theologians apply Spirit Christology to the question of how it is that we can know God, and their insights will form the dogmatic basis for our theology of mission. Having discussed the work of these two prominent Spirit Christologists, we have highlighted a number of themes that will be central to our understanding of mission based on the coherent, mutual and reciprocal missions.
of the Spirit and the Son. It is clear that the dogmatic questions pertaining to Spirit Christology have implications both for trinitarian theology and Christology, which in turn will be the foundations for our missiological concerns. As Del Colle’s ideas remain largely undeveloped in relation to church life and practice, we will develop them in our model of mission. Thus, Del Colle’s emphasis on a Spirit Christology will form the basis of our model for mission: the coinherent missions of the Son and the Spirit as the basis for a dialogical model of mission based on a theology of incarnation and anointing. We will also explore some of the ramifications of a theology of experience and how that relates to pneumatology, specifically the emphasis on the Spirit of sonship and daughterhood. Del Colle’s categories of conversion in terms of inclusion, obedience and hope will be taken up through others’ transformational theologies of conversion; the Christian life as a Christlike life of discipleship affecting all aspects of existence. Moreover, his emphasis on humanity, not just as the focus of the missions of the Son and the Spirit, but as then participating in the work of God in the world will be central. Included in this will be the notion of mission as liberation for creation and the implications of that for society. We now turn to the trinitarian theologies of Thomas Weinandy and Colin Gunton.
CHAPTER TWO

SPIRIT CHRISTOLOGY AND THE TRINITY

**Introduction**

We have seen in Chapter One that it is impossible to argue for an orthodox Spirit Christology without also discussing the impact that this has on trinitarian theology. As we further explore contemporary work on pneumatology, we now consider the trinitarian theology of Thomas Weinandy and Colin Gunton, with a view to demonstrating how their work develops some of the themes that arose in Chapter One in relation to the question of the missions of the Son and the Spirit. Neither Weinandy nor Gunton explicitly state that they are constructing a ‘Spirit Christology.’ I have chosen to consider their work, however, as in the course of pursuing trinitarian theology with a concern to emphasize a more robust pneumatology, they construct Christologies in which the Holy Spirit plays a constitutive role in the person of Christ and is, therefore, consonant with the work of others who intentionally promote Spirit Christology. Both are concerned to emphasize the hypostatic individuation of the Spirit and to do so within a trinitarian framework. Moreover, the work of both Weinandy and Gunton gives a different perspective to those already discussed and thus highlights more of the possibilities of Spirit Christology for a theology of mission. In Weinandy’s work this comes via a concern to construct a trinitarian model that will articulate the role of the Spirit in the Sonship of Christ and consequently in the sonship and daughterhood of believers. As we have seen, this is a significant emphasis in the work of Coffey, and a central theme for missiology. Weinandy offers a different perspective on this, focusing more specifically on the implications of what it means to be a son or daughter of God in a way that is analogous to the Sonship of Christ.

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192 Habets views Weinandy’s work in *The Father’s Spirit of Sonship* as ‘profound’ and ‘groundbreaking’, and specifically a work that he has found helpful in his own research into Spirit Christology. ‘While Weinandy did not develop a Spirit christology…he did provide a profound vision of the basis of the Trinity that is able to complement both eastern and western approaches, thus ensuring ecumenical catholicity, while at the same time adhering strictly to biblical revelation, thus ensuring fidelity to the Word of God.’ ‘A Little Trinitarian Reflection’ *Evangel* 19/3 2001, p.80, p.81.
Gunton’s focus again is trinitarian theology. His specific concern in much of his work is the complaint (now well-rehearsed) that traditional trinitarian theology vitiates our understanding of the person and work of the Holy Spirit. In the course of his work, and in addressing this imbalance, he draws many conclusions that are similar to Del Colle, Coffey and others, while at the same time, adding many insights of his own. The difference in the work of both Weinandy and Gunton is that they offer more radical revisions to trinitarian theology than either Del Colle or Coffey. We will evaluate some of the strengths and weaknesses of these moves. What we will see is that whereas all proponents of orthodox Spirit Christologies have many points of meeting and interwoven concerns, their emphases and conclusions are sufficiently different to be of interest, and yield somewhat different perspectives on related doctrines such as the doctrines of humanity and of the church, which in turn will open up other avenues for our thinking on mission.

**Thomas Weinandy: The Father’s Spirit of Sonship**

Thomas Weinandy in *The Father’s Spirit of Sonship* offers a reconception of the Trinity because, as we have noted, he sees deficiencies in both the traditional Eastern and Western trinitarian models. The priority for Weinandy is to construct a trinitarian model in which the Godhead is portrayed as a Trinity of equal persons, and in doing so, to restore the notion of ‘symmetry’ to the depiction of innertrinitarian relations, the latter concept being one which he believes has largely been lost in the dominant models of the Trinity. His entire argument is based on his view that what ‘one needs to grasp is that the whole oneness of God’s being (the *homoousios*) is itself a trinity of persons.’¹⁹³ According to Weinandy, Eastern and Western trinitarian models remain deficient in their ability to depict this equality within the Trinity and fail to do justice to the three persons who are not only equal but whose relations are also simultaneous and non-sequential. Traditionally, both the Eastern and the Western models of the Trinity depict the relations between the Father, the Son and the Spirit developing in a linear or progressive fashion which, according to Weinandy, skews our understanding of the nature of God as revealed in the triunity of persons.

Weinandy identifies two main contributing factors to this serious defect in the trinitarian models; the first being philosophical notions that are ‘still active in their respective conceptions of the Trinity’ which he believes are ‘foreign to and not in accord with scriptural revelation’ and the second being an underdeveloped pneumatology. Whereas he is willing to concede that both the Eastern and Western traditions would maintain that ontologically all three persons of the Trinity are equally eternal, in his view, the philosophical and metaphysical foundations of the two models undermine the essential ontological equality of the Trinity. The main culprits identified by Weinandy as lying behind the weaknesses in these trinitarian models are middle or Neoplatonic emanationism and Aristotelian epistemology. Weinandy believes that rather than illuminating or in some way serving to explain the biblical witness, Greek metaphysical and philosophical concepts are alien to the revelation of God in Scripture. His position is that secular metaphysics in its own right, is incapable of dealing with the revelational data of the Trinity. For Weinandy, the Godhead not only resides in but is the inter-relationship among the persons of the Trinity. His frustration with Eastern and Western models of the Trinity, which he believes to be based on something other than Scripture, is that they fail to communicate this. Weinandy identifies two main difficulties with the traditional models of the Trinity. The first is that they communicate the development of trinitarian relations in a linear and/or progressive sequence. He sees the Eastern view of the Trinity in this way, with the Godhead residing in the Father, sharing his divinity with first the Son and then the Spirit as they emanate out from him. Weinandy believes this emanationism to be true not just of the East but also of the West, and concludes that this is not evident in Scripture, but is borrowed from Neoplatonism. He writes, ‘Within both views of the Trinity there lingers a Neoplatonic emanationist sequentialism; that there is a logical or conceptual priority of the Father over the Son and the Son over the Holy Spirit’. A second problem that Weinandy perceives with the traditional trinitarian models is a related but distinct issue, namely the diminished role of the Holy Spirit. Weinandy contends that one of the detrimental results of the linear views of the Trinity is that neither model adequately accounts for the active role of the Holy Spirit in the trinitarian life.

196 Weinandy, T., *The Father’s Spirit* p.10.
197 Weinandy, T., *The Father’s Spirit* p.10.
Although in some respects what Weinandy offers is something ‘new’, in that it is a departure from traditional models of the Trinity, he is keen to point out that his model has its roots in ancient sources, namely Scripture and the writings of Athanasius. Weinandy’s view is that trinitarian doctrine should have been shaped early on by Athanasius’ defense of the *homoousious* against the use of *homoiousios*. Athanasius understood that the Godhead did not reside in the Father alone from which the Son and the Spirit emanated, but that the Son ‘is inseparable from the essence of the Father, and he and the Father are one…the Word is ever in the Father and the Father in the Word.’ While the Father is the Father and the Son is the Son, they are ‘one in propriety and peculiarity of nature, and in the identity of the one Godhead.’ His opinion is that these seminal insights should have transformed the whole history of trinitarian theology but unfortunately they did not. Weinandy’s view is that the Cappadocians never grasped this particular truth derived from Nicaea’s *homoousion* doctrine and, wishing to affirm both the monarchy of the Father, and the individuality of the Son and the Spirit, the Father alone came to be understood to represent the Godhead, begetting the Son, with the Spirit proceeding from him. The description of the origins of the Son and the Spirit is thus attributed by Weinandy to Platonic emanationism. He claims that this concept has dominated the Orthodox view of the Trinity until the present day and undermines a view of the Trinity in which the Godhead is understood solely as the oneness of God’s being in a trinity of persons. The result, he says is a diminution of the active roles of the Son and the Spirit within the inner trinitarian life and this forms the basis of his criticism of the Eastern view of the Trinity. In addition to this, in respect of his assessment of the Eastern view of the Trinity, his criticism extends to the incompatibility of the notion of *perichoresis* (by which the persons of the Trinity are said to coinhere in one another) and the linear model of procession in the East. He has difficulties reconciling the two. He asks, ‘If the movement of the Son and the Holy Spirit is “out from” the Father, how do they mutually interpenetrate one another?’

His conclusion, therefore, is that Platonic emanationism is not only unhelpful for our understanding of the Trinity, and thus for our understanding of the very nature of God, but it is irreconcilable with the biblical witness. The biblical revelation, ‘that God be one and that the Son and the Holy Spirit be equally God’ cannot be

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communicated effectively if we continue to depict the relations between the persons of the Trinity as developing in a linear or progressive fashion. In his view, emanationism cannot reconcile, ‘in a conceptually unified manner, the fact that God is one and that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are God’, but will always be vulnerable to the dual dangers of tritheism and subordinationism. Within the Western model of the Trinity, it is not only Platonic emanationism that undermines the equality and symmetry within the Trinity. This is further exacerbated by Aristotelian epistemology. Aristotelian epistemology requires that a thing first be known before it is loved. When applied to trinitarian relations, the Son is first begotten and known by the Father and then loved by him in the Spirit. The Son, in turn, then loves the Father by the same Spirit. This leads to a sequentialist understanding of trinitarian relations which Weinandy wishes to move away from entirely. Instead, he aims to describe both the origin and relations of the persons of the Trinity in one simultaneous, non-sequential event. His description of this and his reconception of the Trinity requires a pivotal active role of the Holy Spirit. Already we can see how Weinandy’s work is a significant departure from either Del Colle or Coffey who retain elements of the procession model, the *Filioque* and passive spiration albeit in a different form. They are less comprehensively critical of traditional models than Weinandy.

As we noted above, Weinandy does not use the term Spirit Christology. However, his trinitarian model relies so heavily on the role of the Holy Spirit within the Trinity, and the constitutive role of the Spirit in the person of Christ and in the relation between the Father and the Son that his Christology certainly falls within the definition of Spirit Christology given in Chapter One. Weinandy directly attributes the lack of symmetry that he sees in both the Eastern and Western models of the Trinity to an underdeveloped pneumatology. He argues that both models depict the Holy Spirit as a passive member of the Trinity, and do nothing to counter our understanding of the Holy Spirit as inactive as he proceeds from the Father and or through the Son. The corrective therefore, for this asymmetry, is to define the role of the Holy Spirit in a more definite way, giving him an active role in the relations of the Trinity. It is interesting to note that opinion is divided as to whether Augustine’s description of the Holy Spirit as ‘the bond of love’ between the Father and the Son is

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200 Weinandy, T., *The Father’s Spirit*, p.11.
201 Weinandy, T., *The Father’s Spirit* p.80.
helpful or detrimental in this regard. As we have seen, Del Colle and Coffey both have a positive assessment of the Augustinian model and even use this as a basis for their own, recapitulating Augustine’s efforts for a modern Spirit Christology. Weinandy, among others, regards Augustine’s contribution and legacy in this respect as having had a negative impact on trinitarian theology. The issue at stake is whether Augustine’s trinitarian theology endorses our understanding of the Spirit as a ‘passive’ member of the Godhead, and if so, whether this actually undermines our understanding of the Holy Spirit as co-equal and co-eternal with the Father and the Son, or not. Weinandy’s criticism of the Augustinian model of the Holy Spirit as the ‘bond of love’ is that ‘the Holy Spirit plays a passive role as the love between the Father and the Son, and thus appears less clearly as an acting subject’. Weinandy is not alone in making these criticisms. They are echoed by Tom Smail who claims that Augustine failed to do justice to the distinct personhood of the Holy Spirit, portraying the Spirit in terms of impersonal grace rather than in terms of a fully personal Spirit. Gunton is similarly critical of Augustine’s legacy, for this and other significant reasons, which I will discuss below. Augustine himself nowhere implies that the Spirit is in some way derivative, inferior or a lesser person within the Trinity. In his writing, he affirms from the outset that the ‘unity and equality of that highest Trinity is shown from Holy Scripture.’ Moreover, the ‘sentness’ of the Spirit does not imply, for Augustine, that the Spirit is in any way ‘less’ than the Father and the Son.

and we have demonstrated, that He who is sent is not therefore less than He who sends, because the one sent, the other was sent; since the Trinity, which is in all things equal, being also equally in its own nature unchangeable, and invisible, and everywhere present, works indivisibly.

However, it is clearly a deeply held conviction with some theologians that his legacy has served to undermine our understanding of the Spirit as person, and they wish to emphasize that the Spirit is not just ‘gift’ but also one who gives, not just ‘sent’, but one who sends. Weinandy writes,

205 Augustine, On the Trinity, XV.III.5.
I would argue that the real cause for the lack of symmetry within the conception of the Trinity, both in the East and the West, is primarily due to the inactivity of the Holy Spirit as he proceeds from the Father and the Son. They are active in their love for one another, but as their love for one another the Spirit is purely passive. Once the Holy Spirit comes forth from the Father as the one in whom the Son is begotten, so conforming the Father to be Father and the Son to be Son, a symmetry of action and thus a symmetry of *perichoresis* within the Trinity is secured.\(^\text{206}\)

Against Del Colle and Coffey’s accounts therefore, Weinandy privileges the work of the Spirit within innertrinitarian relations. This becomes his means of presenting the Trinity in a non-hierarchical and non-sequential way and doing away with notions of logical priority and precedence. He believes that a proper understanding of the Trinity ‘can only be obtained if all three persons, logically and ontologically, spring forth in one simultaneous, non-sequential, eternal act in which each person of the Trinity subsistently defines, and equally is subsistently defined by, the other persons.’\(^\text{207}\) He argues that there is an order of origin and derivation, but not an order of priority, precedence and sequence among the persons of the Trinity.’\(^\text{208}\) His new conception of the Trinity is as follows:

> [t]he Son is begotten by the Father in the Spirit and thus the Spirit simultaneously proceeds from the Father as the one in whom the Son is begotten. The Son, being begotten in the Spirit, simultaneously loves the Father in the same Spirit by which he himself is begotten (is Loved). The Spirit (of Love) then, who proceeds from the Father as the one in whom the Father begets the Son, both conforms or defines (persons) the Son to be the Son and simultaneously conforms or defines (persons) the Father to be the Father. The Holy Spirit, in proceeding from the Father as the one in whom the Father begets the Son, conforms the Father to be Father for the Son and conforms the Son to be Son for (of) the Father.\(^\text{209}\)

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207 Weinandy, T., *The Father’s Spirit*, p.15.
208 Weinandy, T., *The Father’s Spirit*, p.15.
We will consider this in more detail below. It is important to note here that Weinandy is not arguing that the monarchy of the Father be abandoned in this new trinitarian scheme. What he is proposing is a trinitarian conception in which there is no danger of understanding the Father as somehow constituting the Godhead outside the Trinitarian relations of Father, Son and Spirit. In other words, we must emphatically endorse the idea that the Father is the dynamic source and fount of the Son and the Holy Spirit but he does not precede them.

The person of the Father indeed constitutes the ontological being and personhood of the Son and the Holy Spirit, but he does so in the one being of God. The substance of God is not the Father. The being of God (I prefer the expression ‘the being of God’ to the phrase ‘the substance of God’) is the Trinity which is the one act of the Father begetting the Son and spirating the Spirit. The eternal constituting of the persons takes place within (and not outside of) the one being of God, and therefore is the one being of God. There is neither priority of oneness nor of threeness. Three persons are one God or one God is three persons.210

Thus the monarchy of the Father is established and maintained within the one being of the Trinity and not prior to or outside it. D’Costa is critical of Weinandy on this last point, believing that he outrightly contradicts himself, arguing on the one hand for an order of derivation and origin affirming the Father as the sole ungenerate source and on the other that the Trinity is one simultaneous and harmonious act by which the persons are who they are.211 Weinandy wishes to maintain the concept of the monarchy of the Father, but only within an understanding of the Trinity that emphasizes a constitutive role for the Spirit, not just in Christology, but in the immanent life of the Trinity. The problem in the end is that this can seem somewhat contradictory and it is an issue that those committed to a constitutive role for the Spirit within the immanent Trinity and a non-hierarchical portrayal of the inner-trinitarian life need to wrestle with further.

It is essential in understanding Weinandy’s conception of the Trinity to understand his method. Methodologically, he constructs his model on the maxim that

210 Weinandy, T., The Father’s Spirit, p.64.
the ‘economic Trinity is the immanent Trinity’. The importance of this is not just that he bases his model on the acts of God in history and human experience, but that he understands the formation and being of the Trinity in terms of action and not simply being. Therefore, the being of God is inseparable from the one act of God in begetting the Son and spirating the Spirit. Through this ‘functional ontology’, each person of the Trinity plays an equal part in the being of God. Moreover, the one being of God as the Father begets the Son and spirates the Spirit from within the homoousios and so the Father gives the whole of his divinity to the Son and the Holy Spirit, constituting them as equal divine persons. The begetting and the loving of the Father, the being begotten and the reciprocal love of the Son all constitute one single event in the Spirit.

Thus, we can see through this that to some extent, Weinandy’s model maintains the crucial role of the Spirit as being the love between the Father and the Son, although he develops this much further, assigning an active role to the Spirit. In other words, for Weinandy, it is not enough to say that the Father is Father because he has a Son or the Son is Son because he has a Father. He proposes a mutual co-inherence or perichoresis of action within the Trinity which makes the persons be who they distinctively are, but reciprocally acting on one another, simultaneously fashioning one another to be who they are and so becoming who they are in themselves. None of the persons is purely passive; not even the Holy Spirit. What of the implications of this for the Father and the Son? In respect of the second person of the Trinity, the Son is co-constituted as Son in the simultaneous acts of begetting and loving by the Father. He then goes on to ask with reference to the Son whether ‘there is a reciprocal act that the Son performs which equally constitutes his being the Son in relationship to the Father and so, in some sense, constitutes the Father as Father?’ The answer to this lies in the role of the Holy Spirit and the model which results is one in which each person of the Trinity has a part in constituting or ‘personing’ the other persons of the Trinity. ‘Once the Holy Spirit comes forth from the Father as the one in whom the Son is begotten, so conforming the Father to be Father and the Son to be Son, a symmetry of action and thus a symmetry of perichoresis within the Trinity is secured.’

212 Weinandy, T., *The Father’s Spirit*, p56.
214 Weinandy, T., *The Father’s Spirit*, p.66.
Weinandy’s Reconceived Trinity

Weinandy claims that traditional views of the Trinity not only ‘make true and radical trinitarian enrichment impossible’ but they are inadequate to the task of meeting the ‘existing biblical, systematic, spiritual and ecumenical issues.’\(^{216}\) His own understanding of how the Trinity is, not only purges the remnants of Neoplatonic emanationism, but also serves to express the dynamism within the Trinity.\(^{217}\) The central tenet of his argument is that the Father is the Father in that he begets the Son in the Spirit. The essence or very nature of the Father’s paternity demands that he begets the Son in Love. The Father spirates the Spirit in the same act by which he begets the Son; the Spirit proceeds from the Father as the paternal Love in whom or by whom the Son is begotten. ‘[T]he Holy Spirit naturally and necessarily proceeds from him as the Love in whom the Son is begotten.’\(^{218}\) Whereas Weinandy accepts Aristotelian epistemology (that something be known before it is loved) as appropriate for humanity, he rejects this as applicable to the Godhead, as this would mean that logically, the Son must ‘first’ be known ‘before’ he is loved\(^{219}\) which simply contributes to the defective understanding that there is some logical priority within the Trinity. In contrast to the idea of first begetting and then loving, Weinandy sees the two acts as one simultaneous event in the Trinity, being held together by the action of the Spirit. The begetting and spirating come forth from the Father ‘as distinct, but concurrent, acts. The begetting of the Son and the proceeding of the Spirit are simultaneous, and although they are distinct, the two acts mutually inhere in one another.’\(^{220}\) The paternity of the Father becomes inextricably bound up not only with the Son, without whom he would not be the Father, but also with the Spirit in whom the Love between the Father and the Son is actualized. He writes, ‘The Father spirates the Spirit as the fatherly love in whom and by whom the Son is begotten and thus exercises his paternity not just in the begetting of the Son.’\(^{221}\) Thus, in Weinandy’s conception of the Trinity, the Spirit makes the mutual co-inherence of action possible and intelligible. ‘The Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son and does so by conforming each to be in relation to the other, and so becomes distinct in himself in

\(^{216}\) Weinandy, T., _The Father’s Spirit_, p.6.
\(^{217}\) Weinandy, T., _The Father’s Spirit_, p.94.
\(^{218}\) Weinandy, T., _The Father’s Spirit_, pp.69-71.
\(^{219}\) Weinandy, T., _The Father’s Spirit_, p.75.
\(^{220}\) Weinandy, T., _The Father’s Spirit_, p.72.
\(^{221}\) Weinandy, T., _The Father’s Spirit_, pp.72-3.
his mutual relation to them as the love by which they come to be who they are for one another."\(^{222}\)

Weinandy spells out what this means for the role of the Holy Spirit. For Weinandy, the action of the Spirit becomes the 'cornerstone which holds together this fatherly act of lovingly begetting the Son and this filial act of the Son loving the Father.'\(^{223}\) The paternal and filial act of loving is what makes the Trinity the Trinity and ‘persons’ each member of the Trinity. This means that the Father is the Father not only because he begets the Son, but also because, in the begetting of the Son, the Son loves the Father, and so as Son helps constitute the Father as Father. The Father would not be Father unless he had a Son who loved him as a Son.\(^{224}\) Love for the Father is the essence of sonship and love for the Son is the essence of fatherhood.

The one action by which the Spirit is the Spirit is then twofold in effect – pertaining to the Father and to the Son. The Spirit, springing forth within the Father as his love in or by which the Son is begotten, conforms the Father to be the Father for the Son and concurrently conforms the Son to be the Son for the Father.\(^{225}\)

Weinandy insists that he is not replacing what he sees as the precedence of the Father over the Son and the Spirit with the precedence of the Spirit. The Spirit is ‘equally and simultaneously substantiated or “personed” by the Father and the Son, since it is by proceeding from them that the Spirit becomes the Spirit of the Father and the Son.’\(^{226}\) He then redefines the term ‘spiration’ as the act by which the Spirit is breathed out or proceeds from the Father as the love in which the Father begets the Son. In this same event, the Spirit conforms the Father to be the Father, derivatively proceeding from the Son, and conforms the Son to be the Son. Thus the Spirit is the one by which the Son loves the Father.\(^{227}\) The question of whether Weinandy believes that there is a causal order within the Trinity or not and whether this is a logical or an ontological notion is difficult to ascertain and his position could be perceived to be contradictory as we have noted. Weinandy defends himself on this issue. Commenting

\(^{222}\) Weinandy, T., *The Father’s Spirit*, p.79. 
\(^{223}\) Weinandy, T., *The Father’s Spirit*, p.73. 
\(^{224}\) Weinandy, T., *The Father’s Spirit*, p.73-4. 
\(^{225}\) Weinandy, T., *The Father’s Spirit*, p.73. 
\(^{226}\) Weinandy, T., *The Father’s Spirit*, p.74. 
\(^{227}\) Weinandy, T., *The Father’s Spirit*, p.74.
on Boff’s use of Patreque, Filioque and Spirituque to avoid a sequential priority and precedence among the persons of the Trinity and to illustrate the notion that ‘each person of the Trinity is constituted in a simultaneous and an active subsistent relationship with one another’, Weinandy states that the difference between his and Boff’s work is that he would not use the term Patreque if it was to mean that the Father comes forth from the Son and the Holy Spirit similar as to the way the Son and the Spirit come forth from him’ (my italics), but that if it was used to say that the Spirit ‘conforms the Father to be the Father as the Father breathes forth the Spirit, and that the Son helps establish the Father as Father as he actively cries out “Abba!” in his being begotten, then I could agree with his notion of Patreque.’228 In other words, on this issue, Weinandy’s focus is on the manner in which the persons of the Trinity constitute one another, rather than on an ontological claim regarding the inner-trinitarian life.229

Therefore the Father is still the unbegotten source of the Son and the Spirit, but the order transcends an emanationist view which implies not only an order of origin and derivation, but also an order of priority, precedence and sequence, which undermines the eternal nature of the one trinitarian act and thus the divine equality of the persons. The idea of the Spirit subsisting as the source of the complementarity between the Father and the Son230 is clearly a very different role for the Spirit and a far cry from the idea of the Spirit as a passive member of the Trinity. One caution with Weinandy’s work is whether, in assigning such a crucial role to the Spirit he is not over-emphasizing the work of the Spirit at the expense of the role of the Father and the Son, although he insists that this is not the case. His view of the Spirit as the ‘cornerstone’ of the Trinity does not allay fears in this regard. He also writes,

[p]utting it more strongly, hopefully not too strongly, it is by the Spirit that the Father substantiates or “persons” himself as Father because it is by the Spirit that he begets the Son. In so doing the Father substantiates or “persons”, by

228 Weinandy, T., The Father’s Spirit, Fn. 44, pp.80-1.
229 On this point, Del Colle is adamant that there should be no Spirituque if the passive spiration of the Spirit is compromised. His concern with Weinandy’s thesis is that the activity of the Spirit complicates the issue of the monarchy of the Father. ‘Reflections on the Filioque’ Journal of Ecumenical Studies 34/2 (1997) 202-217, p.216.
the same Spirit, the Son and the Son personally re-enacts, and so is “personed” in the Spirit of sonship, as Son of the Father.231

**Becoming Sons and Daughters**

Having argued for a reconception of the Trinity, Weinandy then turns to the theme with which he began; the experience of becoming sons and daughters of God in the Spirit. For this he draws his material from the Pauline corpus, which he notes, ‘places before us a Christian life that is integrally trinitarian’, the evidence for which can be found in the following passages: Rom 6.4, 6.11, 7.6, 8.9; 1 Cor 6.11; 2 Cor 3.6; 1 Thess 4.8; Gal. 5.25, 5.16. Weinandy sees a ‘transparent trinitarian pattern that emerges from these and similar passages’ – we have access to the Father by one Spirit (Eph. 2.18) and by that Spirit God makes us a new creation in Christ. Weinandy interprets this as being assumed to the very depths of God’s inner being. Through the Spirit we have the ‘mind of Christ’ (1 Cor. 2.16) and we are being transformed by the Spirit into his likeness (2 Cor. 3.18).

The inherent logic here is that Christ, having complete access to the Father, comprehends the mind of God because he possesses fully the Spirit of God. We have the mind of Christ, and thus have access to God’s inner thoughts, because we too now possess the Spirit. The Spirit, in conforming us to Christ, gives us entrance into God’s wisdom232

The emphasis on the role of the Spirit in conversion gives us a particular type of transformational theology of conversion, the basis of which is pneumatological. Salvation is seen not just in terms of belief but in terms of a whole life transformed by Christ and the Spirit. This transformational view of conversion is something we encounter again and again in those arguing for a Spirit Christology and one which we will return to in Part Two, but we see this clearly in Weinandy’s work.

The access to the Father carries with it certain characteristics of this new life. Weinandy outlines the following benefits: we are incorporated into the familial life of God himself and the heavenly sanctuary or kingdom of God’s all-holy being; we

231 Weinandy, T., *The Father’s Spirit*, p.73.
232 Weinandy, T., *The Father’s Spirit*, p.34.
share the splendour of the Lord; (2 Cor. 4.7-18) we are transformed into the glorious image of God that is Christ fashioning us into sons of God; we enjoy the same rights and privileges as Jesus; we experience a heavenly life analogous to his own. And this new life is founded exclusively on the work of the Spirit.233 ‘Thus we are incorporated into the life of the Trinity as the Trinity itself exists – the grace and love between the Father and the Son is in the fellowship of the Spirit for it is through the Spirit that the Father and Son exist for one another.’234

Weinandy’s work on pneumatology and the Trinity is valuable for a number of reasons. There are three that I wish to highlight. The first is his emphasis on Romans 8.14-17 as a seminal text crucial to the discussion of the sonship and daughterhood of believers and the Spirit. The second is his emphasis on experience as a valid form of knowing God and as a basis for theologizing, and the third is his non-sequential model of the Trinity. On the first, Weinandy places at the centre of his work, Paul’s crucial teaching on the work of the Spirit...

...because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry “Abba, Father.” The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children.

The Holy Spirit, active in constituting the Son as Son, is also, through Christ, bestowed on believers, so that we participate in sonship and daughterhood through the Son. As we have noted in the work of Del Colle and Coffey, the transformation and re-creation of humanity as sons and daughters of the Father is at the heart of any trinitarian model of mission. Secondly, is Weinandy’s emphasis on experience. In other words, his theology of adoption is firmly rooted in his own experience of the Spirit in his life and the lives of others, as he notes in his introduction.

233 Weinandy, T., The Father’s Spirit, p.35. Elsewhere Weinandy argues that this new life in Christ is a new kind of life not just in our relationship with God, but with each other; our relationships are changed in kind and not degree. We are brothers and sisters in Christ. (Rom 12.4-5; 1 Cor 12.12-13; Eph 2.11-22) There is no longer a divide between Jew and Gentile, male or female, slave or free because in Christ humanity becomes one. (Gal 3.28; cf. Rom.10.12; 1 Cor. 12.13; Col. 3.11) ‘Even such elemental relationships as husband and wife, parents and children, and master and slave have been placed on an entirely new level (cf. Eph. 5.21-6.9; Col. 3.18-4.1; Philemon).’ In the Likeness of Sinful Flesh (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1993), p.85-86.
234 Weinandy, T., The Father’s Spirit, p.52.
The stimulus for this work was not expressly trinitarian in origin. I came to this thesis while considering the work of grace in my own life and in the lives of others. As a result of being baptized in the Spirit within the Charismatic Renewal and, after witnessing the changed lives of many others who similarly had experienced this baptism, I was prayerfully considering and studying Romans 8:14-16 – a passage that now expresses experiential relevance....At one point the thought came to me that if we, who are Christians, are conformed into sons of the Father by the Spirit through whom we are empowered to cry out in the same words as Jesus, then the eternal Son himself must have been begotten and conformed to be Son in the same Spirit in whom he too eternally cries out “Abba!”.

The significance of experience as a basis for theologizing should not be dismissed and is a notable development in charismatic and Pentecostal theology, but also among others. Del Colle in the preface of his book also notes, ‘[t]his work was motivated by interests of both mind and heart. What began many years ago as a journey of the heart into the experimental and experiential dimensions of Christian faith eventually led to the theological quest for understanding.’ Paul Newman in a similar way comments, ‘Christology is not a disinterested academic exercise in historical research. It is a quest impelled by faith, a search for adequate expression of the truth about one who has been experienced in such a compelling and vital way that the experience can only be called a religious experience.’

As we noted in Chapter One, Del Colle raises the question of the role of the Spirit and human experience, and the need for theology to engage not only with culture, but with the nature of human experience. Notwithstanding the difficulties of articulating a theology of human experience, Del Colle notes the appropriateness of a theology of S/spirit for precisely this task. ‘[H]ow else except from the notion of spirit (Holy or otherwise) is one to engage the issue of human experience and culture?’

Pentecostal and Charismatic expressions of faith often focus on the experience of the

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235 Weinandy, T., *The Father’s Spirit*, pp.ix-x.
237 Newman, P.W. *A Spirit Christology: Recovering the Biblical Paradigm of Christian Faith* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1987), pp.43-44. Also, see the introduction to Frank Macchia’s work *Baptized in the Spirit* which begins with his story of his own conversion and experience of being filled with the Spirit (pp.11-14).
Spirit, and especially on the effect of the Spirit as being the one to give the assurance of our sonship and daughterhood as described by Paul in Romans 8, the one who makes real to us the Fatherhood of God and enables us to cry to him as Father, just as Jesus does. The renewed emphasis on pneumatology is affecting questions of epistemology and cognition, and forming the basis for much reflection. The key issue raised by Del Colle is how to speak of human experience theologically rather than collapsing pneumatology into anthropology, which is always a danger if our anthropological starting point is human religious self-consciousness.

Third is Weinandy’s emphasis on the distinct role of the Holy Spirit within his non-sequential, non-hierarchical model of the Trinity. Despite some areas in Weinandy’s work that need some clarification, there is no doubt that his argument is important for the trinitarian implications of assigning a more active role for the Spirit in the Trinity. Weinandy achieves his aim of giving a specific and precise role to the Holy Spirit within the immanent trinity; a role which he feels has been obscured throughout the history of trinitarian theology. By doing this, not only are the interrelationships between the subjects reconceived, but Weinandy challenges some established ideas about the Holy Spirit and succeeds in giving the Spirit a proper trinitarian role ‘in which we more easily recognize his personal ontological depth as a distinct subject.’

What is Weinandy’s contribution therefore to a theology of mission?

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239 One notable example of a theology of experience is Gelpi’s recent work on conversion that Yong asserts is rooted in his (Catholic) charismatic experience of the Spirit. In his formidable three volume work, *The Firstborn of Many: A Christology for Converting Christians*, Gelpi explicates an inculturated Spirit Christology for a North American context and draws on the philosophical tradition of Bernard Lonergan, A.N. Whitehead, C.S. Peirce and Josiah Royce to formulate a foundational Christology based on a metaphysics of experience in relation to a theology of conversion. This in conjunction with a Pauline Spirit Christology of hope forms the basis of Gelpi’s theology of conversion, which he believes is more suited to Christian discipleship and spiritual formation in the North American context. Gelpi’s model is rooted in the notion of experience, both the experience of God in the divine Breath (his term for the Holy Spirit) and the impact of the Spirit of God on human experience. He sees Christian hope as ‘transformative to human experience and being’ and conversion is experienced on a number of different levels, including the intellectual, the affective, the moral and socio-political. In all these areas, conversion entails turning from the irresponsible to the responsible and ‘taking responsibility for our life of faith in light of the particular incarnational and pentecostal gifts of God’ as a ‘dynamic process of transformation.’ Yong relies heavily on Gelpi’s work in his own development of a theology of salvation and believes his theology of experience and his understanding of conversion as an ongoing transformative process as hugely significant for any Pentecostal-charismatic scholarship. See Yong, A., ‘In Search of Foundations: the oeuvre of Donald L. Gelpi, SJ, and its significance for Pentecostal Theology and Philosophy’ *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 11/1 (2002), p.25 fn.55.


The first is a theme we have now reiterated a number of times regarding men, women and children as sons and daughters of the Father. The second is the significance of Weinandy’s non-hierarchical and symmetrical view of the Trinity. Although this is a contentious view, Weinandy’s thesis has much in it that would appeal to the postmodern or perhaps more importantly, post-Christendom perspective. We will discuss the postmodern perspective and culture in more detail in a later chapter, however, the move away from institutional religion is also a rejection of hierarchical and often patriarchal ecclesial structure. Volf’s criticism that ‘a hierarchical notion of the Trinity ends up underwriting an authoritarian practice in the church’, might be contested but is a significant perspective. We can clearly see the attraction of Weinandy’s alternative and yet still orthodox model of the Trinity for a society that is suspicious of authoritarianism in general, but perhaps especially suspicious of it in the church. Those who are alienated from the church due to a negative perspective of patriarchy, hierarchy and authority would be relieved to discover that there are some alternative, less hierarchical and subordinationist models being presented. The third is Weinandy’s focus on experience and specifically on the recognition of the validity of experience as a form of knowing. This is an important step for a church involved in mission to contemporary society. Kapic points out that an anthroposensitive approach ‘considers Christian experience to be a legitimate and necessary tool for understanding and articulating correct doctrine.’ Any contemporary theology of mission will need to engage with the notion of human experience and culture. With Weinandy’s work in mind, we will turn now to consider the work of Colin Gunton on the Trinity within which there are many parallels with the work we have considered thus far.

**Colin Gunton: The Trinity and the Spirit**

Colin Gunton, in his writing on the Trinity, pursues a similar line to Weinandy albeit in a different fashion and with different emphases. In the Preface to *Father, Son*

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243 This issue is dealt with in some detail by Kevin Giles in *Jesus and the Father* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2006). Giles addresses the worrying trend in some Evangelical circles where hierarchical view of the Trinity is used to endorse the subordination of women to men. He makes a strong case from antiquity for a non-hierarchical and non-subordinationist view of the Trinity.
244 Kapic, K., *Communion with God*, p.118.
and Holy Spirit, he writes that he is offering an account of the work of the triune God ‘in which a more secure place is sought for the doctrine of the Holy Spirit than has often been the case in theology, especially the theology of the West.’

He too is critical of Augustine and his legacy to Western trinitarian theology. There are various aspects of Augustine’s thought which, in his view, vitiate an adequate understanding of the Trinity and in agreement with Weinandy, he identifies Neoplatonism as one of the main culprits. According to Gunton, Augustine’s thought is tainted by Neoplatonism to such an extent that he betrays the scriptural and traditional understanding of the Trinity. Whereas Weinandy’s main criticism of Augustine is that emanationist ideas have distorted a true portrayal of trinitarian relations, Gunton argues that Neoplatonic ideas of ‘substance’ have distorted Augustine’s work and subsequent views of the Trinity, the danger being that this gives rise to some form of modalism. For Gunton, the outcome of Neoplatonic philosophy has resulted in ‘a view of an unknown substance supporting the three persons rather than being constituted by their relatedness.’

Weinandy identifies the deficiencies in trinitarian thought in the East and the West as directly attributable to a failure to adopt crucial insights from the work of Athanasius. Gunton is more critical of the Western tradition than the Eastern one, and does not specifically refer to the work of Athanasius in the way that Weinandy does. He does, however, refer to insights established by the Cappadocians that he perceives Augustine to have failed to adopt, and he attributes Augustine’s weaknesses to his lack of appreciation of the breakthrough in trinitarian thinking by them. He makes the point that the Cappadocians’ conceptual and ontological revolution was that God is as he is made known by the Son and the Spirit – ‘he is made known as he is, and not through something other than God in the economy that under- or overlies his being.’

He claims that Augustine is effectively modalist in the sense that the three persons of the Trinity tend to be conceived as posterior to an underlying deitas or being of which they are, so to speak, outcrops. The Cappadocian revolution in thinking should have secured the concept that there is no being anterior to that of the persons.

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246 For a full discussion of this see Gunton, C., *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1991) pp.31-55.
Gunton proceeds to highlight various aspects of Augustine’s pneumatology that he believes have left the Western tradition seriously deficient. There are three main lacunae in Augustine’s work that particularly concern him. The first is that Augustine fails to include the eschatological dimension of the work of the Spirit that is so prominent in the New Testament, the absence of which, Gunton identifies as one of the worst legacies to the Western tradition.\textsuperscript{251} His second criticism is that Augustine’s work betrays a dualistic tendency in requiring a choice between this world and the next rather than ‘a realisation of the next in the materiality of the present and a conception of the Spirit as realizing the conditions of the age to come particularly through the creation of community.’\textsuperscript{252} And finally, he is concerned that by emphasizing the Spirit as having a ‘unitive’ function of love within the Trinity he ‘minimizes the part played in the development of the doctrine of the Trinity by the incarnation – for an incarnational conception of love is scarcely to be found – and he obscures the specific hypostatic uniqueness of the Holy Spirit.’\textsuperscript{253} Gunton’s opinion is that a trinitarian model requires a portrayal of the Spirit ‘as an outgoing love derived from the economy of the incarnation.’\textsuperscript{254} As we have seen, this last point is also of particular concern to Coffey, and part of his return model. Gunton writes, ‘The overall result is that because the doctrine of the Spirit has inadequate economic hypostatic weight in Augustine, the father of Western theology also lacks the means to give personal distinctiveness to the being of the Spirit in the inner Trinity.’\textsuperscript{255}

Gunton’s own response to this is spelled out most clearly in his book \textit{Father, Son and Holy Spirit} in which one of his main aims is to redress the balance towards the work and person of the Spirit and to give the Holy Spirit due weight in the being and action of God. He writes, ‘[a]lmost all of the papers seek to show that a theology of divine action that does not incorporate the distinctive work of the Spirit as well as that of the Son fails in some way to encompass the breadth of the biblical economy.’\textsuperscript{256} In his essay on the work of T.F. Torrance, he brings out precisely Weinandy’s point with reference to the \textit{homoousion} as being a central concept for our understanding of the Trinity. Whereas traditionally, the \textit{homoousion} of the Son with the Father has been seen to be essential for our understanding of the divinity of the

\textsuperscript{251} Gunton, C., \textit{The Promise}, p.50.
\textsuperscript{252} Gunton, C., \textit{The Promise}, p.50.
\textsuperscript{253} Gunton, C., \textit{The Promise}, p.51.
\textsuperscript{254} Gunton, C., \textit{The Promise}, p.51.
\textsuperscript{255} Gunton, C., \textit{The Promise}, p.51.
\textsuperscript{256} Gunton, C., \textit{Father, Son and Holy Spirit}, p.xiii.
Son, he argues that this must also extend to the Holy Spirit, and that it is not enough for a doctrine of the Trinity unless the *homoousion* of the Holy Spirit is also established.\textsuperscript{257} Gunton sees this as a crucial move to establishing what he understands as the necessary explication of the co-equality and co-eternity of all three persons in the immanent Trinity.

In keeping with others who wish to emphasize the role of the Holy Spirit in the being and action of God, Gunton sees the New Testament witness as evidence enough for equal, reciprocal and coherent missions of the Spirit and the Son, and foundational for understanding the distinctive character of the actions of the Father, Son and Spirit within a unified conception of God’s action.\textsuperscript{258} He is in agreement with Coffey that the maxim ‘the acts of the Trinity in this world are undivided’ is helpful only if it is not applied at the expense of understanding the distinct roles of the persons of the Trinity in this world. He writes, ‘we must remember that one point of the doctrine of the Trinity is that it should enable us to attribute particular forms of action to the particular persons of the Trinity, albeit without suggesting that they are other than the acts of the one God.’\textsuperscript{259} So it is a question of distinguishing, not separating what the three persons do, as we have already considered with the work of Del Colle in particular. Going further than Del Colle, Weinandy and Gunton both argue, in different ways, that our trinitarian theology needs to develop beyond some of the traditional models, even to the point of revising some crucial aspects of them. In respect of the *Filioque* clause, Weinandy claims that his model ‘transcends’ it. Gunton, on the other hand, sees the Western *Filioque* clause as being one of the main contributing factors preventing Western theologians from outlining an equal and distinct role for the Spirit in the trinitarian economy. He believes that the *Filioque* clause serves to exacerbate the tendency within Western theology to subordinate the role of the Spirit to the Son so ‘that he appears to be given little more of a function than the application of the work of Christ to the believer, church and the rest.’\textsuperscript{260} It could legitimately be argued that this role is not insignificant or to be belittled as it is the role of co-constituting the church as the body of Christ.\textsuperscript{261} Or as Owen describes,

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{257} Gunton, C., *Father, Son and Holy Spirit*, p.38.
\item \textsuperscript{258} Gunton, C., *Father, Son and Holy Spirit*, p.79.
\item \textsuperscript{259} Gunton, C., *Father, Son and Holy Spirit*, p.28.
\item \textsuperscript{260} Gunton, C., *The Promise*, p.168.
\item \textsuperscript{261} I owe this point to Gavin D’Costa made in conversation.
\end{itemize}
[b]ut yet, of all the promises given to them concerning a future and more glorious state of the Church, next to that of the coming of Christ, those are the most eminent which respect a more full communication of the Spirit. Accordingly we find in the New testament (sic), that whatever concerns the conversion of the elect, the edification of the Church, the sanctification and consolation of believers, is so appropriated to him, that, without his special operation, nothing of it can be enjoyed or performed. So careful was God to secure the faith of the Church in this matter, as he knew its eternal concernsments to lie therein.262

Nevertheless, one of Gunton’s specific objections to the Filioque is that it gives a warrant for understanding the Spirit as ‘the Spirit of Jesus’ without allowing us to then articulate a reciprocal role for the Spirit which would allow us to speak also of Jesus being ‘of the Spirit’263 so this is a point more germane to Christology proper rather than to ecclesiology. Gunton’s argument is that Scripture attests to both being true: that the Spirit is of Jesus as Jesus is of the Spirit, and that Western pneumatological subordinationism not only leaves the trinitarian tradition impoverished, but fails to do justice to the biblical portrayal of the acts of the persons of the Trinity. The reciprocity that he is advocating is that although we understand the risen Jesus as the agent of the pouring out of the Spirit, we need to understand also that the incarnate Son is equally the gift of the Spirit. It is clear from this that Gunton, is following closely many aspects of a Spirit Christology. Smail in The Giving Gift argues precisely this point, proposing what is sometimes called a Spirituque clause as a supplement to the Filioque. Smail also objects to the Augustinian description of the Spirit, claiming that it portrays the Spirit in terms of ‘impersonal grace’ rather than as a fully personal Spirit. In his view, ‘[t]he birth stories themselves insist that the Son depends on the Spirit for his coming into the world, and that dependence continues throughout his earthly life and beyond.’264 Both Gunton and Smail see this as serving to redress the balance within the innertrinitarian relations, portraying an equality-within-difference of function and at the same time becoming a starting point for a fully developed pneumatology, thus securing the notion of a distinct personhood for

the third person of the Trinity. Gunton comes to the point where he sees the Filioque as so threatening to this that he writes, ‘[a]ll this demands a doctrine of personal distinctness of the Holy Spirit, in relation to both Son and Father, and that in turn demands an abandonment of the Western Filioque doctrine whose chief function is to prevent such an individuation.’

Thus, Gunton concludes that we can and must acknowledge the distinct but coinherent roles of the persons of the Trinity in the mystery of salvation. In agreement with Weinandy, he maintains that God the Father is the fount and goal of our being. He continues, however, ‘we neither receive our being in the first place apart from Christ, the mediator of creation and salvation, nor are directed to our goal apart from the Spirit, the perfecting cause.’

Unlike Weinandy, he does however, point out that when arguing for co-equality within the Trinity, we must also acknowledge the subordinationist elements within the New Testament. Gunton rightly identifies the need for models of the Trinity that stress the co-equality of the Father, Son and Spirit to be ‘adequately correlated’ with the subordinationist elements of the economic Trinity evident in the apparently subordinationist texts of 1 Corinthians 15 and some of those in the Fourth Gospel. He writes, ‘[t]hey at least appear to be counter evidence to the central thesis, and therefore require careful interrogation.’ Passages that indicate subordinationist elements of the economic Trinity occur mainly in John’s Gospel, but also elsewhere in the New Testament (cf. Jn. 4.34, 6.38-40, 5.30, 5.19-30 and Rom 15.3). Ivor Davidson writes,

The whole structure of the relationship between the Father and the incarnate Son in John’s narrative implies that obedience to the purpose and desire of the one who initiates the Son’s mission is a vital part of the life of the Word incarnate and intrinsic to his work as Saviour. Jesus speaks as he does and acts as he does as subject to the command of his Father (Jn. 12:49-50; 14:31; 15:9-10).


Gunton’s solution is to draw on Irenaeus’ foundational illustration of the Son and the Spirit as the two hands of God. He writes,

It is often said that when the New Testament writers use the word, “God” simpliciter, they are referring to God the Father, so that Irenaeus is true to scripture in speaking of Son and Spirit as the two hands of God, the two agencies by which the work of God the Father is done in the world.²⁷⁰

Gunton prefers this analogy because the Father is seen as the ‘fount’ of the Trinity, but not at the expense of a kind of equality. In order to communicate this equality, Gunton, like Weinandy draws on the full implications of the *homoousion* principle and applies this to express the oneness of the being and act of God. Thus, the Son and the Spirit are understood to be ‘as truly and as fully God as the Father’. This achieves a two-fold purpose. Not only is the Western principle that the acts of the triune God in the world are undivided safeguarded so that the Trinity is not divided into three distinct wills, but with the Irenaean analogy, the economic subordinationism within the Trinity is expressed without detracting from the full divinity of the Son and the Spirit. Gunton acknowledges that there is an economic but not ontological priority of the Father, and that does not diminish the divinity of the Son and the Spirit. ‘It is as truly divine to be the obedient self-giving Son as it is to be the Father who sends and the Spirit who renews and perfects. Only by virtue of the particularity and relatedness of all three is God God.’²⁷¹

**Gunton’s ‘Spirit Christology’**

Although Gunton does not use the term ‘Spirit Christology’ his particular interest lies in the Christologies of John Owen and Edward Irving, for the specific reason that they both formulate Christologies in which the Holy Spirit plays a significant part and are fully trinitarian. As with the Christologies of Coffey and Del Colle, these are not offered as alternatives or replacements for Logos Christology, but as a complementary aspect of the doctrine of Christ, in which the Holy Spirit plays a

²⁷⁰ Gunton, C., _The Promise_, p.166.
²⁷¹ Gunton, C., _The Promise_, p.166.
significant role in the formation of Jesus Christ. So for Owen, the voluntary assumption of the human nature by the Son is ascribed to the Son himself, but ‘the divine efficiency in this matter was the peculiar work of the Holy Ghost.’272 Owen emphasizes the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of the Son, as well as the Spirit of the Father and the Spirit as ‘the immediate operator of all divine acts of the Son himself, even on his own human nature.’273 The implication of Owen’s Christology is that it highlights the work of the Spirit in the humanity of Christ. The human nature of Christ was miraculously formed, sanctified from the moment of its conception, and filled with grace, but also, grew in grace in the power of the Spirit.274 Thus, the divine nature, according to Owen, did not control or predetermine the actions of Jesus Christ.

His divine nature did not supply the place of a human soul, nor did it immediately operate the works he performed…but being a perfect man, like us in everything but sin, his rational soul was the immediate principle of all his moral operations. In the improvement and exercise of these faculties, he made a progress like other men, which was accompanied with a progression in grace also (Luke 2:40). …this growth in grace and wisdom was the peculiar work of the Holy Ghost; for as the faculties of his mind were gradually enlarged, he filled them with grace for actual obedience.275

So rather than the human nature of Christ being directly determined by the Word, Christ’s human nature is identified as ‘autokineton’, ‘a self-determining spiritual principle, fully self-conscious and as creature open and responsive to God’276 As Gunton discusses in another essay, it is ‘the utter and complete self-giving of the eternal Word, obedient to the Father and dependent upon the Spirit, that makes the particular historic person, Jesus Christ, at the same time the way of the many to God.’277 The point that Gunton brings out is that the human life of Jesus is not so much pre-programmed as might be suggested by some nearly docetic Christology, but

274 Owen, J., *The Holy Spirit*, p.120.
that it is through the leading of the Holy Spirit that Jesus is able to bear human flesh through all the hardships and temptations of his human life and still be obedient to the Father. He is ‘maintained in holiness by virtue of [his] free response to the guidance of the Spirit.’278 So for Gunton, such a conception creates space for a conception of the humanity of Jesus ‘which gives due emphasis to his freedom, particularity and contingency: they are enabled by the (transcendent) Spirit rather than determined by the (immanent) Word.’279

If it is the Spirit rather than the Word who is identified as the ‘immediate, peculiar, efficient cause of all external divine operations’280 then this clearly has implications for Trinitarian theology, Christology and pneumatology and more specifically, the doctrine of the two natures of Christ and the communion of the natures within the hypostatic union and soteriology.281 Owen’s claim is not unproblematic, and we will discuss his Christology further in Chapter Three. For now, the key point is that Gunton is particularly interested in a pneumatic Christology for the impact that this has on soteriology. The reason that it is a crucial step to re-establish the place of the Holy Spirit in the theology of incarnation282 is not simply because this Christology is buffered against docetic tendencies, but because of the soteriological significance of this move. Irving writes, ‘[a]nd to that end…the Holy Spirit formed for the Son a body from the fallen flesh of Mary. The salvation of this representative piece of flesh becomes the basis for the salvation of the rest.’283 His point about a more robust pneumatology is not only that it affords a place for the Holy Spirit in all our theologizing, but also that it gives us a greater appreciation of the humanity of Christ, and that it is the Son, in his humanity, who saves.284 Christology determines soteriology; a Christology that has a docetic tendency will affect our view of the atonement in one way and one that has an Ebionite tendency in another. A Christology which acknowledges the full humanity of Christ as well as his full divinity, will allow us to emphasize his own participation in all that is human and the

278 Gunton, C., Father, Son and Holy Spirit p.193.
279 Gunton, C., The Promise, p.70.
280 Gunton, C., The Promise, p.70.
284 See also, Weinandy, T., In the Likeness of Sinful Flesh for a robust account of the notion that it is Christ, in his humanity, who saves.
redemption of humankind and therefore also, humanity’s participation in Christ. With Spirit Christology, this is understood as a work of the Spirit, the work of God that terminates with the Spirit. We will return to some of these points in relation to Christ’s humanity and ours in Chapter Three.

**Spirit Christology and the Biblical Witness: the coinherent missions of the Son and the Spirit**

We have been referring thus far to the biblical witness to the Son and the Spirit, and the importance of the revelation of the triune God in the economy through the works of the Son and the Spirit, which is so crucial to the methodology of those who advocate a Spirit Christology. All proponents of orthodox Spirit Christology place equal emphasis on the accounts of the life of Christ in the synoptic Gospels, and often also refer to the theology of Paul and Hebrews, thus expanding the horizon for Christological debate, rather than narrowing it down to just the explication of John 1.14. What follows are some biblical loci that form the basis of what we have been arguing so far. We have already noted the significance of Luke 1.35 and Matt. 1.18, that Jesus was conceived by the power of the Spirit. In Luke 2.25-32, his dedication as a baby was presided over by the Spirit. Luke 1.80 and 2.52 attest that he grew strong in spirit and wisdom. In Luke 3.21-22, the Spirit descends upon him in bodily form at his baptism, to then be led by the Spirit into the wilderness. (Luke 4.1) Some translations say he was ‘driven’ by the Spirit, which gives the Spirit an even more forceful role. In the desert, he overcomes the temptations of the devil and then returns to Galilee filled with the power of the Spirit and Luke 4.18-19 tells us that his public ministry, inaugurated in the synagogue of Nazareth, was anointed by the Spirit. Hebrews confirms the humanity of Christ, that he was like us, his brothers and sisters in every respect (Heb 2.17) and that he ‘offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to the one who was able to save him from death, and …he learned obedience through what he suffered.’ (Heb 5.7-8) Hebrews 9.14 tells us that Jesus offered himself up on the cross ‘through the eternal Spirit’, he

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cries to his Father, ‘Abba!’ on the cross, also by the Spirit (Rom. 8.15) and Romans 1.3-4 proclaims that the Son ‘was descended from David according to the flesh and was declared to be the Son of God with power according to the spirit of holiness by resurrection from the dead.’ Acts speaks of Jesus of Nazareth as the one ‘anointed with the Holy Spirit and with power, how he went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him’ (Acts 10.38). The Bible irrefutably demonstrates the Spirit as an active person in the life and ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus.287

Gunton argues that the Lucan material especially serves as a basis for the otherness and particularity of the Spirit, even at times portraying the Spirit as over-against Jesus.288 He even writes, that it could be argued ‘that the first two chapters of the Gospel of Luke express a certain priority of the Spirit over the Son’289 and equally, he sees that the tradition which holds that it is the Spirit by whom Jesus is raised from the dead gives weight to this idea. Against accounts of the Spirit that portray the Spirit as derivative or least, we affirm the hypostatic individuation of the Spirit. Owen writes, ‘[t]he will and pleasure of the Holy Spirit is in all the goodness and grace that he communicates to us or works in us. He is not a mere instrument or servant disposing of what he has no concern in, nor power over: but in all things he works according to his own will.’290 (Jn. 3.8) Thus, Gunton acknowledges that although it is clear from Scripture that Jesus becomes the one who pours out the Spirit after the resurrection, he is adamant that this should not be the dominant feature of any trinitarian model.

287 For a close study of the biblical data regarding the relation of Christ and the Spirit in the four Gospels see Hawthorne, Gerald F. The Presence and the Power: The significance of the Holy Spirit in the life and ministry of Jesus (London: Word Publishing, 1991). Hawthorne begins his study asking the question, ‘To what extent was this extraordinary life the direct result of the Spirit’s activity upon it?’ He goes on to examine the work of the Spirit in the conception and birth of Jesus, his boyhood and youth, his baptism and temptation, ministry, death and resurrection, arguing for his own version of a Spirit Christology. His conclusions are reminiscent of Owen’s Christology, where Jesus is acted upon by the Spirit in his humanity in his incarnate life, accounting for his growth and progress into wisdom and knowledge as he grows into adulthood, although Hawthorne himself does not refer to Owen. His conclusion, however, is a form of kenotic Christology in which Christ voluntarily gives up some of his divine attributes and here he departs from Owen. The question of Jesus’ dependence on the Spirit for holiness and power however is a recurring theme in Spirit Christology.
The Spirit in Jesus’ Life and Death

Weinandy similarly roots his argument in Scripture, giving a detailed account of various New Testament texts, all of which support his view that the Spirit has a distinctive and important role in the life, ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus and in the ongoing life of the church. He does, however, have a different emphasis, in The Father’s Spirit of Sonship, as we have already seen: to emphasise the Spirit’s role more specifically as the one who shapes the filial and paternal relation in the immanent Trinity. In focussing on the Spirit as the Spirit of Sonship, Weinandy studies most of the main events of Jesus’ life. He makes more of the role of the Spirit in Jesus’ baptism than either Coffey or Del Colle. In Jesus’ baptism, the Spirit descends upon Jesus and the voice of God is heard declaring him to be the Son with whom the Father is well pleased. Weinandy correlates the event of Jesus’ baptism with the role of the Spirit in the person of the Son. Jesus’ Sonship here is presented as dependent upon his being the bearer of the Holy Spirit. So Jesus is described as the Son, through the anointing of the Spirit, and will remain the faithful servant of the Father even unto death. Weinandy argues that this is an insight into his eternal Sonship. ‘Therefore, as the Spirit conformed Jesus to be the faithful Son on earth, so the Spirit conforms him as the Son, within the Trinity, so as to be eternally pleasing to the Father.’ Weinandy argues that the Father’s declaration of Jesus as the Son occurs at his baptism, in conjunction with the descent of the Spirit. This indicates that he eternally authenticates, by which he also means ‘begets’, the Son in the Spirit. So for Weinandy, the baptism of Jesus, supports his thesis. The phrase, ‘[t]oday I have begotten you’ can then be understood as a temporal expression of an eternal act, just as Luke’s emphasis on Jesus praying to the Father indicates the eternal communion between the Father and the Son in the Spirit. Moreover, in the baptism, the Spirit is the one who confirms Jesus as the beloved while simultaneously affirming the Father as the lover. For Weinandy, Jesus as bearer and sender of the Spirit is exemplified in John 7. ‘If, then, the living waters of the Spirit flow from the heart of Jesus, it would seem to imply that it is the Spirit who molds and suffuses the very being, the very

291 Weinandy, T., The Father’s Spirit, p.28.
heart, of Jesus, and so conforms Jesus to be who he is – the Son. Only because the Spirit wells up in him as the Son can he then baptize with the Holy Spirit.\textsuperscript{292}

As we have already noted, Romans 8.14-17 is a seminal text for Weinandy in respect of the Spirit in the filial and paternal relationship. The calling of ‘Abba!’ by Jesus is evidence of the Spirit at work in him, just as it is also the evidence of the Spirit at work in humanity, when we cry to the Father as ‘Abba’. Mark’s account of Jesus calling to his Abba Father on the eve of the crucifixion is evidence of the Spirit of Sonship at work and thus Weinandy focuses on the experience of Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane as illustrating the work of the Spirit in the crucifixion.

The agony in the garden then supremely illustrates the paternity of the Father and the filiality of the Son…If Abba can only be spoken in the Spirit (Gal. 4:6, Rom. 8:15) then within the crucifixion, at this most severe and radical moment, we behold in time the eternal enactment of the Father being ceaselessly, in the Spirit, the Father of and for the Son, and the Son being always, in the Spirit, the Son of and for the Father.\textsuperscript{293}

The idea of the Spirit being the one in and through whom Jesus offered himself is not only in accordance with the biblical portrayal, but gives a distinctly pneumatological and therefore trinitarian cast to the crucifixion and resurrection. The prayers in Gethsemane are offered in the Spirit, as Jesus calls to his Abba Father. The Son, seemingly forsaken by the Father, is sustained by the Spirit, and in Hebrews 9.14 we read that Jesus offered himself ‘through the eternal Spirit.’ Weinandy then goes on to compare this with John’s account of Jesus’ prayer to the Father in John 17 and the Spirit’s role in the glorifying of the Son by the Father and the Father by the Son. As with the crucifixion, so with the resurrection, Weinandy argues that while it is the Father who raises Jesus from the dead, he does so by the Spirit, and in that act, ‘the Son, who was in the flesh, is now, through the resurrection designated Son of God in power.’\textsuperscript{294} So the resurrection by the power of the Spirit is then another event that ‘absolutely confirms the sonship of Jesus and unconditionally confirms by the same

\textsuperscript{292} Weinandy, T., \textit{The Father’s Spirit}, p.45.
\textsuperscript{293} Weinandy, T., \textit{The Father’s Spirit}, pp.29-30.
\textsuperscript{294} Weinandy, T., \textit{The Father’s Spirit}, p.32.
Spirit, the eternal fatherhood of the Father. Dabney has similarly written on the
Spirit as the one who leads and accompanies Jesus through his life, suffering, trial,
death and resurrection. He argues that in Hebrews, the Spirit of God is not portrayed
as belonging to Jesus in the sense of his property, but ‘rather as the power that bears
his office and sacrifice’.  

The New Testament witnesses to the work of the Holy Spirit, therefore, as the
eschatological *Spiritus Vivificans*, active on both sides of the cross. Moreover,
it is precisely as such that the Spirit is to be understood as the *Spiritus Crucis*,
for it was the same *life-giving Spirit* of God who freely entered into death, hell
and the grave to raise Jesus from the dead, who first led Jesus into a life-
giving ministry of suffering and sacrifice and death. *The Spirit of God* is, thus,
the *Spirit of the cross, the Spirit of the self-sacrifice and resurrection of Jesus
Christ*.  

The ramifications of recent work on pneumatology are important for a theology of
atonement and soteriology. It is not within the scope of this chapter to consider this
in detail, but it is clearly germane to the question of mission so we will note some of
the significant developments and the gains of Spirit Christology for soteriology.

**The Spirit and Salvation**

We have been arguing throughout that Spirit Christology constrains us to speak of the
coinherent missions of the Son and the Spirit, and despite shades of sequentialism in
Del Colle’s and Coffey’s adherence to the *Filioque*, that we cannot simply bifurcate
the two missions or place them sequentially. We have demonstrated the New
Testament witness to the work of the Spirit in the death and resurrection of Christ. We
cannot therefore develop a theology of salvation apart from the Spirit. All the

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296 Dabney, D.L., ‘Naming the Spirit: Towards a Pneumatology of the Cross’ in *Starting with the Spirit*,
p.53.
298 See Dabney, D.L., ‘Naming the Spirit: Towards a Pneumatology of the Cross’ in *Starting with the
Smail, T., ‘The Cross and the Spirit’ in Smail, T., Walker, A., and Wright, N., *Charismatic Renewal:
The Search for a Theology* (London: SPCK, 1993), Yong, A., *The Spirit Poured Out on All Flesh*
theologians surveyed thus far are concerned that any theology of the Spirit encompasses soteriology. This is, however, treated with more or less emphasis depending on the particular concerns of the theologian. Gunton, for example, has a greater emphasis on soteriology in his work.

Although Gunton does not specifically speak of the ‘missions’ of the Spirit and the Son, his work is characterized by the treatment of the non-identical but inseparable work of the Spirit and the Son in creation. And as his concern, especially in his later work, is to articulate a proper role of the Spirit, his contribution in this area is important. Two areas of particular interest to Gunton, (which for him are inextricably bound up with the question of soteriology) are the issues of the Spirit’s role in creation and eschatology. For Gunton, the saving work of God in the Trinity is not simply for humanity but is for the whole of creation, and more specifically, the movement of the creation towards being taken up into God is a work of the Spirit. Again we see the Spirit being afforded a crucial role in the economy of salvation. We have already noted Gunton’s work on the Spirit forming Christ in his humanity. Following on from the notion that the Spirit is bound up in every aspect of Jesus’ life, Gunton develops the idea that the Spirit was not simply involved in the event of the crucifixion and resurrection but also in the significance of these events for salvation. He describes the Spirit as the ‘efficient power of Christ’s sacrifice.’

It is impossible to view the saving work of God as purely Christological without taking into account the work of the Spirit in that. So in conclusion we will look briefly at some of Gunton’s work on the atonement and pneumatology, some of which we will pick up again in the next chapter.

Gunton bases much of his work on pneumatology and the atonement on Edward Irving. For Irving, the actual body of Christ becomes central to his theology of sacrifice, priesthood and atonement. It is the flesh of Christ that Irving sees as the ‘middle space on which the powers of the world contended with the Holy Spirit dwelling in His soul’. The cosmic battle of the atonement is waged therefore, not only in and through Christ’s physical body, but is thoroughly pneumatological. Gunton writes, ‘[i]t is, we might say, Aulen without myth, because the battle is centred on the human Christ’s engagement in his own body with the powers of

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300 See Gunton, C., *The Actuality of Atonement* pp.128-141 for an extended discussion of Irving’s work.
evil.' In Gunton’s atonement theology, the physical embodied and human nature of Christ become central, and the work of the Spirit in the human body of Christ becomes a crucial aspect of it. ‘This body, consisting as it does of fallen flesh, is yet kept from sin by the agency of the Spirit, and so becomes the first instance of restored humanity and the basis of redemption for others.’ This has implications for the role of the Spirit in the physical world which is a topic to which we will return. Christ’s humanity comes to the fore as the fully human and fully divine person, he is the paradigm of the Spirit’s work and the new humanity. Through his life of sinless obedience, sustained by the Spirit, he becomes the means of salvation for all humanity, and able to take up humanity into himself. On the difference between the missions of Christ and the Spirit, it is clear that only Christ can bear sins, and this cannot be a work of the Spirit, but the work of Christ is wholly dependent on the work of the Spirit. In keeping with all that we have seen so far, Gunton emphasises again the importance of Christ being viewed as both the bearer and the sender of the Spirit, and, following Irving, he describes Christ the sacrifice who then becomes Christ the priest. It is through Christ that the Spirit is poured out on all flesh and it is in Christ and through the Spirit that human beings become truly human.

There is much of interest in Gunton’s work on the atonement and the Spirit, with his emphasis on the cosmic significance of the Spirit, atonement and eschatology, that is germane to any discussion on Spirit Christology. And as we have seen, these are themes that are introduced in Del Colle’s work. For Gunton, not only humanity, but the entire creation is affected by sin, awaiting redemption in Christ. It is the whole of creation that needs redeeming and the purpose of the self-giving of Jesus is to unite all things to him, which is a work of the Spirit. He makes the point from Romans 8 that the mention of the eschatological Spirit comes significantly in a passage concerned with the redemption of the whole creation, which is to be ‘set free from its bondage to decay’ (v.21). For Gunton, justification is not simply a forensic or transactional process, but means that ‘God in his freedom as Spirit will bring to perfection that which was begun, despite the worst efforts of the creation to resist.’ Grace functions as the ‘pull of the Spirit’ to completion in contrast to the pull of sin to dissolution. Thus we come back to the theme introduced in the first chapter, that

'pneumatology is the key for the return of all things to God.' The return of the creation to God is bound up with notions of freedom, liberation, gift and love.

If the matter is put in terms of the action of God the Spirit, the point can be made concretely. Jesus was free in the midst of the pressures towards enslavement to the demonic because his life was maintained in freedom by the action of the liberating Spirit. So it is in general: the Spirit of God enabling the world to be itself, to realise its eschatological perfection. That is a kind of constraint, but the constraint of love, as Paul knew (2 Cor. 5:14)

The Spirit then becomes instrumental in the atoning work of God to draw all creation to himself. The atonement is understood as a work of gift, grace and love. This is something directly related to his view of the work of the Spirit in Christ, the freedom of Christ in the economy of salvation and the deeply trinitarian cast to his theology. He makes the point that if we understand the Spirit to be God graciously enabling life to be truly human, and if we see it as a work of God the Father, ‘coming indeed from “outside” as the outworking of the eternal love of God, but taking shape within an autonomous human life (autonomous because given autonomy by the Spirit)’ this not only gives the atonement a cosmic context rather than just the anthropocentric and individualistic view of the atonement so prevalent in the West, but gives the context for understanding the atonement as a work of grace and gift. If the relation of God to the world is viewed logically or causally there is always the danger that the work of God towards creation can be seen in terms of mechanical determination. Instead, Gunton presents a view of the atonement which draws a sharp distinction between mechanical determination and grace and in which the Spirit plays a crucial part.

We have been arguing that the Spirit works in the conception, life, suffering, death, resurrection and glorification of Christ. The view of the Spirit that we have been describing in the last two chapters compels us to consider the role of the Spirit in all aspects of the Son’s life, and all aspects of his relation with the Father. The Spirit is never absent, superfluous, secondary, or ancillary, but fully participant in all

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306 Del Colle, Christ and the Spirit, p.103.
aspects of the work of God in this world, as the co-equal and co-eternal third person of the Trinity. How then does Spirit Christology affect our view of the crucifixion? First, as we have been arguing, a fully trinitarian understanding of the event of the crucifixion is crucial for our understanding of atonement as the free gift of God to the world and a work of God which is effective for all creation and not only humanity. Further to this is the fact that Spirit Christology challenges accounts of the crucifixion that posit any implied separation within the personhood of God, as we see the Spirit involved with the person of Christ throughout all his sufferings. The separation or abandonment of the Son by the Father is never therefore viewed as total in any sense of that word. The crucifixion is the greatest display of God’s love to the world, enacted by all three persons of the Trinity, and the means by which this love is poured out into the world. On this account of the crucifixion there is no room for conceiving of the death of Jesus as the violent act of a father against a helpless son, or some kind of transaction with the father demanding a sacrifice from the son in a detached way. Moreover, any account of the atonement that rests on the notion of the real abandonment of the Son by the Father, not only allows an improper separation between the Father and the Son, but is wide open to the criticism that we are telling a story of a ‘vengeful Father punishing an innocent Son’ rather than the story of a ‘loving and holy God, Father, Son and Spirit, bearing himself the pain of our failures.’ Against accounts of the crucifixion and the atonement that focus solely on the relationship of the Father and the Son, therefore, Spirit Christology includes the work of the Spirit. The real sacrifice of the Son in his human nature is not diminished, but the Son is held in relationship with the Father through the Spirit in this earthly life. In his incarnated state, the Son is prepared for his death by the Spirit, led through Gethsemane by the Spirit, held in the knowledge of the joy set before him by the Spirit, empowered to suffer and to die by the Spirit and raised to life in the power of the Spirit.

309 Holmes, Stephen R., The Wondrous Cross: Atonement and Penal Substitution in the Bible and History (London: Paternoster, 2007), p.109. Holmes also notes the negative feminist reading of this account of the atonement. 'In the twentieth century feminist theologians opened up a new line of criticism, suggesting that for God to punish his innocent Son amounted to nothing more than a legitimization of child abuse. In their writings we find the notion that the cross of Jesus understood in broadly penal terms displays the sado-masochism of Christianity and as encourages (sic) abused women to become complicit in their abuse.' p.5. He goes on to write, 'If we improperly separate the Father and the Son, if we forget that Jesus is God just as truly as the Father is God, then we might see it as a story of a vengeful God who demands that violence be inflicted — but of course at that point we have left anything like Christianity way behind, and so what we are saying is irrelevant anyway.' p.106.
The work of the Spirit in the death, resurrection, ascension and return of Christ is central to any Spirit Christology. Yong writes,

a pneumatological soteriology understands salvation to be the work of both Christ and the Spirit from beginning to end. To use Pauline language: the Holy Spirit enables proclamation, hearing, and understanding of the gospel, justifies through the resurrection of Christ, provides for adoption of believers, accomplishes rebirth and renewal, sanctifies hearts and lives, and provides the down payment for eschatological transformation. In all of this, the Spirit is not an appendage to Christ in the process of salvation but saves with Christ throughout.310

The liberating work of Christ and the eschatological Spirit for all creation is a dominant theme in Gunton’s atonement theology and serves to develop a certain perspective on what Del Colle calls ‘emancipatory concerns of social praxis and a just society.’

This theme, however, of Spirit Christology and the practice of justice in the societies in which we live has received its most thorough treatment in the work of Moltmann. As an early proponent of Spirit Christology, Moltmann develops the idea of mission as the liberating work of the Son and the Spirit, but with a specific emphasis on the calling of the church to the poor and marginalized.311 In his work, *The Way of Jesus Christ: Christology in Messianic Dimensions*312 he draws together many of his insights on Christ and the Spirit, rooting Christology in Jewish messianology. Here he articulates a Spirit Christology which sets the ‘eschatological history of Jesus in a holistic christology.’313 The Spirit who spoke through the prophets both ‘shaped the proclamation and ministry of the earthly Jesus’ as well as bringing about the renewal of all things.314 Spirit Christology is eschatological Christology, and eschatology is in turn Christological.315 Moltmann’s Spirit

310 Yong, A., *The Spirit Poured Out on All Flesh*, p.82.
Christology, rooted as it is in Jewish messianic expectations, sees the divine Spirit as ‘the first facet of the mystery of Jesus’. In other words, the history of Jesus begins with the Spirit.\(^{316}\)

For Moltmann, faith in Christ, as well as being hope for the future, is inextricably linked to discipleship and ethics. ‘To confess faith in Christ goes together with discipleship’.\(^{317}\) Christology is not to be divorced from Christian praxis, and in Moltmann’s view should inevitably lead the community of Christ to the poor, the sick, the oppressed, the despised and the unimportant.\(^{318}\) Mission for Moltmann is first trinitarian, leading the liberation of humanity and second ecclesial. Mission is the church participating in the extension of the kingdom of God, the glorification of the Father through the Son in the Holy Spirit, through which humanity is liberated from all forms of slavery in this life in the presence of the coming God.\(^{319}\) Moltmann’s emphasis on the obligation of the church to the poor and marginalized is in no way in tension with Gunton’s work, it is simply more clearly articulated by him. We will return to the question of discipleship, ethics and mission in Part Two, and go on to see David Bosch’s debt to Moltmann in his work on mission. Moreover, the church’s role and cooperation in the extension of the kingdom of God will be central to this thesis.

**The Economic and the Immanent Trinity**

Before we conclude this section on various aspects of Spirit Christology, and contemporary trinitarian studies, I wish to comment briefly on methodology as this is an area of some contention. We have noted throughout that the theologians surveyed place great emphasis on the biblical witness, the relationship of the revelation of the acts of God in this world to his being *in se*, and, to varying degrees, the importance of experience, specifically the experience of God through the Holy Spirit. We have also noted Molnar’s fierce criticism of Coffey much of which, though not all, is rooted in Molnar’s criticism of Coffey’s method and would be extended to others attempting to argue for a Christology ‘from below’. Molnar disparagingly writes, ‘[a]ny dualistic separation of [Jesus’] humanity and divinity…is typical of Christology from below,

\(^{316}\) Moltmann, J., *The Way*, p.73. For Moltmann, these emphases in Christology are crucial and a much needed corrective to the christological dogma of Nicaea which neglects the Jewish messianic promise fulfilled in the life, death, resurrection, ascension and promised return of Christ. p.74.


especially Spirit Christology. For Molnar, a Christology from below is an ‘ascent from the world to God instead of an ascent towards God in Christ through his Holy Spirit’ and negates the need even for faith. Molnar writes that he, on the other hand, is advocating a theology that ‘begins and ends its thinking with the Word incarnate in such a way that one thinks continually from a centre in God and not from a centre in oneself.’ Molnar contends that we have to distinguish between the ‘economic and the immanent Trinity in a theologically appropriate way’ and that we cannot simply equate the love and goodness of God with our own experiences of human love and goodness. Thompson on Weinandy, in a similar way, questions the lack of controls on Weinandy’s deductions based on moving from the economic Trinity to the immanent Trinity. He points out that this move does not take into account any kenotic motif in the economy. These are good points and need to be taken into consideration. As we have seen Del Colle cautions against a theology of experience and culture being reduced to anthropology. However, the debate is more nuanced and more complex than Molnar concedes, and we wish to include experience as a possible legitimate foundation for theological reflection.

Our experience of other human beings cannot lead us to a full revelation of God, but it is a far cry from this assertion to claiming that any Christology from below ultimately negates the need for faith, or that experience is not, in some way, if we are prepared to qualify this, a valid aspect of our theologizing. Christology from below still has Christ as its point of departure; the biblical witness to Christ. Molnar’s criticism is directed at Coffey, but applies to any Christology from below. He writes, ‘Coffey interprets the immanent Trinity as our understanding of the biblical data within the world of our own intellectual culture.’ I have difficulty in understanding how Molnar himself transcends this process. Any proposal regarding the immanent Trinity is at heart analogical and speculative. We have no way of measuring our proposals apart from the revelation of God through the biblical witness, and our own knowledge, which is culturally bound, and of which experience will be a part. Any theologian who proclaims that Jesus is Lord cannot do so apart from the Spirit of God

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320 Molnar, P., Response to David Coffey, p.61.
321 Molnar P., Some Dogmatic Implications, p.38.
322 Molnar, P., Some Dogmatic Implications, p.41.
323 Molnar, P., Some Dogmatic Implications, p.34.
325 Molnar, P., Some Dogmatic Implications, p.43.
who engenders our faith, whether she begins her Christology from below or above. Molnar asserts that caution needs to be exercised over ‘readings off’ from human experience to God; arguing directly from the economic Trinity to the immanent Trinity is problematic and certain controls need to be exercised. This is a necessary word of warning for proponents of Spirit Christology. It is not the case though that we should dismiss any Christology which starts from below, that we can make claims that this always compromises the heart of the Christian faith, or that experience is always irrelevant and dangerous as a basis for theological reflection. References to experience in the process of theological reflection should not always be treated with suspicion or dismissed out of hand. What is the Christian faith based on if not on the claim and the reality that we do not simply know about a person, Jesus Christ, but that we know Him and that we love God through Christ and in the power of the Spirit? Testimony to that love and that relationship not only will be but should be a part of our theological reflection.

We have surveyed a number of theologians whose primary concern for our talk of the Trinity and Christology has been to revivify a fully articulated doctrine of the Spirit, and to balance the work of Christ in the world with an equal, coinherent, and yet distinct role for the Spirit. We have seen an argument for this from both the Roman Catholic and the Reformed traditions, and have noted many overlapping concerns among the theologians surveyed. We have noted the importance of the Spirit as the Spirit of Sonship and the implications of this for humanity. We have examined key biblical texts, and discussed the role of the Spirit in the person of Christ, in the economy of salvation, in the crucifixion and resurrection and in the realization of this salvation as experienced by humanity. It is by the Spirit that we have access to the Father through the Son. In Gunton’s work we noted the importance of the work of the Spirit in creation and in the humanity of Christ, and began to explore some of the implications of that. We touched on the Spirit as the one who works in the physical and embodied world and as the one who, with Christ, brings redemption and liberation to all creation. I hope to have demonstrated that Spirit Christology is a viable Christology which represents some aspects of Christology evident in Scripture that is not fully represented by Logos Christology alone. Despite charges of adoptionism and modalism, it is possible to construct a Spirit Christology that avoids those particular dangers. Not only this, but far from encouraging a dualistic separation of Jesus’ humanity and divinity, Spirit Christology gives us a way of emphasizing
both so that on the one hand, we avoid any tendency to docetism, giving full weight to the humanity of Christ, while at the same time affirming his full divinity as the unique Son of God, and as one with the Father. Moreover, I have argued that Spirit Christology gives a distinctly trinitarian cast to all our theologizing, following the maxim that there can be no pneumatology without Christology and no Christology without pneumatology, and arguing that the relation of the Father to the Son is only ever in the Spirit. Spirit Christology takes seriously the co-equality of the persons of the Trinity, even in the more hierarchical models of the Trinity, fleshing out the confession of the church of the Spirit as the Lord, the giver of Life, who with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified. We have begun to note some of the advantages of this for mission to a postmodern or post-Christendom society. In Chapter Three we will continue to develop these points as we go on to discuss in more detail the question of the Spirit in Christology proper, the Spirit and the humanity of Christ and what that means for our humanity. We will consider some of the ramifications of employing a Spirit Christology as a basis for our theological anthropology, with a view to the consideration of the mission of the church.
CHAPTER THREE

CHRIST’S HUMANITY AND OURS

Introduction:

Having discussed questions relating to the Trinity and the Spirit, we now turn to the topic of Christology, the humanity of Christ and our humanity, building on Del Colle’s themes in Chapter One. He writes, ‘Jesus Christ, crucified and risen, is the human ground in God for the ultimate transfiguration of created reality.’ The Spirit who is both the Spirit of Sonship in Christ and in believers, is sent so that ‘the agency of the risen Lord is all-embracing and fundamental’ and ‘so that humanity may be fully pervaded by the mystery of God and…may fully commune with God.’ The Holy Spirit is the agent of inclusion, conversion and transfiguration, the means by which the human is united to Christ, and the means by which the inculturated and historically specific concerns of humanity are transformed. This brings the notion of human agency to the fore. Human beings are first the object of divine salvation, but also ‘those who are anointed with the Spirit even as Jesus was so anointed. As bearers of the Spirit they enter into this process of inclusion, conversion, and transfiguration, in a fundamental sense through their identification with Christ in baptism…and in a processive and discrete sense through their immersion into and life in the Spirit.’

We will explore this topic with reference to three different accounts of Christ’s divinity and his humanity all of which fall within the rubric of Spirit Christology, but have slightly different emphases. We consider the later work of Coffey, and also the work of Ivor Davidson and that of John Owen. Davidson’s work has a number of significant overlapping concerns with Coffey, but is rooted in the Protestant tradition and Owen, as we have already noted, was an early advocate of a ‘Spirit Christology’ and pioneered early work on Christ’s humanity and the Spirit. Whereas the neglect of the Holy Spirit and the underplaying of the human life and ministry of Jesus are ‘simply two sides of the same coin’, Spirit Christology

326 Del Colle, Christ and the Spirit, p.205.
corrects the traditional neglect of the Spirit and allows us to place a greater emphasis on the humanity of Christ. In formulating a particular Christology with an emphasis on the Spirit in the earthly life of Christ, we focus not only on the person of Christ as the pre-existent Word, but also on Jesus, the Son of God anointed by the Spirit. The human life, ministry and death of Jesus Christ comes to the fore in the doctrines of Christ, salvation, human being, the church etc. The biblical witness gives testimony to the full humanity of Christ. We read in the book of Hebrews:

> Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death – that is, the devil – and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death. For surely it is not angels he helps, but Abraham’s descendants. For this reason he had to be made like his brothers in every way, in order that he might make atonement for the sins of the people. (Hebrews 2.14-17)

We have noted that methodologically, advocates of Spirit Christology start with a Christology from below, with an emphasis on the biblical witness to the role of the Spirit in the earthly life of Christ. In this chapter we will discuss the ways in which we might understand the work of the Spirit in the life of Christ, and how that informs our understanding of humanity. This, in turn, will form the basis for our dialogical model of mission shaped by a theology of incarnation and anointing.

Thus far, we have considered various trinitarian models that redefine the work of the Spirit both in the economy (based on the biblical witness) and in the inner-trinitarian life, forming the basis for Spirit Christology. Although we have considered innovations in contemporary trinitarian theology and have so far touched on some aspects of Christology, there is yet more to discuss with respect to Christology proper. Spirit Christology emphasises the role of the Spirit in the incarnation and posits the Spirit as the one in whom Jesus relates to the Father. This, however, necessarily raises many questions about the interaction of the divine and human nature in Christ, the nature of the hypostatic union and many of the on-going debates in the church about how the Chalcedonian principle can be articulated and worked out in our talk of Jesus, the God-man. Advocates of Spirit Christology make a case for being able to say that Christ’s human nature is enabled by the Spirit rather than determined by the immanent Word, but without negating Logos Christology. There is also often an
emphasis on the ‘theandric’ or ‘theanthropic’ nature of Christ’s person, which is a characteristic of the accounts to follow. In this chapter we will consider a number of theologians who complement classical Christology with Spirit Christology, and go on to consider the implications of this for Christ’s humanity and our own. How do we avoid both modalism and adoptionism when discussing the work of Christ and the Spirit in the world, and the work of the Spirit in humanity? On the one hand we affirm the continuity of Christ’s humanity with ours so as to maintain the salvific link between Christ and us, while at the same time acknowledging that his humanity is different from ours in its sinlessness.

This will lead to a discussion on how Spirit Christology shapes theological anthropology, and what the implications of that might be for mission. Coffey and Davidson revisit the classic doctrine of the enhypostasia, both arguing in different ways for a revivification of this doctrine in contemporary theology, complementing this with a more explicit pneumatology. There are, however, significant differences in their work, due to Coffey’s Catholic perspective as distinct from Davidson’s Reformed theology. We will then consider further the implications of Owen’s distinctive insight that ‘all direct divine activity on the assumed human nature of Christ was that of the Holy Spirit,’ and what it means to ‘re-establish the place of the Holy Spirit in the theology of incarnation’. The church has never ceased to wrestle with what it means to describe the mystery of the incarnation, and there are no perfect models. Neither does Spirit Christology give us a perfect model. It does allow us however to give due weight to the humanity of Christ and to explain the work of the Holy Spirit in his life and person that is so evident in the New Testament.

**Christology Proper: Spirit Christology and the Doctrine of the Enhypostasia**

The classic problem facing those who wish to talk of the nature of Christ, or more specifically the two natures of Christ, is how to avoid Nestorianism on the one hand

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328 Weinandy also argues along these lines in *In the Likeness of Sinful Flesh*, that Jesus Christ is the human “I” of a divine person. ‘Within this understanding, Jesus lacks nothing that pertains to us as human beings. What is unique is that the divine person of the Son (the subject, the who) in the Incarnation lives, experiences himself, and expresses himself in a totally human manner, within the ambience of a human self-identity, under the conditions of a human “I.” Because the Son truly came to exist as man, he feels, thinks, speaks, and acts within the confines of a fully human “I.”’ p.13


and Apollinarianism on the other. If our talk of Jesus implies that the human nature is entirely subsumed by the divine, we are in danger of the latter; if we imply that, in some way, Jesus existed on earth as two different persons, then we are in danger of the former. If we are exploring new ways of talking about the Spirit and the human and divine natures of Christ, these issues need to be addressed, and a Spirit Christology has to be able to answer some of the classic Christological problems adequately. In this chapter, we will consider different examples of pneumatic Christologies and how they have addressed the question of Christ, his humanity, and ours.

In his article, “The Theandric Nature of Christ,” Coffey continues to develop his work on a pneumatic Christology. His concern is to focus on the unity of Christ, stressing both his divinity and his humanity, without devaluing the latter, or setting one over against the other. Coffey traces Christological thought from Pseudo-Dionysius to Rahner, reinterpreting the doctrine of the communication of idioms (upon which he believes Scholastic Christology relied too heavily) and explores in addition to this, the doctrine of the enhypostasia, which he calls the key to Christology. His aim is to formulate a Christology in which the humanity of Christ and the necessity of the Spirit are fully articulated whilst at the same time, adhering to traditional Christological categories, “respecting the normative Christological dogma of Chalcedon and the witness of the Gospels.”

The thrust of Coffey’s article is the clarification of his work on the nature of the hypostatic union and an answer to his critics on this particular area of his work. His response is the explication of the human nature of Christ as ‘theandric’.

Coffey argues that, traditionally, theologians have been nervous of any theology that may display monoenergist tendencies. In order to avoid that, therefore, the concept that Christ’s activity was ‘theandric’ (and therefore unified) has been shunned. Coffey deems this to have been a mistake. He then asks whether this means there are two operations of two natures, ‘the divine operation of the divinity and the human operation of the humanity?’

Coffey takes Aquinas to task on the grounds that Aquinas claims that Christ has two distinct operations, one divine and one human. Coffey himself does not wish to say that the human nature is operated by the

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divine nature. He believes that this diminishes the human nature to a meaningless category. This is a theme we have already met in Owen. In response, Coffey appeals to antiquity and the thought of Pseudo-Dionysius. He quotes,

it was not by virtue of being God that he did divine things, not [sic] by virtue of being a man that he did what was human, but rather, by virtue of being God-made-man he accomplished something new in our midst – the activity of the God-man.\(^ {334} \)

Coffey’s claim is that this was meant to be interpreted to mean that the ‘mystery of Christ was contained within the being and operation of the divine Word in the humanity, the human nature, of Jesus of Nazareth’,\(^ {335} \) thus being an early hint of the doctrine of the en- and anhypostasia. The origin of the doctrine of the en- and anhypostasia is unclear. Once attributed to the 6\(^{th} \) Century Palestinian monk, Leontius of Byzantium, this is now considered to be mistaken. Contemporary scholars trace its use to Leontius of Jerusalem in the 6\(^{th} \) Century who, Davidson notes, employed it to combat the ‘exaggerated Cyrillian tendencies of collapsing divinity and humanity into a composite quiddity’ on the one hand and on the other, the ‘quasi-Nestorian separation of the divine and human within a synthetic prosopon’.\(^ {336} \) Davidson defines the doctrine of enhypostasia-anhypostasia as follows:

the human nature of Jesus has no hypostasis of its own (it is ‘anhypostatic’), but subsists only and always as the human nature of the Son of God, the second person of the Trinity (it is thus ‘enhypostatic’ in him). His human nature is technically said to ‘subsist’ rather than ‘exist’, since ‘existence’ might imply accidental being, whereas ‘subsistence’ suggests necessarily actual being by virtue of – only by virtue of – assumption by the divine hypostasis of the Logos. Negatively, the humanity of Jesus has no independent reality of its own; positively, it is hypostasized in union with, or in (enhypostasis), the person of the Logos. The incarnate Christ is one person


acknowledged in two natures, as Chalcedon says, and his humanity, like his divinity, preserves its own characteristic properties, ‘without confusion, without change, without division, separation’; but his humanity has no reality in isolation from the subjecthood of ‘one and the same Son’. The stress falls on the enhypostasia rather than the anhypostasia, but the enhypostasia presupposes the anhypostasia, and makes little sense without it.\endnote{337}

The doctrine of the en- and anhypostasia is a way of expressing the unified being of Christ. One of the difficulties with Coffey’s use of this doctrine is that he argues for a ‘reversible’ or invertible doctrine of the enhypostasia; the human nature of Christ subsists in the person of the divine Word, and the divine Word subsists in the human nature of Christ. It is unclear however whether Coffey is blurring the distinction between relations that are not strictly equivalent. The human nature is anhypostatic and has no ‘existence’ of its own, and is enhypostatic in the eternal Word, whereas the Word pre-existed the incarnation and therefore has its own existence. We will return to this question below when we come to discuss different views on the relation of Logos Christology to Spirit Christology and how that affects our understanding of the humanity of Christ and our humanity. Davidson makes the same point as Coffey without arguing for a reversible relation of the two natures, but still claiming that the doctrine of the enhypostasia allows us to speak of the human nature of Christ as ‘theandric’; a way of speaking of Christ as a unified person rather than implying that there are somehow two persons in one body. Coffey writes, ‘it allows him a single theandric operation in the Pseudo-Dionysian sense’ and in this way, expresses theologically the mystery of the God-man.

The implications of this for our understanding of the human nature of Christ are clearly significant. Coffey’s interest in relation to this is the nature of the hypostatic union; his particular interest being how it is that the human nature can reach or attain to the divine nature so as to be united with it, and he develops his theological anthropology along Rahnerian lines. He considers the doctrine of the enhypostasia for what it might indicate to us not only of Jesus’ human nature, but of human nature in general and extrapolates a theological anthropology from his understanding of the hypostatic union. We have already noted in Chapter One the

\endnote{337} Ivor Davidson, ‘Theologizing the Human Jesus’, p.135.
opposition to Coffey’s position expressed by Molnar who rejects any form of natural theology and that these issues (the capacity of the human nature for the divine) were famously debated between Barth and Brunner in the 1930’s bringing forth Barth’s famous retort to Brunner in which he says ‘No!’ to any form of natural theology. Against Barth, Coffey posits a continuity between God and human beings, a *capax Dei*. He is insistent, however, that the continuity between God and humanity is only bridged by grace and is not *achieved* by any inherent quality within humanity, nevertheless the grace to receive the divine nature is given to all humanity. Coffey’s theology is an attempt to unify the concepts of the action and being of God in this world and his criticism of traditional Thomist theology is that there is a lack of integration of these two, leading to a false understanding of the nature of being. Thus, he finds fault with Aquinas who, in order to explain the reality of the union of God with humanity claims that human nature is ‘capable of God by its action but incapable by its being’. In other words, Coffey argues that Aquinas claims that ‘the divine Word can subsist in a nature which has the ability to attain the Word through its operations of knowledge and love but not through its being’.\(^{338}\) Coffey believes this position to be untenable and that to bifurcate act and being is false. He follows Karl Rahner in developing the concept of *obedientia potentialis* to argue that human nature is capable of embracing the divine in action and being through the work of God’s grace.

The concept of *potentia obedientialis* is used to define the relation between nature and grace or the union of the human and the divine. Rahner employs it however for his theological anthropology, to speak of the orientation of the human towards God, which he expresses as the existential perfection of the human essence. Both Rahner and Coffey are clear that whatever the nature of the union between the human and divine, this only ever occurs as a result of God’s initiative and is only actualized under the power of God’s grace.\(^{339}\) Not only this, but Coffey writes that although Rahner understands the human being as obediential potency for hypostatic union with the son of God, Jesus Christ is the ‘only man in whom this fullness of being human has been actualized.’\(^{340}\) However, Rahner understands the obediential potency as not solely an attribute of Christ, but part of human being. Thus, Rahner and Coffey both believe that human nature is essentially oriented towards God albeit

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always as a result of divine grace and not by human will or effort. The perfection of human reality in Christ is the uniquely highest case of this. So for Coffey there is nothing inherently divine in human nature and there is a difference between human beings and the ‘theandric’ nature of Christ. It is unclear what exactly is being claimed for human being, as on the one hand, Rahner speaks of the self-transcendence towards the divine due to the self-communication of God towards humanity, while at the same time stating that *potentia obedientialis* is the capability of ‘receiving this self-communication without being eliminated thereby and ceasing to be a human and creaturely being.’

On the other hand, however, Coffey makes the point that with Aquinas, the human nature of Christ remains ‘creaturely’ and not capable (under grace) of ‘an ontological expansion from within that would reach beyond all confines and embrace divinity itself, even that of the Word of God.’ It is not surprising that Coffey asserts that the human nature at once remains creaturely but is also somehow inherently capable of becoming divine. Rahner is speaking of the perfection of an existential essence of humanity under grace and so Coffey writes, that humanity is in all cases potentially divine under grace and in the case of Christ, actually so. He goes on, ‘[h]ence we can say that human nature as *potentia obedientialis* for hypostatic union is realized absolutely in the case of Christ, and relatively in the case of others.’ As we will see below, Owen has a completely divergent view of what it means for humanity to be made in God’s image.

Coffey develops his work on the divine and the human by turning to the doctrine of the enhypostasia in relation to the communication of idioms. As with all Christologies the question of the interaction of the human and the divine in Christ, or the communication of idioms must be considered. Coffey notes that the communication of idioms concerns what one might appropriately say about the essential properties pertaining to Christ’s two natures and points out that there was already in antiquity ‘some appreciation of the fact that communication as predication would be meaningless unless it were based on communication as event.’ (my italics). Coffey therefore complements the doctrine of the enhypostasia with the communication of idioms as event, that of ‘ontological communication from the

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In this way there is unity of action and thus by implication unity of being. He concludes, ‘[t]he enhypostasia sets the two natures in their correct ontological relationship, which the communication of idioms then transposes into a dynamic communication from the divine to the human.’ Furthermore, he argues that whatever is communicated will be received in a human way. Coffey believes that the enhypostasia sets the two natures of Christ in relationship and therefore, crucially, ‘philosophically it can be said that whatever is predicated of Christ’s divinity is a statement about his humanity.’ On the question of the communication of idioms, Spence argues exactly the same point in his article, ‘Christ’s Humanity and Ours: John Owen’ where he too claims that the *communicatio idiomatum* should be interpreted as the relationship of the two natures interacting ‘dynamically’ and not statically, in other words, as primarily ‘act’ from which comes the concept of ‘being’.

How does this relate to Coffey’s Spirit Christology? Primarily, for Coffey, Spirit Christology allows us to express this trinitarianly. If we refer back to his work as discussed in Chapter One, we know that he sees the Spirit as the one who is not only the love between the Father and the Son, but also the one who mediates between them. Communication between the Father and Son is accomplished through the Spirit. Coffey expresses this trinitarianly as the following; ‘[t]his places Jesus in a unique ontological, psychological, and spiritual relationship with the Father, mediated from the Father to him and from him to the Father, by the Holy Spirit.’ Secondly, Spirit Christology ‘enables us to see that the immediate agent of the hypostatic union is the Holy Spirit...though the ultimate agent remains the Son.’ Coffey draws a distinction between the hypostatic union, which he describes as the work of the Son (Logos Christology) and the work of sanctification, which he posits as a work of the Spirit. Nevertheless he identifies the Spirit as the guiding principle working in salvation history, being bestowed ‘in all fullness as Spirit of Sonship by the Father in his act of the creation of Christ’s humanity, and thereafter by being the Spirit existing

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and acting in the depths of Christ’s person as he lives out his mission.” Coffey’s theology is a distinct departure from the traditional descending pattern of Thomist Christology. His emphasis on being and action, on a Christology from below, on the unity of Christ’s being and on the work of the Spirit, not as a subsequent additional element to Christology but integral to it, all serve to highlight the humanity of Christ. Coffey’s theology is one which highlights what he calls the ‘centripetal’ model of the Trinity and the life of God which reaches out to and embraces human life. As we will see, this is an insight that proves valuable for our discussion on mission.

Having differentiated between the work of the Spirit in Christ and in humanity, he develops his understanding of the link between Christ’s humanity and ours, on the grounds that Spirit Christology offers a paradigm which emphasises rather than minimises the humanity of Christ. Coffey’s theory rests on his view of love and of how the Spirit operates as love in his own personhood, in the life of Christ and in the lives of believers. Coffey uses the term ‘theandric’ to denote that all that Jesus does as the God-man is human-divine. This in turn he claims means that it is at base human. Therefore, the love that is the Holy Spirit is appropriated by Christ and thus ‘humanized’ in its radical reception by him. Coffey describes the divinity of Christ as ‘the supreme actualization of his humanity by grace’, or in other words, by the appropriation of the Spirit. He then argues,

[t]his appropriation I have not hesitated to call an “incarnation” of the Holy Spirit, though the meaning of the word here is only analogous to that which it bears in the Incarnation properly so called. The matter might be accurately and succinctly expressed thus: in a way analogous to the Incarnation of divine being in human being in the person of Jesus, there is an incarnation of divine love in human love in the love of Jesus, this latter incarnation being the Holy Spirit.

Thus his argument encompasses a number of pneumatological and christological concerns: articulating a proper mission of the Spirit, emphasising the humanity of Christ in his divinity (thereby forming a Spirit Christology) and linking

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353 Coffey, D., Deus Trinitas, p.39.
354 Coffey, D., Deus Trinitas, p.39.
the two concepts to the work of God in the world via the love of God which is the Spirit. Coffey’s conclusion is that if Jesus’ love of his neighbour is the Holy Spirit sent by him upon the Church then his love of God must be the same Spirit returned by him to the Father.\textsuperscript{355} As we have already discussed, Coffey’s view is that God and neighbour become inseparable objects of human love. The Son loves the Father and the church in the same love, which for Coffey is the human side of this love and therefore takes the humanity of Christ more seriously than an alternative view. His argument from Scripture is as follows:

Matthew and Luke see the combination of the two loves as the fulfilment of the Old Testament revelation, which suggests at least an intrinsic relationship between them; second, Paul and Matthew agree that love of neighbor is the fulfilment of the Law and the sole criterion of divine judgment, which suggests that this love must involve also the love of God; and third, the statement of Jesus in Matthew 25.40 that a kindness to the least of his brethren is in fact done to himself requires that Jesus be seen as the embodiment of God’s Reign and so implies that in him God and neighbor are inseparably objects of our love.\textsuperscript{356}

In sum, Coffey’s theology of the immanent Trinity is that by the anointing of the Spirit (the love of the Father for the Son) the humanity of Jesus was created out of nothing, in one act. The human nature of Christ was radically sanctified in the fullness of grace, ‘and united…hypostatically to the preexistent divine Son….By this act there began together, in coordination, though in a way awaiting progressive revelation, the respective missions of the Son and the Holy Spirit.’\textsuperscript{357} The Holy Spirit, appropriated by Jesus as his own Spirit, is ‘incarnated’ as his human love for the Father, is also the power in which he accomplished his mission in obedience and love, and is returned to the Father through his life and death. ‘The double mission stood fully revealed and effective, “sacramentalized,” in Jesus’ resurrection from the dead.’\textsuperscript{358} In relation to humanity, authentic human love is necessarily at the same time love of God and love

\textsuperscript{355} Coffey, D., \textit{Deus Trinitas}, p.39.
\textsuperscript{356} Coffey, D., \textit{Deus Trinitas}, p.39.
\textsuperscript{357} Coffey, D., \textit{Deus Trinitas}, p.148.
\textsuperscript{358} Coffey, D., \textit{Deus Trinitas}, p.148.
of neighbour. Jesus’ love of humanity therefore, is one with his love of the Father and ‘identical with the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of Christ.’

Moreover, while the Holy Spirit is a bond between even ordinary Christians and the Father, it is in a much more radical sense a bond between Christ and the Father. The union between Christians and God is explained fully by their reception of the Holy Spirit from him and their consequent empowerment to love him, but Christ in receiving the Spirit from the Father appropriates it, and so returns it to the Father as his own Spirit, his personal love of the Father.

Coffey thus formulates his immanent trinitarian model on an economic understanding of the Trinity. So whereas the procession model is based on distinction, the return model is based on the concept of union, not only of the three persons of the Trinity, but including the participation of humanity. The corresponding missions of the Spirit and the Son are incarnation and grace. The incarnation is the self-communication of the Father to the world in Jesus Christ, and grace is the self-communication of the Father and Christ his Son to us, in the person of the Holy Spirit. The work of grace is thoroughly trinitarian, the gift of the Spirit to unite us to Christ and thus to bring us into union with the Father. His view of grace and personhood is that grace brings us into a relationship of daughterhood and sonship which is at once unique to each of us and becomes the definitive expression of authentic personhood.

A second contemporary approach to this is provided by Ivor Davidson also and advocate of Spirit Christology. Like Coffey, Davidson argues that the doctrines of anhypostasis and enhypostasis are still useful in the discussion of Christ’s humanity. He claims that they still afford a ‘useful way of highlighting the primacy of grace, and, contrary to common caricature, do not undermine the density of human experience’. He goes on to add that ‘[s]uch an account needs to be supplemented, however, with a robust pneumatology in order to specify the relevance of the human Jesus for revelation, salvation, anthropology, ethics and eschatology.’ Davidson discusses the history of the doctrine and its application in church history from the early church to Barth in the modern day. He addresses the complaint made by

359 Coffey, D., Deus Trinitas, p.148.
360 Coffey, D., Deus Trinitas, p.41.
361 Coffey, D., Deus Trinitas, p.65.
362 Davidson, I., Theologizing the Human Jesus, p.129.
detractors of the doctrine who claim that the concept of the anhypostasia reduces the humanity of Christ to an impersonal substance, with no hypostatic subsistence of its own, thus becoming a tertium quid. If the human nature of Jesus is impersonal, then not only is it not human nature proper because it is not personal, but there can then be no continuity between the human nature of Christ and ours. It becomes ‘docetism writ large’. Davidson argues that rather than the doctrine of anhypostasia leading to an impersonal Jesus and consequently undermining the authenticity of Jesus as ‘a person’, the opposite is the case, but only if we understand the doctrine as referring to ontological and not psychological categories. He writes,

\[\text{[t]he point is not that Jesus lacked individuality, or that what we might call his psychological make-up was in any way incomplete; it is rather that his humanity had no subsistence independently of the Word’s assumption of it in the act of becoming incarnate.}\]

In a similar sense to Coffey, his concern is that we articulate a concept of the personhood of Jesus that offers a unified account of his person. The two natures of Jesus are concrete (enhypostatos), but there cannot be two hypostaseis, as there is only the one dynamic person of the Word in action. ‘The “becoming” which incarnation implies does not mean that God qua God indwells or is metamorphosed into a man, but that God the Son subsists personally as a man.’ This then places an emphasis on the ‘oneness of the divine subject of incarnation’ and the dynamic nature of the Word in action. However, Davidson adheres to the traditional doctrine of Logos Christology in a more orthodox manner than Coffey who we have already noted has an unusual reading of John 1.14. It is the Word who assumes human nature, and it is the Word with whom the initiative in human salvation lies. For Davidson, the relation of the Word to the human nature is not invertible or reversible, but there is a fundamental asymmetry between the two.

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363 Davidson, I., Theologizing the Human Jesus, p.137.
364 Davidson, I., Theologizing the Human Jesus, p.138.
365 Davidson, I., Theologizing the Human Jesus, p.140.
366 James Loder who develops a pneumatic Chalcedonian Christology speaks of the asymmetry of the divine and human natures, asserting that ‘the divine maintains priority over the human.’ The Logic of the Spirit: Human Development in Theological Perspective (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 1998), p.14. He writes, ‘[t]he Chalcedonian relationality between God and humanity plays out into the relationality between eternity and time, and so ontological priority is given to the eternal without
Davidson applies his particular theological anthropology and the implications of this in relation to the particularity of Christ, soteriology, anthropology and ecclesiology. In other words, he begins to apply these insights to church life and praxis, to questions of mission and discipleship. In relation to soteriology, the unity of the God-man is essential. He writes,

... it is the Word who always exists as the hypostasis of his humanity; the humanity of the Christ could have no reality otherwise…Nevertheless, the incarnate hypostasis of the Word is for Jesus’ human nature the source of a properly human existence, genuinely individualized and specifically located, precisely in order to be the source of human deliverance. Jesus is a real man only as the Son of God, for if he is not the Son of God, he is no Saviour.\(^{367}\)

Thus this is not merely a philosophical point about the personhood of the second person of the Trinity, but primarily a soteriological point about the nature of Christ. ‘It is because his humanity subsists as it does that his sufferings are as magnificent and transformative as they are.’\(^{368}\) In relation to this, the particularity of Jesus’ existence is key to Davidson’s argument. Making a case for the ‘oneness of the divine subject of incarnation’ places the emphasis very firmly on the unique, bodily, and human existence of Jesus, because there is no existence of Jesus Christ the God-man outside that. Secondly, Jesus as the divine Son lives a unique and fully human life, ‘subject to the contingency and vulnerability of fleshly existence.’\(^{369}\) This is not only crucial to Davidson’s soteriology, but also to his anthropology, and thus to his concept of church and mission. We will return to this point at a later stage in this chapter.

In opposition to Coffey, Davidson considers the work of Karl Barth on the enhypostasia to be of real significance. First he acknowledges Barth’s work on Jesus as divine revelation, the principle that the incarnation ‘is the disclosure that only God can reveal God’. As we have seen in Coffey’s work, the hypostatic union leads him to

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\(^{367}\) Davidson, I., Theologizing the Human Jesus, p.141.

\(^{368}\) Davidson, I., Theologizing the Human Jesus, p.140.

\(^{369}\) Davidson, I., Theologizing the Human Jesus, p.140.
posit the *obedientia potentialis*. Barth takes an opposing view. Davidson summarises his position:

... the resources for human access to the divine cannot possibly be located within humanity itself: by definition, the initiative in revelation must be divine. The human nature of Jesus disrupts creaturely reality, for it does not arise from human possibilities. The *anhypostasia* repudiates every idea that Jesus is a man adopted by God or inspired by God, for it dismisses the possibility of any existence for him outside of divine action.\(^{370}\)

Contra Rahner and Coffey, Davidson claims that the human nature of Jesus *disrupts* creaturely reality, for it does not arise from human possibilities. Thus, from the same reality, we see that two opposing conclusions are drawn. This debate will not be resolved simply. The point of contention lies in the concept of an ‘inherent capacity’ for God. Barth, in his later years, softened in his position towards Brunner, and became less opposed to all forms of natural theology as long as Christology was the defining concept from which all other theology is derived, but as we have seen from Molnar’s Barthian stance, it is argued that if we speak of an inherent capacity, we are detracting from the unique saving work of Christ. How are we able to say that God alone reaches towards humanity, and is the one who, in Christ, effects the union of humanity with the Godhead if we posit that this disposition towards God is inherent? Davidson adopts a Barthian stance. Rahner and Coffey have a more optimistic view of the work of the Spirit in humanity. We will come back to this issue with the work of Owen, the *imago Dei* and the Spirit.

On one thing, both Coffey and Davidson are agreed: that there is no ‘inherent capacity’ for God within humanity that does not come from the Spirit. Roman Catholic theology, however, places more emphasis on the continuity between God and humanity in contradistinction to the ‘disruption’ between the two as expressed in Davidson’s Reformed theology. Davidson develops these themes using Barth’s theology as a basis for his own Christology and supplementing it with a robust pneumatology. Jesus is the veiled revelation of God in history, revealing the divine Self in incarnation, but at the same time being veiled in the creaturely medium of

\(^{370}\) Davidson, I., *Theologizing the Human Jesus*, p.142.
humanity. So for Davidson, the doctrine of the an- and en-hypostasis sets out the basic Christological terms of reference, ‘vere homo, particular, individual, historical, but never independent or generated by that which is contingent and finite – always vere Deus also.’ The theological point that he is making is not primarily about the ‘how’ of incarnation, but about the action of God in history; the saving action of God in Christ. What is of interest to this thesis and particularly with respect to the mission of the church are the implications of this for human being that Davidson draws out. Davidson is not simply concerned with a forensic account of salvation, the act of the forgiveness of sins simpliciter, but with a broader understanding of the salvation – that of the transformation of the created order and the human sphere by God through the very fact that Christ participates in that sphere.

He sees Barth’s contribution as useful for spelling out the implications of the relationship between the divine Word and humanity both for theological anthropology and for Christian ethics. Before we develop these themes, we turn to the work of Owen.

Christ – the Paradigm of Humanity

We turn now to the work of John Owen whom offers ‘a coherent way of understanding the true creaturehood of the man Christ Jesus within an incarnational christology’ and develops the idea of Christ as the prototype of the Christian life. We will first examine a number of Owen’s key ideas before considering Alan Spence’s use of them. We have already touched on Owen’s view of how the Spirit functions in the human nature of Christ. Owen posits that the only immediate act of the Son on the human nature, was the assumption of it. The personal union of Christ is the ‘inseparable substance of the assumed nature in the person of the Son.’ This union was indissoluble and not disrupted by the death of Jesus, as according to Owen, the union of the soul and body did not constitute him a person, ‘for he was a person by the union of both to the Son of God.’ Owen goes on to describe the interaction of the divine and human natures in Christ in the following way. ‘All other actings of

371 Davidson, I., Theologizing the Human Jesus, p.142.
372 Davidson, I., Theologizing the Human Jesus, p.147.
373 Davidson, I., Theologizing the Human Jesus, p.145.
God in the person of the Son towards the human nature were voluntary, and did not necessarily ensue on this union. For there was no transfusion of the properties of one nature into the other; nor real physical communication of divine essential excellencies to the humanity. For Owen, this has particular implications for how we view the problem of the omniscience (or apparent lack of) of Christ. (cf. Mark 13.32). His conclusion is that the human nature, however advanced, is not the subject of infinite, essentially divine properties. Suzanne McDonald writing on Owen’s view of the *imago Dei* notes that Owen insists, ‘with very few exceptions upon the utter loss of the image [of God] in all save the elect.’ Humanity has lost the image of God through sin and the only hope for the restoration of the image is to be united to Christ by the Spirit. This then is the opposite of Coffey’s Rahnerian view of human nature. In Owen, the image is restored in the elect through union with Christ, and it is by the power of the Spirit that the elect are able to grow in Christlikeness. Owen views the sanctification of humanity as entirely a work of the Spirit, and this too applies to the humanity of Christ.

For Owen, the voluntary assumption of the human nature by the Son is ascribed to the Son himself, but ‘the divine efficiency in this matter was the peculiar work of the Holy Ghost.’ The Spirit is ‘the immediate operator of all divine acts of the Son himself, even on his own human nature’ and grew in the grace and the power of the Spirit. As we have noted, according to Owen, the divine nature did not control or predetermine the actions of Jesus Christ. The obedient Son is dependent on the Spirit in his earthly life, and maintained in holiness ‘by virtue of [his] free response to the guidance of the Spirit.’ The human actions of Jesus are enabled by the Spirit rather than determined by the Word. The idea that it is the Spirit, however, rather than the Word who is identified as the ‘immediate, peculiar, efficient

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381 McDonald writes that the image of God, ‘even in its first created perfection, is not to be understood as the innate feature of humanness…but only a Spirit-filled possibility.’ p.327.
384 Owen, J., *The Holy Spirit*, p.120.
386 Gunton, C., *The Promise*, p.70.
cause of all external divine operations is not unproblematic. Oliver Crisp believes that Owen’s Christology means that God the Son is always ‘one step removed from his own human nature’ and results in a Nestorian divide that jeopardizes the integrity of the hypostatic union.

The principle cause for concern is that Owen’s doctrine seems to generate a distinction between God the Son and this agency “in” or “through” his human nature at all moments after the first moment of the assumption of human nature is the very act of becoming incarnate. Thereafter, his divine nature does not act directly upon his human nature, but only mediately, via the agency of the Holy Spirit. But this seems theologically dubious.

Is Owen’s Christology one in which the role of the divine nature is diminished?

There are two possible responses to this. Spence has responded in defence of Owen’s Christology, now including a discussion about the two wills of Christ. He describes it thus, ‘every action of the incarnate Christ is in accordance with the will of the eternal Son.’ Christ’s human actions are carried out within the divine ‘hospitality’ of the Word. If we agree with Owen that the only direct act on Christ’s human nature by the divine nature was the incarnation, this does not mean that ‘he did not indirectly bring about every purpose of his will moment by moment in the incarnate life.’

This was his life lived as he willed it, each action brought about through the Holy Spirit. The Son is not a passive bystander to the outworking of this life. There was of course also a human will in that incarnate life, freely willing every action under the Spirit's guidance. By the inspiration of the Spirit both divine and human wills are in absolute harmony.

In this way the work of the Spirit is understood to be in the two natures of Christ rather than the divine nature being usurped by the Spirit in the incarnate life of Christ. A second response is the fact that Owen’s Christology, like Coffey’s and Davidson’s

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389 Crisp, O.D., John Owen, p.15.
390 These views were all expressed in an email conversation with Spence, Sept. 2010.
after him, is ‘theanthropic.’ Kapic notes that by using the language of ‘assumption’ for the hypostatic union, Owen preserves the integrity of the fully divine nature. The anhypostatic human nature is brought into union with the divine nature by assumption ‘inseparably and for ever’ uniting the two natures of Christ in one person. The emphasis in Owen’s Christology, therefore, is on the whole person of Christ as an acting subject. The Spirit, therefore, acts upon the person of Christ in his human nature.

The parallels between Coffey’s, Davidson’s and Spence’s work are apparent, although there are also some crucial differences, particularly regarding the view of human nature, both Christ’s and ours. Coffey’s understanding is that humanity is drawn into the Godhead and thus ‘divinized’. Davidson and Spence have a different emphasis. For them, Christ is the perfection and fulfilment of human existence. Spence comments,

I would suggest that the practice, common in the earlier Christian tradition, of describing the goal of man as some form of divinisation is open to grave misinterpretation. Our destiny is not that we might be made divine but rather that we might at last become truly human.

It may be that the difference between the two approaches is negligible, however, in Davidson’s and Spence’s theology, the emphasis is placed firmly on the human sphere, the created order, and the potential of the God-man to transform the temporal and spatial conditions in which we live. The concept of divinization is sometimes treated with suspicion as if humanity could claim to be God. It is possible also, that this theology has docetic overtones. If what is valued ultimately is the divine over and against the human, the possibility is that we look to the passing away of that which is essentially human and the replacement of that with the divine, rather than to the transformation and the bringing to perfection of God’s good creation in Christ by the Spirit.

391 See Kapic, K., Communion with God, p.104.
392 Kapic, K., Communion with God, p.81.
394 Spence, A., Christ’s Humanity and Ours in Persons Divine and Human, p.97.
Using Owen’s Christology, Spence explores some of the theological implications of emphasising the full humanity of Christ in the way we have been articulating. In Spence’s opinion, theological tradition has, by and large, failed to present Christ as ‘normative man.’ He notes that Spirit Christology, in the way we have been describing it, by ascribing full humanity to Christ, allows us then to understand Christ as the ‘paradigm’ of that which is truly human. Christ’s life not only becomes ‘a plumbline by which to form an estimate of our present human condition’ but also ‘the prototype of our destiny in God’s redemptive purposes’ Christ’s life represents the goal of human existence. In other words, as we have noted, true human flourishing looks like Jesus Christ. Spence goes on to ask more specific questions regarding the experience of Jesus as a man and our own experiences, ‘Did the man Jesus face experiences as a man that are continuous with our own?’ In other words, did he as man, face God as we do? Was Christ’s humanity such that his experience of God was in ‘no way qualitatively different from possibilities that are open to us.’ The writer to the Hebrews describes Jesus as the Son of God who nevertheless lives by faith and obedience, not because he was able to dwell on this earth in some divine capacity removed from the reality of day to day human existence, but because he, like us, lived a human life of faith, love and obedience. Davidson writes,

[a]s the epistle to the Hebrews in particular makes abundantly plain, it is precisely the reality of Jesus’ solidarity with human beings in their weakness, vulnerability, and liability to temptation that is the key to his ability to represent humanity to God. That solidarity is of an ontological, not a merely symbolic, kind: it is in assuming the status of the human as it presently is, in living a sinless existence within the conditions of a corrupt world and in the likeness of sinful flesh (Rom. 8:3), that he fulfils a perfect ministry as the representative of humanity in the presence of God (Heb. 4:15; cf. especially Heb. 2:10-18).
Hence the three instances of Jesus’ trials or temptations that are depicted in the New Testament are to be understood as profoundly human experiences, for which the Son is prepared for and empowered by the Holy Spirit. The temptations in the desert follow directly after his baptism in the Spirit and the proclamation by the Father of his status as the dearly beloved Son. Similarly, the trial in Gethsemane is endured under the anointing of the Spirit as we have noted on the grounds that his cry to his Abba Father is uttered in the Spirit. (Rom. 8.15) Finally, Christ’s greatest trial, his crucifixion, for which his whole life had been a preparation, is also suffered under the anointing of the Spirit. Jesus faces the same temptations as in the desert, ‘If you are the Son of God, save yourself’. The temptation to vindicate himself as the Son through a display of power rather than through weakness, suffering and death was a profoundly real experience as we know from the New Testament witness. Jesus, in his human nature, suffers trials of faith, of having to believe that what the Father had promised him would be accomplished. These trials of faith are lived out in the power and with the comfort of the Holy Spirit.399

In answer to his own questions, Spence suggests that the process ‘by which Christ as man learnt of God was similar to our own religious experience, that is, it was mediated by the enlightening, encouraging, comforting, empowering and sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit.’400 He summarises his position in The Promise of Peace,

Jesus as man, filled with the Holy Spirit, is the paradigm of Christian possibilities, the historical exemplification of what it is to be truly human….Central to the discussion is the idea that the Spirit-empowered human nature of Christ is the pattern for the renewed image of God in Christian lives…We are not directly divinized through salvation, rather we are conformed to the image of God as manifest in the Spirit-filled humanity of Christ.401

399 On Owen’s view of the temptations of Christ, see Kapic, K., Communion with God pp.94-97. Owen believed that Jesus lived a life of continual temptation (from without) and was therefore like us, but had no moral evil and was therefore unlike us. He believed that Christ faced temptations in order to overcome them, and so to bring strength and comfort to the believer.
400 Spence, A., Christ’s Humanity and Ours in Persons Divine and Human, p.96.
Christ, the Spirit and humanity

Thus, Spirit Christology shapes our theological anthropology. What does it add to our understanding of the human life lived out in covenant relationship with God, the human response to God and the Spirit’s work in bringing creation to perfection? What is the relation of humanity to Christ? What light does the humanity of Christ shed on our humanity? If we adopt Owen’s perspective, humanity, being made in God’s image, does have a capacity to recognize and respond to him, but this is lost to us, and only restored in Christ. Christ is the pattern and renovation of the image of God in us. The Christian life is then understood in terms of conformity to the person of Christ. The Spirit becomes the crucial person in this work; he is given to us for the purpose of uniting us to Christ and making us like him. In other words, God’s divine image was first restored in Christ’s own human nature so that his whole life was in effect the prototype of the Christian life. ‘A sanctifying work is presupposed in Christ who thereby becomes a pioneer in the faith for other believers.’

Stephen Holmes notes that the effect of Owen’s Christology is profound; the sanctification of Christ is now understood as ‘a work of the Spirit in the life of a human being.’ The implications of the possibilities for the continuity of human existence with the incarnated life of Christ are highly significant, and we will spend much of this thesis exploring some of these implications.

We have already considered some of the ways in which we may say that Christ’s humanity is both like and unlike our own, making the point that an adherence to Logos Christology both preserves the uniqueness of Christ as Saviour and acts as an effective safeguard against any form of ‘degree Christology’. Spirit Christology, however, highlights the continuity between Christ’s humanity and ours. The same Spirit who anoints Jesus, anoints us. We are sons and daughters of the Father in the son. We are baptized by the same Spirit. We participate in the divine nature. (2 Peter 1.4) We must not stress however, the work of the Spirit in the life of a believer as analogous and not equivalent to the work of the Spirit in the life of Christ. Jesus is the natural son and human beings are adopted sons and daughters. Jesus, unlike us, is without sin and never able to ‘grieve the Spirit.’ ‘The fullness of the Spirit Jesus

402 Spence, A., Christ’s Humanity and Ours in Persons Divine and Human, p.84.
403 Spence, A., Christ’s Humanity and Ours in Persons Divine and Human, p.85.
received was not grieved or hampered by sin, but enabled to flow perfectly through…[him] who obediently and totally aligned himself to the Father’s will."\textsuperscript{405} John the Baptist was a man filled with the Spirit, in the way that we as human beings are. Jesus’ very being however is attributed to the work of the Spirit in his conception.\textsuperscript{406} According to John 3.34, Jesus was given the Spirit without measure (\textit{ou gar ek metron}). Christ was a man filled with the fullness of God. In Ephesians 4.7, however, Paul writes that it is Jesus himself who then gives the graces of the Spirit \textit{by measure} (\textit{kata to metron}). In addition, the Spirit in us is the eschatological Spirit, bringing us to a perfection in the risen Christ that will only be fully realized when Christ returns. As Del Colle notes,

\begin{quote}
In the resurrection, history takes a turn, so to speak, surpassing history in eschatological fulfilment, although even here there exists a temporal/historical tension between the risen Christ and the parousial Christ, at least in the ecclesial witness to Christ with its implications for sanctification (1 Jn. 3:2). Christ still has a future, one that is inseparable from the Body, the church, and from the eschatological renewal of all creation.\textsuperscript{407}
\end{quote}

‘[N]ow we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.’ (1 John 3.2)

\textbf{Christ, the Spirit and human agency}

With Spirit Christology as the basis for our understanding of how God works in humanity, we can express it in the following way. If Christology is always our point of departure, we are able to establish that there is no union of divine and human outside of the divine initiative in Christ. The incarnation, however, is about humanity, about God becoming man. Christ is not only the prototype, but the fulfilment of human nature and of human being. Christ is the representation and paradigm of truly human flourishing. This reaches back to creation, to our having been made in the

\textsuperscript{405} Ponsonby, S., \textit{God Inside Out}, p.55.
\textsuperscript{407} Del Colle, \textit{Christ and the Spirit}, p.208.
image of God, and to all things having been made through Christ, and forward to the eschaton, when we shall be transformed fully into his likeness. Humanity cannot even reach towards God let alone attain to the Godhead. With Coffey, the movement of humanity towards God is a work of the Spirit through Christ in all humanity; with Davidson and Owen, this is a work of the Spirit through Christ in the life of believers. However, through Christ, humanity is made for God, and ultimately made to be like him. We have made a case for the person and therefore the humanity of Christ being inextricably linked with the Spirit. We have argued that Jesus Christ’s person was created and formed, led and moulded by the Holy Spirit, rather than the idea of a human nature pre-programmed by the divine Word. If this is the case, then we understand the work of God in humanity as also being a work of the Spirit through and with Christ. Pauline theology is infused with the understanding that the reception of God is not only based on the salvific work of Christ, but is fulfilled by the work of the Spirit in our lives. Thus we see Spirit Christology as a basis for understanding the work of God in humanity. The bridge between God and humanity is always Christ himself. It is God’s initiative and it is Christocentric. The truth of Christ is also, however, revealed by and received in the Spirit, so expressing both the pneumatological and Christological aspects of the divine and the human union. Similarly, the reality of becoming like Christ and the transformation of the human being into Christlikeness is a work of the Spirit.

We have argued, therefore, that Spirit Christology not only lends theological significance to human being, but by acknowledging Jesus’ existence and his humanity as prototypical, we also understand that the fulfilled human existence in Christ by the Spirit becomes the goal of the Christian life. As Coffey and Spence argue, the communication of idioms is to be interpreted dynamically, so that whatever is communicated will be received in a human way. Jesus is the eternal Son of God, but as Davidson writes, ‘his humanity develops and functions as it does, in obedience and intimacy, via the personal work of the Spirit.’ The Spirit perfects Jesus’ humanity ‘by enabling him to be what he is called and sent to be, empowering, comforting, sanctifying and inspiring him.’408 This shift away from a deterministic or static understanding of the hypostatic union, enables us to speak of Jesus’ ‘freedom’ to act and to obey. Jesus’ actions are not determined, but he acts out of free ‘human’

408 Davidson, I., Theologizing the Human Jesus, p. 152.
obedience that is actualized by the Word through the Spirit. The Spirit is the one who, with Jesus, enables humanity to address the Father as Abba, and enables humanity to live a life that is fully human.  

Participation in the life of the Trinity, therefore, can be viewed as a fully human pursuit. As we saw in Chapter One, with the work of Del Colle, one of the corollaries of Spirit Christology is a stronger account of human agency. This will become a central concept in the model of mission developed in Part Two.

Davidson extrapolates his Christological model to offer a robust account of human agency and freedom in the power of the Spirit and this will serve as the basis for our model of mission. With echoes of Spence’s work on Owen, Davidson’s concerns with some interpretations of Logos Christology is that the Word’s control of the flesh is so direct that it by implication reduces the flesh to extreme passivity, emptying the humanity of Christ of any developmental process and normal self-determining energy. In contrast, Davidson believes that ‘an enhypostatic account of humanity’s existence in Christ can be a way of expressing the importance of human freedom’ while also saying that ‘the right kind of human actions are only possible by virtue of divine generosity.’ But how, he asks, might the determinative grace proclaimed by the enhypostasia in the life of Jesus be mediated in the experience of the individual believer and of the Christian community as a whole?

One of the crucial aspects of Davidson’s work is that he does not divorce the experience of the individual believer from the notion of community and church. His argument for a human response to God on the basis of Christ’s response in the Spirit always entails by implication, the ‘ecclesial task.’ How can this be expressed as ‘active manifestation’ rather than as a response that is reduced to mere ‘grateful acquiescence’? As we have seen, Davidson awards a more prominent place to the Holy Spirit in the enhypostasia, but what are the implications of this? He argues that the spelling out of the grace of which enhypostasis communicates is ‘the good news that humanity is not overwhelmed or reduced to passivity, but exalted to true freedom in correspondence to and covenant partnership with God.’ By the Spirit, Jesus lives

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409 Davidson, I., Theologizing the Human Jesus, p.147.
410 Davidson, I., Theologizing the Human Jesus, p.147.
411 Davidson, I., Theologizing the Human Jesus, p.145.
412 Davidson, I., Theologizing the Human Jesus, p.150.
413 Davidson, I., Theologizing the Human Jesus, p.145.
anhypostatically out of himself and enhypostatically in and towards God. The implications of this for human existence are as follows:

... so too the Christian agent is most human when she recognizes that she is freed from a compulsive concern with self-actualization by means of her own energies and enabled to live in correspondence to God, in an ethical pattern shaped by values and concerns in God’s kingdom.  

Davidson achieves a balance in his work between grace and response, between God’s action towards us which is always the initiating and effective act and our free response of faith, gratitude and obedience. He concludes,

[y]et the actions which the agent performs are none the less personally real for being generated ultimately by grace. The act of faith, epitomized most strikingly in the posture of gratitude and supplication evinced in prayer, is the realization of what God in Christ has chosen human life to be. The outworking of the ‘convertedness’ of which the enhypostasia is analytical enables the believer to pursue a determined yet spontaneous and cheerful obedience to the God by whose grace she is sustained and to whose glory she is called.  

It is this dynamic of grace and response which then forms the foundation of the ecclesial task – to be witnesses to the world of the saving truth and goodness of God in Christ. And it is by the Spirit that the Christian community is the mediator of the grace which God speaks in Jesus. The following is a summary of Davidson’s position which will become crucial for our understanding of mission.

An enhypostatic theology combined with a robust pneumatology affords resources for accounts of the church, its ministry and mission which disavow ethical docetism while preserving the primacy of divine enabling and the sovereign freedom of divine self-communication in and to the world. If the church embodies the presence of Christ and makes him known, it does so as

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414 Davidson, I., Theologizing the Human Jesus, p.145.
415 Davidson, I., Theologizing the Human Jesus, p.146.
the Spirit of the Jesus for whose coming it waits graces it and works through its corruptions and weaknesses. And therein lies its confidence and hope.\footnote{Davidson, I., Theologizing the Human Jesus, p.153.}

Davidson’s emphasis on human freedom, spelled out as it is both Christologically and pneumatologically is not only important for the church and the way that Christians understand their own position in relation to God, as he notes, but is also significant for any theology of mission. The notion of response is a key concept when we are discussing the process of speaking and hearing the good news of Christ. It is essential that those to whom the church speaks also understand that although they cannot answer by themselves, they will have to answer for themselves and that within God’s choosing of humanity, there is also a free response. In a society where an enormous emphasis is placed in human freedom and individuality, the church needs to have an anthropology that is able to engage with this particular perspective. The right but not disproportionate emphasis on human freedom and agency would be such a theology.

Davidson also articulates the distinct but coinherent missions of the Son and the Spirit, working in and through the world. Any hint of docetism is strongly rebuffed in an account which privileges and values the human. The sovereignty of God and the freedom of humanity are both expressed, and the task of living out the good news of Christ is a community and not an individual one, lived out in the power of the Spirit. It is as a body, a collective, that the church reflects the Christlike life. We will build on these insights for a missiology rooted in Spirit Christology.

We have discussed various contemporary accounts of Spirit Christology, some of their strengths and weaknesses, and the implications of these for a theological anthropology. We will build on this in developing an account of mission in which human agency is held in a dialectical tension with the grace and sovereignty of God and the empowering of the Spirit. The dynamic of incarnation and grace, of divine initiative and human response will come to the fore, as will the interplay between the individual and the ecclesial community.
**Spirit Christology: a ‘unifying’ Christology**

I wish to conclude this survey and critique of Spirit Christology with some remarks on the contribution of Spirit Christology to the study of Christology in general. One of the most influential, but detrimental developments in Christology in recent years was the bifurcation of the Christ of faith and the Jesus of history, coupled with the belief that the pursuit of one was incompatible with or might somehow compromise the pursuit of the other. The theologians that we have considered above, among others, are concerned to combat this either/or approach to Christology, and to articulate a Christology in which the Jesus of history is the Christ of faith and vice versa. Davidson laments that too often in theology, as a result of various Christological developments,

> Jesus has been neatly spiritualized out of the way, his humanness, and especially his bodiliness, rendered surprisingly marginal for both the details and the grand narratives of theological thinking…the widespread stress on Jesus’ humanity has not been sufficiently integrated within a Christology which is concerned in faith to exegete and proclaim the mystery of divine action as the mystery of God’s presence as this man, in his past achievement, his present reality and his future glory.  

The highlighting of his humanness, as we have seen, in no way undermines, but instead endorses Jesus as Saviour. By stressing both the Jesus of history and the Christ of faith, and by understanding God’s presence as this man as Davidson puts it, we are able to affirm that, ‘in his humanness he uniquely embodies the presence of God for the salvation of the world.’ Clearly, these insights are crucial in relation to a theology of mission. It is not only that it is doctrinally correct to hold these two concepts together, but that it is pastorally apposite and inextricable from the question of how we may know Jesus Christ. LaCugna comments on developments in Christological method.

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417 Davidson, I., Theologizing the Human Jesus, p.134.
418 Davidson, I., Theologizing the Human Jesus, p.134.
First, the historical Jesus (the Jesus of the gospels) is the primary and non-negotiable norm for contemporary christology. Second, christology can no longer be separated from soteriology. The sharp distinction between the ‘being’ of Jesus Christ…and his ‘function’…is no longer defensible, nor is the separation of dogmatic treatises into christology proper (who Christ is in his person) and soteriology proper (how Christ accomplishes our salvation). The direction in contemporary christology often has been described as the shift from a christology ‘from above’…to a christology ‘from below’…, but many theologians now doubt whether this characterization is helpful or even valid. Two affirmations are necessary: the being of Jesus Christ is the ground of his history, his person, his words and deeds; likewise, the being of Jesus Christ is constituted to be what it is precisely through his history and person. Every modern christology must struggle with uniting these two perspectives.419

It has been my intention to demonstrate that Spirit Christology is able to unite these two perspectives. We are able to emphasize equally the historical person of Jesus with Christ, the universal Saviour, whose reality, existence, and soteriological significance is inextricably bound up with the person and work of the Spirit, the one who reveals Christ to the world.

With Spirit Christology, the incarnation is understood as the uniting of the two natures of Christ, with the humanity of Christ formed, shaped and perfected by the Spirit. We have made a case for the humanity of Christ being integral to his being, in an active and not simply a passive, determined sense. If this is true, then his humanness and all that it entailed must in some way be formative of his being and personhood, and the embodied nature of Christ takes on a greater significance. It is not that the human nature has any generative or creative capacity on its own, thus threatening the anhypostatic character of the human nature of Christ, but simply that the life that Christ lived on earth he lived as a human being, and thus his human will, his human responses and his human character are meaningful. A Christology that acknowledges the humanity of Christ in this way will emphasize the particular, embodied and localized existence of Jesus as crucial to our understanding of Christ as Saviour. Spence notes that we must be able to affirm that a historical or biographical

study of Jesus is both possible and valuable. The historical locatedness of Jesus is not incidental but becomes integral to who he was and what he did. Jesus’

knowledge and thought-patterns were influenced by his religion, culture and prevailing historical circumstances…[and] the study of his life and developing understanding in the context of his background, culture, religion, call, personal faith and hope in God is intricately bound up with our interpretation of his message, his ministry and his person as the object of our faith.420

Particularity and the notion of historical locatedness will be key concepts for our missiology, but not at the expense of the universal. The risen Christ is the particular Christ, made known to all generations by the Spirit. In the persons of Christ and the Spirit, in their coinherent and co-dependent mission, the universal meets the particular with neither taking precedence or priority over the other.

In sum, a Spirit Christology contributes and acts as a foundation for all kinds of possibilities in our thinking and theologizing. In this chapter we have seen a significant overlap between the work of Coffey, a theologian committed to the Roman Catholic tradition and theologians within the Reformed tradition. Furthermore, with a more robust pneumatology, and an acknowledgement that theology should not be ‘excessively’ Christological, we see Western theology moving closer to Eastern trinitarian thought, and possibilities for a more fruitful ecumenical dialogue. With a stronger emphasis on the humanity of Christ we are able to make a case for a strong rebuttal of docetism in its many forms, while also placing greater significance on the created order, the free response of humanity to God, and the role of humanity in God’s economy. We understand redemption to be a recreation of this world rather than a deliverance from it. Thus the material world is the place where theological meaning can be found. With our emphasis on the dynamic activity of the Spirit in Christ and the work of the Spirit in humanity, we have an account of human response and freedom which allows us to speak of human agency without abrogating the sovereign work of God. We see the work of the Spirit in Christ as the one who anoints, empowers, sustains, comforts and communicates. This particular work of the Spirit continues in the lives of believers. As we noted in Chapter Two, the Spirit is

420 Spence, A., The Promise of Peace, p.34.
'not a mere instrument or servant disposing of what he has no concern in, nor power over: but in all things he works according to his own will.'

Thus we affirm the hypostatic individuation of the Spirit within the unity of the Trinity. Moreover, our understanding of the coinherence of the missions of the Spirit and the Son allows us to articulate a theology of the universal and the particular, which will in turn come to form the basis for our understanding of unity and diversity as we develop our thinking on mission. Finally, with the emphasis on the Spirit functioning in individuals, but in individuals who are part of a community and in the church as a ‘body’, we maintain our understanding of the Christian life made whole only as it is lived out in relation to those around us. Gunton asserts, ‘persons also are constituted in their particularity both by their being created such by God and by the network of human and cosmic relatedness in which they find their being.’

In the chapters that follow, we will take these theological principles that arise from Spirit Christology and apply them, exploring the implications for individuals, the community of the church and the world around us, as the church seeks to fulfil the task of communicating the good news.

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PART TWO: SPEAKING OF MISSION

CHAPTER FOUR

MODELS OF MISSION I

Introduction

Thus far we have made a case for Spirit Christology as a viable Christology and have demonstrated the ways that it may act as a foundation for further theologizing. The foundational principle is an equal emphasis on Christ and the Spirit and an understanding of the work of God in this world as the coinherent and reciprocal missions of the Son and the Spirit. In respect of mission, we have emphasized the work of the Spirit as the Spirit of Sonship, bringing humanity into relationship with the Father as sons and daughters in Christ. We acknowledge Jesus as the prototype of humanity, which in turn acts as a foundation for a theological anthropology, and this leads to an understanding of the participation of human beings in the work of God in this world. At the heart of a missiology based on Spirit Christology is the concept that through the mission of the Son and the Spirit, human beings become sons and daughters of the Father, but in addition to this we have touched on the work of the Son and the Spirit in the transformation of all aspects of life. Moreover, we have developed a theology of the universal and the particular rooted both Christologically and pneumatologically, which in turn gives us a way of expressing both unity and diversity within church life and practice. What does this renewed emphasis on the Spirit and particularly Spirit Christology mean for contemporary missiology? Is this particularly well suited to address the exigencies of our time? As we noted, Rosato suggests that Spirit Christology, ‘might well allow Christian theologians to present Jesus Christ in a way more understandable to contemporary secular culture and also more appropriate to the current spiritual and pastoral needs in the Christian community.’423 Others believe that there is an openness to Spirit talk in contemporary society that will facilitate the presentation of a Spirit Christology. Can Spirit

Christology give us a theological foundation for missiology which is ‘more appropriate’ than other models of mission for our time?

In Part Two, I will consider this claim, assessing what it is that Spirit Christology has to offer as a basis for reflections on mission, and how it compares with other models of Christology. We will explore further what might be the yield or productivity of Spirit Christology for the ‘life and praxis of the church’ and examine this question in relation to mission, evangelism and catechesis. I will argue that Spirit Christology gives us a dogmatic foundation for a dialogical model of mission based on incarnation and anointing; a model of mission in which we are able to account for the inbreaking work of God and human response, divine initiative and the corresponding obedience of the church. In order to do this, we will begin with some introductory comments on mission, defining terms such as mission, evangelism and discipleship. I then give a brief summary of some of the salient features of contemporary culture in Western Europe, before turning to a survey of New Testament perspectives on mission. In subsequent chapters we will explore how the question of Christ, the Spirit and mission has been answered by a number of contemporary theologians and then, referring back to the insights gleaned from our interlocutors in Part One, how this helps to form a model of mission in the West.

The Missio Dei and the Mission of the Church

In his magisterial work, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* David Bosch writes, ‘Every branch of theology – including missiology – remains piecework, fragile, and preliminary. There is no such thing as missiology, period. There is only missiology in draft.’ With this in mind, we turn to missiology, for which the point of departure for any discussion must be the *missio Dei*. Bosch notes the influence of Barth in the mid 20th century as being crucial to a shift in thinking to understanding mission as ‘being derived from the very nature of God.’

At the Willingen Conference of the IMC in 1952, mission was linked primarily and inextricably to the Trinity; the Father sending the Son, and the Father and the Son sending the Spirit. Thus the mission of God came to be understood as only ever

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424 This is one of the issues that Del Colle raises but only answers in outline.
initiated by God himself, with its origins only in him. Bosch notes that the notion has been useful to ‘articulate the conviction that neither the church nor any other human agent can ever be considered the author and bearer of mission’ that it is ‘primarily and ultimately, the work of the Triune God, Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier, for the sake of the world, a ministry in which the church is privileged to participate.’ Bosch notes that the potential weakness of the concept of the *missio Dei* is that mission can be seen to be wholly God’s concern, thereby diminishing the role of the church to such an extent that the church is seen as no longer bearing any responsibility for making a contribution. At Willingen, however, there was an important innovation in the understanding of the *missio Dei* to include a new movement: the sending of the church.

Mission is thereby seen as a movement from God to the world; the church is viewed as an instrument for that mission. There is church because there is mission, not vice versa. To participate in mission is to participate in the movement of God’s love toward people, since God is a fountain of sending love.

The developed notion of the *missio Dei* is thus defined in trinitarian, christological, pneumatological and ecclesiological terms, with the church being understood as God’s ‘instrument’ for his mission to the world. With our models of Spirit Christology we develop the concept of the *missio Dei* further, not only noting the sending nature of God, with the traditional taxis of Father, Son, Spirit, but also the sending of the Son by the Spirit and in Coffey’s model, the return of humanity via the Spirit to the Father. The act of ‘sending’ at the heart of the Trinity is emphasised to a greater extent with Spirit Christology, enabling us also to include the Spirit in this movement, not simply as the last in a chain of ‘sending’ out to the world, but as one who also sends. We are unable to extricate the mission of the Son from the mission of the Spirit and the two are fully entwined. Furthermore, the emphasis that we are able to place on the humanity of Christ without compromising or diminishing his divinity, allows us to include humanity in the economy of God through the humanity

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of Christ, thus safeguarding against Bosch’s concern that the *missio Dei* nullifies any need for human participation in the mission of God to the world. The incarnation stands as a manifestation of God’s purpose to work through the humanity of Christ for the salvation of the world, and needs to be at the heart of any understanding of mission. Thus, the concept of human being, in the light of the person of Christ, becomes an integral concept in any missiology. It is, as we have seen in our study of the person of Christ, a Spirit-empowered humanity that becomes the basis for our theological reflection. The work of the Spirit in the personhood of Christ and through him, in our humanity, is as the sender and the one who empowers for mission, hence our theology of incarnation and anointing. The sending of the disciples by Jesus in the power of the Spirit and the implications of that for the church will be a foundational theme of this and subsequent chapters. What does it mean to ‘participate’ in the mission of God, for the church and for individuals? What does it look like for the church to be witnesses to Jesus Christ? How has the church lived out this call? What are the specific insights that Spirit Christology can offer to this foundational missiological principle? In John’s Gospel we read of the encounter of the risen Jesus with his disciples.

> Again Jesus said, “Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.” And with that he breathed on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.” John 20.21-23

In John, what is sometimes called the Johannine Pentecost becomes the basis for the sending of the disciples, commissioned by the risen Jesus, and as receivers of the Spirit. Lesslie Newbigin, commenting on recent developments in the church’s understanding of mission and the role of the church in this, writes the following:

> The truth that the Church is itself something sent in to the world, the continuation of Christ’s mission from the Father, something which is not so much an institution as an expedition sent to the ends of the earth in Christ’s name, has been grasped with a new vividness. Among those who have reflected about these matters it becomes less and less possible to speak of the
missionary task otherwise than as the embassage of the whole people of God to the whole world.\textsuperscript{430}

We will go on to discuss this in detail. However, in order to discuss the questions around what it means to be Christ’s ambassadors, for the church to be sent to the world as the continuation of Christ’s mission from the Father, we will turn to some definitions.

**Mission and Evangelism: What is Mission?**

The task of defining mission is somewhat daunting and as Bosch notes, in many respects, can never be definitive. The question of what it is that the church has been commissioned to communicate to the world has received and will continue to receive a rich variety of answers as the ‘Gospel of Jesus Christ’ presented in the New Testament is interpreted. The answers will encompass many aspects of the saving work of Christ and his Lordship over creation, from the forgiveness of sins, to the now and the not yet of the coming kingdom of God, from individual concerns of personal healing, restoration, wholeness and redemption, to relational concerns of restored families and friendships, and further to macro concerns of justice for the oppressed, restored communities and reconciliation of enemies, even among tribes and nations. Christoph Schwöbel gives a broad definition of the gospel as ‘the proclamation of God’s grace as the universal promise for humankind insofar as it not only identifies the contradiction against God as the root of human alienation, but also proclaims the restoration of the relationship of God and humanity as the ground of salvation.’\textsuperscript{431} The Church of England has recently published a document setting out ‘Five Marks of Mission’. They are:

1. To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom
2. To teach, baptise, and nurture new believers
3. To respond to human need by loving service
4. To seek to transform unjust structures of society

5. To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth\textsuperscript{432}

The ‘good news’ of the restoration of the relationship of God and humanity as the ground of salvation is that which the church is called to proclaim and embody in a fully orbed way permeating all aspects of life. The term ‘mission’ is often used interchangeably with the term ‘evangelism’, however, Bosch makes some helpful distinctions between mission and evangelism relevant to our discussion. In Bosch’s view, mission is a broader concept than evangelism. Mission denotes the total task God has set the church for the salvation of the world, but always related to a specific context of evil, despair, and lostness…It embraces all activities that serve to liberate man from his slavery in the presence of the coming God, slavery which extends from economic necessity to Godforsakenness…Mission is the church sent to the world, to love, to serve, to preach, to teach, to heal, to liberate.\textsuperscript{433}

This view of mission is one that we have already encountered in Gunton’s and particularly Moltmann’s work with is emphasis on the gospel for the poor and the oppressed. Bosch argues, therefore, that evangelism should not be equated with mission, but should be viewed as an essential ‘dimension of the total activity of the Church.’\textsuperscript{434} They are not synonyms, but ‘indissolubly linked together and inextricably interwoven in theology and praxis.’\textsuperscript{435} Evangelism is personal and relational, it involves witnessing to what God has done, is doing, and will do. It is always an invitation, but at the same time, always aims at a response. The one who evangelizes is not a judge, but a witness and this witnessing must be conducted with all humility and respect. Even though we ought to be modest about the character and effectiveness of our witness, evangelism remains an indispensable ministry. Evangelism is always contextual and cannot be divorced from the preaching and practicing of justice.\textsuperscript{436}

\textsuperscript{433} Bosch, D., \textit{Transforming Mission}, p.412.
\textsuperscript{434} Bosch, D., \textit{Transforming Mission}, p.412.
\textsuperscript{435} Bosch, D., \textit{Transforming Mission}, p.411.
\textsuperscript{436} Bosch, D., \textit{Transforming Mission}, pp.412-16.
Vincent Donovan uses the term ‘first evangelism’ to mean ‘the preaching of the gospel for the first time to any group or people, enabling them to hear for the first time the name of their savior, Jesus.’ He describes it in the following way:

[i]t would encompass the time involved from your very first meeting with any people to talk with them about Christ, up until the time they accept the Christian faith and are baptized, or reject Christ and Christianity. It should be distinguished from the further instruction and guidance needed after baptism for any Christian community until the day when it can stand on its own and you can leave it. The concept of first evangelization lies at the heart of the distinction between missionary and pastoral work. It is directed essentially to people who have never heard of Christ.  

Bosch makes the distinction between mission and evangelism based on the difference between the universal and the particular. It is not that one involves a community and one is more individualistic because he also views evangelism as being a ‘community’ pursuit. It is more that he sees ‘mission’ as being God’s response through the church to structural and institutional evils, and evangelism as an indispensable aspect of this response. He notes, ‘[p]rincipalities and powers, governments and nations cannot come to faith – only individuals can.’ Bosch is critical of individualism in any form, however, he acknowledges that a rejection of individualism cannot preclude the idea that God works in the lives of particular individuals; ‘only people can be addressed and only people can respond.’ What is clear is that the ‘mission’ of the church will not progress independently of evangelism. In speaking of mission and evangelism, therefore, we need to hold the universal with the particular, not emphasising one over against the other. Andrew Lord, who has written specifically on contemporary mission and the work of the Spirit writes,

[u]nderstandings of mission range from seeing it as equivalent to evangelism to covering everything the church does in the world. There is a need for a

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438 Bosch, D., Transforming Mission, p.416.
439 Bosch, D., Transforming Mission, p.416.
framework of mission that encompasses the main existing ideas and yet retains a focused challenge for action. This action needs to be clearly linked with the activity of the Holy Spirit and with a vision of the future kingdom.\footnote{Lord, A., ‘Mission Eschatology: A Framework for Mission in the Spirit’ \textit{Journal of Pentecostal Theology} 11 (1997) 111-123, p.111.}

It is my contention that Spirit Christology gives us just such a framework as we will go on to demonstrate. The work of the Spirit of God is both universal and particular and we do not confine it just to one or the other. The Spirit is able to work in individual lives, but also in institutions and the whole of the created order. Not only does the Holy Spirit work in individual hearts, lives and minds to bring about the assurance that we are indeed sons and daughters of God, but as we have seen in the eschatological theology of Gunton and Moltmann, the Spirit will also work to bring about the liberation from the bondage of decay for which the creation itself is waiting and longing. (Rom 8.21) The fullness of this is yet to be realized, but the firstfruits of this gift of the Spirit are manifest now. Whilst acknowledging the work of the Spirit in both the universal and the particular, however, as I am focusing more on the personal nature of mission and evangelism, I will emphasize the work of the Spirit more in the the particular and the personal, than on the work of the Spirit in universal terms.

According to these definitions, we will be discussing mission \textit{and} evangelism in contemporary society, and I will use the term mission to include the notion of evangelism. With respect to evangelism, the more particular or personal aspect of mission, we will apply the principles of Spirit Christology to the following aspects: witness (to the gospel events), invitation, response, dialogue, the primacy of people over institutions, contextual evangelism and the preaching and practice of justice. Lord writes,

\begin{quote}
‘[o]n route to seeing people acknowledge Jesus as Lord we may see mission as Presence, Identification and Dialogue – as witnessing to Christ by simply being in a situation, by finding ways of expressing our faith in a way that identifies with the culture we are in, and by understanding and debating with the views of others so as to present Christ in a meaningful way.’\footnote{Lord, A., Mission Eschatology, p.117.}
\end{quote}
We will be exploring some of these processes (presence, identification and dialogue) from the perspective of Spirit Christology. The witnessing to the gospel events of the incarnate Christ or evangelism as we have defined it, aims at a ‘response’. Bosch describes the response as the following, ‘[t]he calling is to specific changes, to renounce evidences of the domination of sin in our lives and to accept responsibilities in terms of God’s love for our neighbour.’\textsuperscript{442} This also then, will encompass the notion of re-birth and re-creation in the Spirit that we have discussed in Part One. I will assume that when speaking of mission we are articulating something of the call of God through the church to humanity to return to a relationship with him that is expressed in the new covenant in Christ, and that to dispense with the ‘centrality of repentance and faith is to divest the gospel of its significance.’\textsuperscript{443} We now turn to study some models of mission from the New Testament, seeing how they relate to Spirit Christology.

\textbf{The Context for Mission and Evangelism in the West}

In order to assess the value of Spirit Christology to mission in contemporary culture, we first need to attempt to identify certain defining characteristics of contemporary society and culture, as it is only then that we will be able to judge what it is about Spirit Christology as a dogmatic foundation that is particularly well-suited to address the exigencies of our time. There is currently much discussion on the topic of mission and evangelism in the Western church, mainly it appears, due to the overall shrinking numbers of church-goers and the steady decline of attendance in the mainstream churches. Consequently, most mainstream denominations are exploring the questions of the relevance of the gospel and church to the society in which we live, and how to communicate that. Part of this process is to assess our own culture and society in as much as we are able, as it is only from there that we can then discern an appropriate response from the church as we attempt to communicate the truth and reality of Jesus Christ to the society around us, and live out our witness in presence, identification and dialogue.

\textsuperscript{442} Mission and Evangelism – An Ecumenical Affirmation, 1982 cited in Bosch, D., Transforming Mission, p.413.
\textsuperscript{443} Bosch, D., Transforming Mission, p.413.
There are very few who would argue that the message of the gospel of Jesus Christ can be communicated in a timeless or supra-historical fashion. As Bosch and others contend, Christianity conforms to the culture around it, and has done from the beginning. The stories of the New Testament are firmly rooted in a particular historical time and setting. The New Testament writers use terms that are not immediately accessible to us, and in order for us to ‘make sense of’ some of the imagery and references in the Bible, we need to be aware of the context and background in which it was written. For this reason, Bosch cautions that we must not succumb to concordism ‘which equates the social groups and forces within first-century Palestine with those of our own time’ and repeatedly makes the point that the gospel will need to be applied in different ways at different times depending on the specific historical and cultural setting. This is a crucial aspect in understanding mission, and we will discuss some aspects pertaining to this principle, and the role of the Spirit in this in the next three chapters. Bosch writes, ‘A historico-critical study may help us to comprehend what mission was for Paul and Mark and John but it will not immediately tell us what we must think about mission in our own concrete situation.’

Thus, the process of interpretation is crucial; interpreting to each generation and each culture, the contemporary significance of who Jesus is and what he has said and done. This process of interpretation is conducted on a number of levels. We interpret the Bible, we interpret the culture around us, and we interpret our own and others’ experiences. This process that we engage in as Christians is directed and informed by the Spirit and involves not just analysis, but the spiritual gifts of prophecy and discernment. The Spirit is the one who witnesses and points to Jesus as the truth, who will guide us into all truth, the one through whom God speaks to the disciples after the ascension, the one who empowers for witness and the one who will give the words to speak in times of trial. It is not possible for the church to discern an appropriate and accessible way to communicate the gospel and to then go on to do this apart from the guidance and empowerment of the Spirit.

For many years, missiologists have advocated the need for missionaries to understand the culture that they are living and working in; to speak the language of their hearers. For missionaries living overseas or working in obviously cross-cultural settings, this principle has been regarded as essential for any effective mission. In

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recent years, however, many have been arguing that circumstances have so changed in the countries of Western Europe, that they too are now regarded as mission fields, in the light of the fact that these countries are no longer deemed to be ‘Christian’. Lesslie Newbigin notes that this is forcing the church to re-evaluate its response to the culture around it.

The Western world has had to be recognized once again as a mission field, and the Churches have been compelled in a new way to define their nature and mission as parts of a divine society distinct from the wider society of nations in which they live, and all these factors have contributed to developments in the field of theology in the direction of a missionary understanding of the nature of the Church itself.  

What of the culture we are living in now? If it is an essential part of evangelism, to understand the context that we find ourselves in, how do we assess this? Bernard Cooke advocates that we should seek to discern the ‘overall Zeitgeist and regnant ideologies that constitutes the atmosphere of consciousness in which people think and decide and act.’ It is when we do this that we can then consider how the gospel might ‘make sense’ to those around us?

Missiologists speak of a ‘double listening’; listening to the Spirit and listening to culture. In practice, listening to our culture will need to be much more specific and localized than anything we are able to articulate with broad generalizations. Anything we might observe today about our culture will always have an element of provisionality about it, as it is a monumental task to conduct a thorough and fair survey of any particular culture at any particular time. It is, therefore, quite beyond the scope of this thesis to give any detailed analysis of contemporary culture. I will simply highlight some of the predominant cultural trends and ideologies that have been identified by various thinkers in recent years. What are the salient features of modern life that contribute to and frame our general perceptions?

446 Newbigin, L., Trinitarian Doctrine, p.12.
Contemporary Western culture is often described in words such as the following: pluralist, individualist, secular, (post)modernist, scientific, liberal, economized, technocratic, bureaucratic, ecologically damaging, manipulative and exploitative of human beings, relentlessly consumerist. The questions that missiologists, and indeed all Christians, face are how does this affect our worldviews, our values, our relationships? What are the forces that motivate us? How are we used to making sense of the world? In what ways can Christians communicate that will be ‘speaking the language of our hearers’? Of course, when involved in mission to one’s own culture, the complexities of these questions function in a different way as the Christian is as immersed in the culture as the ‘hearer’, and in an important sense, cannot be considered an outsider. So what of the defining features that we have identified above? It has become commonplace in recent years to hear Christian commentators and theologians describe Western society as being in a state of crisis. Del Colle, for example, describes postmodernism as marking a crisis in numerous ways. He suggests that we are facing a cognitive, historical, political and socioeconomic crisis as well as crises in ecology, sexuality and gender, and religion. Others suggest that we are facing epistemological, theological and existential crises. To what extent these claims are defensible is perhaps debatable, but what is striking is that Christians are consistently claiming that Western society is characterized by upheaval and dissonance. This perspective is noticeable among missiologists, specifically in the conversation about contemporary mission in the European West. What is it about this particular period of history that signals a ‘crisis’ for Christianity? Why do we not focus on the positive aspects of our culture for example, the extraordinary advances in medicine, the ease which technology gives us in communication, the very high standard of living, the freedom of worship, the remarkably low infant mortality rates, the lack of infectious diseases? In this section, we will briefly survey some aspects of Western culture, noting why Christian commentators might view this as representing a crisis.

Maclaren writes that the church in Europe is facing a ‘crisis of unprecedented proportions’ but that in the face of dying religion, ‘defiant green shoots of religious

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revitalization are pushing up’. Andrew Kirk also refers to a crisis in the widespread discrediting of the Christian faith, the lack of interest in Christianity, and the common scepticism regarding any claims that Christianity may be ‘true’. His perspective is that the transition from modern to postmodern thought has triggered a crisis in epistemology which has radically affected Christian claims of truth. Maclaren sets out to address the crisis of Christianity in Europe using the tools of sociological analysis, studying the history of ideas, social processes and institutional carriers of secularizing ideas and how they affect the credibility of the Christian faith. From a different perspective, Kirk and Vanhoozer study the crisis of theories of knowledge and epistemology in our postmodern period, analysing different traditions of Western philosophy and then assessing the impact of this on how we decide what is ‘true’ or not, which truth claims have credence, and how we know what we know. These clearly are crucial questions for the study of mission: secularization, pluralism and the reception or rejection of truth claims. One of the questions that Maclaren touches on is the question of how secularized Western Europe actually is.

The question of secularism in the West is considered in detail in Charles Taylor’s *A Secular Age*. His main focus is the North and West Atlantic cultural milieu, and not Europe, but his insights are germane to the discussion. He explores the notion of what he calls secularity in the ‘third sense’ – that there are many alternatives to belief and that belief in God is now one option among many. (The other two senses of secularism are defined as a secular state, or the question of whether or not the population have a religious belief.) Taylor highlights in particular the reality of a new pluralist society, the rise of alternative beliefs and the rise of unbelief which he ascribes to ‘exclusive humanism.’ A secular humanist age ‘is one in which the eclipse of all goals beyond human flourishing becomes conceivable; or better, it falls within the range of an imaginable life for masses of people.’ Taylor identifies changing attitudes to certain notions at the heart of the Christian faith: the

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455 Taylor, C., *A Secular Age*, p.3.
transcendent, death, judgement and freedom. In addition he notes changing attitudes to the notion of Providence, attitudes towards heroism and warrior virtues, a prevailing belief in leveling down in society, and changing attitudes towards happiness.\textsuperscript{459} This, along with what he calls the ‘disenchantment’ of the world, where there is a denial of the supernatural, the magical, the transcendent, has contributed to the ‘face-off between humanism and faith.’\textsuperscript{460} He writes, ‘[a] race of humans has arisen which has managed to experience its world entirely as immanent. In some respects, we may judge this achievement as a victory for darkness, but it is a remarkable achievement nonetheless.’\textsuperscript{461} The new secularism however, does not mean that people are totally devoid of any awareness of the spiritual. Taylor notes the shift from organized religion to ‘spirituality,’ a theme picked up by others. He identifies our current situation as an unprecedented time in which the future is unpredictable and uncertain. ‘In any case, we are just at the beginning of a new age of religious searching whose outcome no one can foresee.’\textsuperscript{462}

Kirsteen Kim also identifies a shift from religion to spirituality.\textsuperscript{463} On the question of secularism and society in Western Europe, Kim cites Grace Davie, Professor of Sociology at the University of Exeter.

Davie suggests that although traditional patterns of religious practice have changed, Western Europeans continue to believe. They have rejected membership of religious organizations but they continue “believing without belonging” and have a vicarious approach to faith, giving tacit support to traditional religious practice, which they see as beneficial to the wider society.\textsuperscript{464}

In Western Europe the question of secularism is a complex one. Here we face a paradox. There is no doubt that we have witnessed the increasing secularization within society and within state funded education over the last fifty years. However, in recent years, respect and even deference towards religious commitment has increased;

\textsuperscript{459} Taylor, C., \textit{A Secular Age}, pp.317-320.
\textsuperscript{460} Taylor, C., \textit{A Secular Age}, p.321.
\textsuperscript{461} Taylor, C., \textit{A Secular Age}, p.376.
\textsuperscript{462} Taylor, C., \textit{A Secular Age}, p.535.
\textsuperscript{463} Kim, K., \textit{Joining in with the Spirit: Connecting World Church and Local Mission} (London: Epworth Press, 2009), p.181.
‘faith’ schools are opening, positions of faith are acknowledged in government, and there is a general recognition that religious plurality is a welcome development. In general, faith and religion are making a comeback despite dire predictions that secularization would eventually eclipse the major religions.\textsuperscript{465} It is difficult to assess what exactly is in decline and what exactly is emerging. It is agreed, however, that we now live in a multi-faith, multi-cultural, multi-lingual and pluralist society where the voices of many and sometimes conflicting ideologies are considered to be equally valid. In reality we live with many conflicting ideas and ideologies. Maclaren notes for example, that it is difficult to make claims for postmodernism as some kind of totalizing worldview when there is much in our pluralist society that could be considered as firmly modern or even pre-modern.\textsuperscript{466} As well as the process of secularization there is a process of desecularization, religious persistences and even religious resurgence.\textsuperscript{467} With so many subcultures in so many parts of the United Kingdom and Europe, it is difficult to speak definitively of regnant ideologies that constitute the atmosphere of consciousness in which people think and decide and act. However, there are some observations that we can make.

We have noted that there is often a general scepticism of those making any kind of truth claim, or rather, of the claim that they are making, especially if it is of a religious conviction or of what is perceived to be some kind of totalizing metanarrative. Possibly linked to this, is a suspicion and scepticism of institutions in general and authority figures (especially among young people), whether that be the church, the government, the police, the judiciary or other such groups. Authority figures do not necessarily wield influence by virtue of their office, but sometimes will command respect if their authoritative office is endorsed by an inner conviction and knowledge; a lifestyle that authenticates the message. One of the consequences of this is a resultant apathy, a lack of commitment to institutions, a breakdown of the concept of discipline for the sake of duty, and a weakening of loyalty to institutions and


\textsuperscript{466} Maclaren, D., \textit{Mission Implausible}, p.ix.

\textsuperscript{467} Maclaren, D., \textit{Mission Implausible}, p.58. Timothy Keller writes that the world ‘is getting both more religious and less religious at the same time. There was once a confident belief that secular European countries were the harbinger for the rest of the world. Religion, it was thought, would thin out from its more robust, supernaturalist forms or die out altogether. But the theory that technological advancement brings inevitable secularization is now being scrapped or radically rethought. Even Europe may not face a secular future, with Christianity growing modestly and Islam exponentially.’ Keller, T., \textit{The Reason for God: Belief in an Age of Skepticism} (New York: Dutton, 2008), p.x.
companies. Commitments tend to be made to smaller groups, based on friendship, and maybe to larger causes that might be tackling justice, poverty or environmental issues, for example. Despite extraordinary political freedom in the West, many people now consider themselves to be apolitical in terms of the major political parties. They do, however, still believe that change is needed, especially with the potential ecological, financial, and sociological disasters that we face. People will therefore join groups or charities that are working and campaigning for justice rather than trusting the government to do this. Those outside the church still expect the church to be involved in all these areas of society: campaigning for justice; caring for the poor and disadvantaged; living lives that are careful of the environment and those around them.

In our post-Blair government in the United Kingdom, some note that people have become tired and suspicious of political ‘spin’ and that the concept of ‘authenticity’ is definitive for trust to function. Cardinal Hume has been quoted as saying, ‘people now – particularly, as it happens, young people – are intensely beguiled by authenticity and conviction, and quick to detect a lack of these.’

In respect of beliefs, religion and faiths, our society is one of strange contradictions and paradoxes where on the one hand we encounter extreme scepticism, maybe of institutions, of politics, of religion and faith, and on the other hand, extreme gullibility and a willingness to accept anyone’s point of view with very little call for verification of a claim. Maclaren posits that we carry ‘around with us a series of competing definitions of the world. We do not necessarily try to resolve them; we simply switch to whichever view of the world makes sense of the group we are with.’ The result is that often we find people hold conflicting views and occupy illogical positions without even attempting to resolve them. So we have noted that in respect of religion we are both secularized and de-secularized, deferential and dismissive of faith positions, sceptical and gullible. In summary, encroaching secularization has meant that at times we encounter, at best, an indifference and, at worst, a hostility to a religious reading of the world. On the other hand, we live in a liberal and pluralist society which means that religious faith is tolerated, but at the same time, the exclusivity of Christian truth claims are called into question. In addition to this, mainstream denominations are facing a sharp decline in numbers. Thus Christianity has been resituated in society as a whole, both in terms of the

469 Maclaren, D., Mission Implausible, p.44
position of the church in society and in terms of the perceived validity of Christian truth.

What of the other aspects of our society: individualist, technocratic, (post)modernist, scientistic, liberal, economized, bureaucratic, ecologically damaging, manipulative and exploitative of human beings, relentlessly consumerist? These will all deeply affect the way we view God, one another, concepts of ‘progress’, ‘success’, our values, ethics and choices among a plethora of other aspects of life. What does this mean for the church involved in mission? We will look briefly at different responses to what is a somewhat complex topic, and then draw out some aspects of our society, the way we think and function, that the church may be able to respond to.

Stuart Murray Williams argues that we live in a post-Christendom society and views this as a positive development for the church. He proposes the following definition:

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\text{Post-Christendom is the culture that emerges as the Christian faith loses coherence within a society that has been definitively shaped by the Christian story and as the institutions that have been developed to express Christian convictions decline in influence.}\]

Murray Williams is clear that although this may be a difficult period of transition for the church, it is something to be celebrated as the church learns to operate from the margins and out of a position of powerlessness rather than dominance. He argues that the church’s marginalized position in society is forcing Christians to behave in ways that are less dominating, arrogant and imperialistic and therefore more consonant with the gospel. He acknowledges that there are vestiges of Christendom still evident in Western Europe, but in his view, the sooner these vestiges fade, the better! The rate of change and the perception of how quickly the church is becoming disestablished is debatable. Clearly this varies from one European country to another. George Lindbeck observes that Christianity finds itself today ‘in the awkwardly intermediate stage of having once been culturally established but…not yet [being] clearly

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471 These views were made known in subsequent conversation with Murray Williams.
disestablished. It is not as simple as claiming that we are de-Christianized as Murray Williams would acknowledge. In the UK for example, the Anglican church still has a privileged position vis-à-vis the state, in comparison with other Christian denominations and other faiths. Whether the Church of England in the United Kingdom for example is actually marginalized is debatable. Nevertheless, Murray Williams’ observations and work on post-Christendom is valuable for any one concerned with mission to our own culture. Kirk notes the effects of pluralism on notions of truth viz. that most, if not all, truth claims are deemed to be relative. He argues that radical pluralism is shaping all Christian mission and that missiology has to be concerned ‘with the issues raised by contemporary epistemological concerns’. He goes on to argue that in response to pluralism, the church has to be able to ‘accommodate radical diversity and have a theory of the many.’ This is a theme that we will return to in later chapters.

In summary, in the West, we live in a society that is on the one hand more secularized and more suspicious of religion including the Christian religion than it has been for hundreds of years. Graham Hughes writes about the ‘corrosive effects of secularism’ which are ‘inimical to a religious reading of the world’ On the other hand, we also find ourselves in a multi-faith, multi-cultural, multi-language culture where each view is as valid as the next, which means that the Christian voice may only be one of many, but it is a voice. On the one hand people are also deeply suspicious of institutions and authority and the institutional church is declining. On the other hand, focus groups, campaign groups, pressure groups and charities are thriving with many people signing up to something that is working towards change in our society. In addition to this there are powerful dominant ideologies that touch everyone: consumerism, individualism, technology, and the breakdown of communities shaped around the nuclear family are dominant forces that shape every life in the West. Is it a really a new age of religious searching or is there a feeling that religion has now been weighed and found wanting?

Many churches are experiencing a struggle to survive, although this is certainly not true of all churches. However, even the thriving churches would agree

with Sanders’ observation, that ‘[i]f this sketch of the current situation is anywhere near correct, the question of how to communicate, in speech, writing, or action, the Christian message to Western culture is a truly formidable one.’

This may be true, although surely this simply means that there are now new and different opportunities for the church. The church needs to ‘renegotiate its relationship with the surrounding culture.’ The church’s traditional means of communicating the gospel may now be redundant or vitiated, however, one of the corollaries of this is that the church will need to be more creative in its thinking and practice as new opportunities will be presented and new things will emerge.

We will go on to note different models of mission from the New Testament and church history. Are there characteristics of mission and evangelism that are essential rather than fluctuating with the times? It seems that especially now the church cannot afford to ignore the importance of what it might mean for us to be witnesses to Christ in contemporary society. What are the various aspects of mission that will reach people in our particular situation: the importance of human presence; identification with the people around us; the empowerment of the Spirit; the place of dialogue rather than monologue; the nature and style of proclamation; the importance of lives of integrity in the church; and the questions of humility and sacrifice. Despite Christian commentators viewing our current situation as a crisis, there are many positive consequences for the church of living in the society that we do. Along with Murray Williams, we agree that a church operating from the margins is one which will be a more humble and repentant church. In a society where atheism is not just an acceptable position but often the dominant philosophy of an institution, a person of faith needs to know why she believes, and those making a choice to be Christians often do so in spite of those around them, rather than because of them, leading to more robust faith. In a multi-faith society, we are challenged by other perspectives which may shape and mould our own. We are forced to consider other religious beliefs, other lifestyles and other points of view. Philip Clayton writes,

[b]y contrast, the strength of the multicultural perspective is that it repudiates all strategies which rest on a forceful colonization of other ideas, languages,

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and cultures by the West. An immediate corollary of this position is that it helps one to realize, perhaps for the first time, the limited and often arbitrary nature of one’s own perspective.\footnote{Clayton, P., ‘Missiology between Monologue and Cacophany’ in Kirk and Vanhoozer, \textit{To Stake a Claim}, 78-95, p.83.}

Not only is there a scepticism about dominant metanarratives, but there is no one metanarrative which stands above all the others. There are many unquestioned values operating in our society which are inimical to the gospel: consumerism, individualism, the instant gratification of desire are some. On the other hand, our culture shapes our witness to some extent and we need now to emphasize things that may have been neglected in the past: the primacy of people over institutions, the church as witness not judge, invitation rather than command. Moreover, being forced into a position of humility, and having to acknowledge the Other may help us to understand that the response to the invitation will be something we cannot control and which might also transform us. In the light of that, dialogue rather than monologue will be important, the church will be sensitive to its context and how that might shape the message, and evangelism will be in the context of the preaching and practising of justice. This is the ministry of ‘reconciliation’. Tom Smail describes the relationship of Christ and the Spirit in the process of negotiating how the church might respond to the culture around it.

In the day-to-day life of the Church there is often tension between being faithful to what Christ has given and being relevant to the world in which we live. It is all too possible for this tension to be resolved in ways that are fatal to the gospel and its communication. Nevertheless, there is a creative way of living with tension that refuses either to accommodate what Christ has given to the prevailing culture, or to withdraw from that culture behind the high walls of a Christian ghetto, and in one way or the other to grieve the Spirit. He is both the Spirit of Christ who makes us faithful to Christ and he is the Spirit who comes to our side of the relationship with Christ to set us free to respond to Christ in a manner that is authentic to our time and place in God’s world and which, therefore, the contemporary world can understand.\footnote{Smail, T., \textit{The Giving Gift}, (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1988), p.197.}
To return to Del Colle’s categories that we encountered in Chapter One, a model of mission in contemporary society will need to be one of incarnation and anointing; one in which we emphasize the embodied nature of the church, and physical presence, but as Spirit-empowered. This will also include the notions of ‘inbreaking’ and ‘response.’ We acknowledge the inbreaking work of the Spirit in the world, but also the importance of human response to that. We affirm that the beginning of mission is the divine initiative, but that it also entails the corresponding obedience of the church. The mission of God is led by the Spirit who calls us to act in obedience to his leading. This brings the participation of humanity to the fore. In our culture, we need a model of mission that privileges the dialogical; one in which we understand the dynamic of both listening to the Spirit and listening to those around us. As we also noted in Chapter Two, there are certain views of the nature of God and the nature of humanity which will speak more powerfully to contemporary culture than others. It may be that Spirit Christology with an emphasis on the co-equality and non-hierarchical view of the Trinity will be more meaningful to the post-Christendom West. In a society where there is a great emphasis on human freedom, we are able to articulate a theology in which humanity is not overwhelmed or reduced to passivity. In addition to this, there are also advantages to a theology in which experience (the experience of the love of God and of our identity as sons and daughters as a gift of the Spirit) is deemed to be a valid form of knowing. Finally, we need a model in which we are able to express certitude over some dogmatic issues without foreclosing all meaning or precluding a certain open-endedness over matters of faith. It is sometimes asserted that a need for certitude and a continuing search for understanding are two mutually exclusive positions. With an equal emphasis on Christ and the Spirit, maintaining the centrality of Christ whilst also articulating the work of the Spirit, we are able to speak of certitude in respect of certain aspects of faith and dogma without precluding a corresponding open-endedness in respect of how this might be lived out in different cultures, communities and eras.

We conclude, then, that it is Jesus Christ, whose identity is still eschatologically outstanding and therefore does not entirely foreclose the meaning of that identity in continued Christian confession, who is both of the Spirit (the basis of Spirit Christology) and the sender of the Spirit. He it is who
now invites and seals the many with the diversity of all their concerns in the return of all things to God who will be all in all (1 Cor. 15:34).

In Chapter Six, we will spell this out in more detail. We now turn to various biblical narratives of mission.


In this section we will examine some of the biblical accounts of mission from the New Testament, discussing the ways in which the different authors describe the Christian life and the mission of the church as being rooted in the person of Jesus Christ and lived out in the power of the Spirit. We will note the convergence of these accounts with principles arising from Spirit Christology, specifically incarnation and anointing, mission as rooted in the person of Christ, but with room for the work of the Spirit in the church and in the world. With a renewed emphasis on pneumatology and in respect of the work of the Spirit and mission we will note the dynamic of both ‘inbreaking’ and ‘growth’; inbreaking to ‘challenge the way things are and to usher in the new’ and growing the good things that are happening in the world. In relation to this, we will discuss the question of mediacy and immediacy in respect of the work of God in this world.

The Bible gives us different pictures of the role and witness of the church. Bosch notes that there is no single overarching term for mission that can as such be identified. Instead, we find a variety of metaphors: salt of the earth, light of the world, city on a hill. Moreover, the mission paradigms of the New Testament writers differ one from another, and therefore, to some extent we have different models, although I will argue that they are unified by the common understanding of the work of Christ and the Spirit, albeit expressed in different ways. We have made a case for Jesus as the prototype of humanity, and focused on the Lukan material in particular for our understanding of Jesus as the Spirit-filled man. Jesus came as the ‘sent one’ to proclaim and embody the good news of the coming kingdom; the reign of God.

481 I have borrowed these ideas from Andrew Lord. See Lord, A., Mission Eschatology, p.114.
Notwithstanding our necessary caution against any anthropologies that draw a simple equation between humanity and Jesus, we have noted how humanity is included in the work of God in the world, that we are all baptized with the same Spirit, and we will go on to note specific incidents of this in the New Testament. The church becomes the ‘sent one’ through the indwelling of Christ by the Spirit.

With Spirit Christology as our foundational theological building block, we are committed to the Christological nature of all our theologizing. Our mission and evangelism is rooted in Jesus Christ and the Christ-events that shape the Christian faith. The church is called to proclaim and participate in the liberating message of Jesus. Bosch outlines the six major ‘salvific events’ that need to be at the heart of any understanding of mission, Christ-events that encompass the whole of Jesus’ life and ministry: the incarnation, the cross, the resurrection, the ascension, Pentecost and the parousia.482 He writes,

> [t]he six christological salvific events may never be viewed in isolation from one another. In our mission, we proclaim the incarnate, crucified, resurrected, ascended Christ, present among us in the Spirit and taking us into his future as “captives in his triumphal procession”. (2 Cor 5:14)483

But this can only be done in the power and with the indwelling of the Spirit, without whom Jesus cannot be understood or proclaimed as Lord and Saviour. Without the Spirit, there will be no effective communication of these events and their meaning for contemporary lives. Bosch describes mission as ‘the expression of the life of the Holy Spirit who has been set no limits’.484

Looking at the mission paradigms in each of the gospels will show us that each one gives us a slightly different emphasis on mission. Sometimes evangelism and mission is understood in terms of seeking a one-off event in a person’s life, a moment of decision or assent to Jesus Christ as Lord. The overall picture of mission in the New Testament, however, shows that the emphasis of mission is on ‘making disciples’, on the reality of a lifetime of following the person of Jesus Christ and of service and devotion to him. Building a picture based on the different themes in the

482 Bosch, D., Transforming Mission, pp.512-518.
483 Bosch, D., Transforming Mission, p.518.
484 Bosch, D., Transforming Mission, p.494.
New Testament will give us an understanding of mission in relation to discipleship, what it means to be a disciple of Jesus, to be an ‘ambassador’ of Christ, to be engaged in a wider calling of the people of God to the world, and how this is entirely rooted in the missions of the Son and the Spirit.

The gospel of Matthew places a great emphasis on the whole concept of discipleship and the idea of mission as disciple-making. Matthew’s lapidary conclusion of the Great Commission not only summarises, but gives shape to the whole gospel emphasizing teaching, preaching, ethics and discipleship. Thus the charge to ‘[g]o and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit’ becomes the foundational principle of mission. This mission is to be carried out on the understanding that the disciples share in Jesus’ missionary authority. Bosch describes it thus:

If all authority has been given to Jesus, why do we have to go and proclaim it? An insignificant and often overlooked word…provides the answer: the word “(go) therefore (Greek: oun). It links the announcement of a reality (Jesus’ universal authority) with a solemn challenge: “Make disciples”. If Jesus is indeed Lord of all, this reality just has to be proclaimed. Nobody who knows of this can remain silent about it. He or she can do only one thing – help others also to acknowledge Jesus’ lordship. And this is what mission is all about – “the proclaiming of the lordship of Christ”. Jesus’ enthronement inaugurates and makes possible a worldwide mission inconceivable up to now. The universal and unlimited dominion of the risen Jesus evokes an equally universal and limitless response from his ambassadors. Mission is a logical consequence of Jesus’ induction as sovereign Lord of the universe. In the light of this, the “Great Commission” enunciates an empowerment rather than a command. It is a creative statement in the manner of Genesis 1:3, “Let there be…”

He also makes the point that it is not only Jesus’ missionary authority that the disciples share in but his suffering, but we will come on to that in due course. Thus in Matthew, we note an emphasis on proclamation and authority and the universal

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485 Bosch, D., Transforming Mission, p.78.
486 Bosch, D., Transforming Mission, p.75.
significance of the message of the lordship of Christ. The focus for Matthew is the preaching of the Lordship of Christ in all aspects of life, clarified and emphasized by Matthew 5-7 with Jesus’ teaching on what the righteous life ‘looks like’ in practice. Not only this, but the renewed life is rooted in the triune being of God as Father, Son and Spirit. Matthew’s main theme of discipleship, initiated by Jesus and exemplified in his person, is to be carried on by his disciples and all who follow him in subsequent generations in Jesus’ name. Jesus’ example in the New Testament is one who not only takes authority over creation, but one who preaches to the poor, heals the sick, restores the broken, defeats the powers of darkness, and serves his followers. Thus, if the goal of mission according to Matthew is to ‘make disciples’ this is not about an assent to a creed, but a lifetime of following Jesus, and in turn, being one who makes disciples. There is in Matthew, however, little explicit mention of the empowerment of the Spirit for this task.

Similarly in Mark’s gospel, there is little reference to the Spirit in comparison to Luke and John, but what reference there is is significant. In Mark, the beginning of Jesus’ ministry is marked by his baptism in the Spirit. (Mark 1.4-11) Shelton points out that this baptism has a twofold purpose. It serves to identify him as the Son of God, and also demonstrates the superiority of his ministry over John’s. Jesus is one who is more powerful than John the Baptist, and who will become the baptizer of the Spirit.487 In Mark it is in the power of the Spirit that Jesus confronts the works of the devil and those who speak against Jesus and call what is holy, evil, are accused by him of blaspheming against the Spirit. (Mk. 3.22-30) The prophecies concerning Jesus were spoken in the Holy Spirit (Mk. 12.35-36) and the Holy Spirit is promised as the one who will speak through believers when they stand trial (Mk. 13.11). Mark’s depiction of the work of the Spirit in Jesus is to identify him as the Messiah, the Son of God.488

In John’s Gospel as we have already noted, John 20:21-23 becomes a key event in our understanding of mission. The sending that is at the heart of the Trinity is extended to Jesus’ disciples. As the Father sends Jesus in the power of the Spirit, so the disciples are also sent, as Jesus breathes on them that same Spirit. Although John’s gospel presents the life of Jesus differently from in the Synoptics, it has some

488 Shelton, J.B., Mighty in Word, p.7.
of the greatest passages on the work of the Spirit. Early on in his ministry, Jesus teaches Nicodemus about the unique work of the Spirit that blows wherever he pleases, and through whom we are to be ‘born again.’ (Jn 3.1-21) Jesus teaches that whoever believes in him (Christ) will have rivers of living water flowing out from within him, by which he means the Spirit. (Jn. 7.37-39) Jesus comforts his disciples with the promise that the Spirit is to come and that when he comes he will teach them all things, guide them into all truth, turn their grief into joy, glorify the Father and the Son, and give them peace. (Jn. 14-16) But more than this, the Spirit will be a missionary Spirit, convicting the world of guilt in regard to sin, righteousness and judgment. The Spirit comes testifying or witnessing to the truth of Jesus, and Jesus makes it plain to the disciples that this too is their task. ‘When the Counsellor comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father, he will testify about me. And you also must testify, for you have been with me from the beginning.’ (Jn 15.26-27)

Luke, sometimes called the ‘theologian of the Spirit’, also provides us with key texts for a pneumatic theology of mission. It is in Luke that we see Jesus as the one empowered by the Spirit, sent out by the Spirit and led by the Spirit. The sending out of the disciples in Luke occurs even before Pentecost as we see in Luke 9 with the sending of the 12 and in Luke 10 with the sending of the 72. As in Matthew, Jesus gives the disciples authority to preach the good news of the kingdom, to heal the sick and to cast out demons. The disciples begin to share in the ministry of Jesus, and are his ‘ambassadors’ even before the crucifixion, resurrection and Pentecost. The disciples go out and demonstrate signs of the coming kingdom: casting out demons, healing the sick and liberating people from the infirmities that bind them up. They are astonished at the power and authority that they are able to exercise and Jesus interprets this as the victory of God’s kingdom over the tyranny and authority of Satan. (Luke 10.18-20)

Recent Pentecostal scholarship on Luke-Acts argues for a specific view of the Spirit’s work in Luke as being one who inspires prophetic speech, which is at the heart of the role of witness to Jesus Christ.389 Jesus has promised that the Spirit would give his disciples words of defense (Lk. 12.12), words of wisdom (Lk. 21.15) and

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words of empowered witness (Lk. 24.49; Acts 1.8). Roger Stronstad classifies nine
different ways in which the Spirit inspires speech for witness in Luke-Acts including:
tongues-speaking/praise/prophecy; witness; defense; a word of knowledge;
encouragement or exhortation; prediction; direction; judgment; and apostolic decree.
He argues that just as Jesus was the Spirit-filled prophet, so are his followers.490
Rather than reading Luke through a Pauline lens where the work of the Spirit is
primarily soteriological, he argues that Luke views the Spirit as given to Jesus and his
followers for divinely inspired speech, accompanied by signs and wonders; for
witness in word and deed. Robert Menzies argues in the same way. The thrust of the
Spirit’s work is empowerment for witness and mission. ‘The Spirit gives the disciples
boldness and persuasive power in their proclamation of the word of God and provides
direction, frequently through visions and dreams, for the expanding mission.’ (Acts
4.13, 31; 5.32; 6.10; 9.31; 13.9, 52) 491 The Spirit empowers for proclamation (Acts
7.56; 9.10-11; 10.3-23; 16.9-10; 18.9-10; 22.17-18; 23.11) and guidance is often
attributed directly to the Spirit. (Acts 8.29; 10.19; 11.12,28; 13.2, 4; 15.28; 16.6, 7;
19.21; 20.22, 23, 28; 21.4)492

First the Spirit descends upon Jesus at his baptism, and then in Acts, descends
again with a second baptism upon the disciples. Bosch notes that ‘in this way the
Spirit’s particular ministry is both distinguished from the ministry of Jesus…and
intimately coordinated with it.’493 It is understood that although Jesus is no longer
physically present with the disciples that he is with them through the Spirit, and
through this guidance, the disciples are led directly into mission. So the Spirit
becomes the initiator, the one who guides and the one who empowers for mission.
(Acts,10,11,15,13,16) Through the Spirit, ‘God is in control of the mission.’494
Mission is predicated on the presence of the Spirit, the one who leads and guides, who

491 Menzies, Empowered for Witness, pp. 187-188.
492 Menzies, Empowered for Witness, p.188.
493 Bosch, D., Transforming Mission, pp.113-4. This view of the Spirit’s relationship with Jesus is
endorsed in the Johannine discourses of John 14-16. Jesus makes it clear that unless he goes, the
Counsellor will not come but, however, he is one who sends the Spirit. (John 16.7) Moreover, with the
coming of the Spirit, Jesus will be present again to the disciples, not leaving them ‘as orphans’, but
living with them and in them.
494 Bosch, D., Transforming Mission, p.114. Roland Allen explored ideas about the Spirit being the
one to lead, enable and empower recent converts in the task of evangelism, mission and church-
planting. He highlighted the importance of trusting the Spirit to be the one to control the mission and
even church life and governance. His books have become the subject of renewed interest for mission-
thinking today. See Allen, R., Missionary Methods: St. Paul’s or Ours? (Grand Rapids, Michigan:
Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1962) and The Spontaneous Expansion of the Church (Oregon: Wipf and Stock,
1962).
is the presence of God with us, distinguishable from the presence of Christ, but not divorced from it. As long as we understand the Spirit as having been sent by Christ, we are able to say that in a qualified sense, the Spirit then ‘precedes’ him, more particularly in the *praeparatio evangelical.* The Father sends the Spirit of truth in Christ’s name, to testify to the world regarding Jesus Christ. The Spirit convicts the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment. (Jn. 15.26, 16.8) The Spirit is the one in whom Jesus is proclaimed as Lord. But he does not speak on his own, only words that come from the Father and the Son. (Jn. Jn.16.13) We do not ever divorce the work of the Spirit from the Father and the Son, but the Spirit is the one who leads us into mission and who leads in mission. Moreover, the Spirit is the one who inspires all aspects of our speech in mission and empowers us for witness.  

We have already noted two other aspects of the work of the Spirit in mission: inbreaking and growth. The inbreaking work of the Spirit, to challenge the way things are and to usher in the new is the immediate work of the Spirit, of which there are numerous examples in Scripture. With Spirit Christology we are able to recognise God’s control of the mission and his freedom to be able to act how and when he wills. (Acts 9.3-5; Acts10.44-48; Gal. 1.11-12, 16; Eph. 3.3,5) The work of the Spirit as the power of God in the incarnation, and as the one who raises Jesus from the dead is the same power at work in the world, still able to bring life out of death and to breathe new life and creativity into people and institutions. God is able to do this sovereignly in unpredictable and surprising ways. At the same time however, as I have been arguing, we cannot rely solely on this as a primary *mode* of mission. God chooses to work in and through the church, in and through human beings and institutions. The incarnation is the supreme example of this, and the Bible stories of the early church endorse this principle. The gospel is communicated by the church and demonstrated by human lives. Yves Congar notes the interplay between mediacy and immediacy with respect to the work of the Spirit. There are stories in the Bible which demonstrate the immediate work of the Spirit, revealing the truth of Jesus Christ and his salvation, and there are countless testimonies of individuals throughout church history who have encountered Christ through some spiritual experience rather than mediated through another. On the other hand, Congar makes the point, ‘[i]t is….not

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495 Amos Yong in his book *Beyond the Impasse: Towards a Pneumatological Theology of Religions* (Carlisle, Cumbria: Paternoster Press, 2003) proposes that we separate Christology from pneumatology for the sake of exploring the potential for a theology of religions. Some, however, have seen this as a problematic proposal, as the Spirit cannot be bracketed from Christ.
possible to make a sharp contrast between immediacy and mediation, since quite often one way is contained within the other or added to it, usually when God intervenes directly in an existing structure and a visible ministry. (Acts 1.15-26; 1 Tim 4.14; 2 Tim 1.6; 1 Pet 4.10-11) Thus, the examples of mediation in Scripture are manifold. (Matt. 10.40, 16.19, 18.17-18; Jn 20.22-23; Acts 9.6, 10.40-42, 14.23; Eph. 4.11-16; Titus 1.5; Jas 5.14, 16) Even the immediate acts of the Spirit are always interpreted and shaped by the communities around us. On the subject of conversions, Taylor writes, ‘the language one adheres to is given force by the conviction that others have lived it in a more complete, direct and powerful manner. This is part of what it means to belong to a church.’ Others’ experiences and interpretations of the Christian life inform and shape our own. So while we acknowledge the supernatural work of God in the world, we also wish to emphasize that the normative model for mission is that it is inseparable from the task of discipleship and community and, therefore, a human pursuit, and that the Spirit is at work in both.

The theme of ‘witness’, and particularly of Spirit-empowered witness remains central to our understanding of mission. Witnessing is reporting ‘that which we have seen and heard’. The disciples are told by Jesus, ‘And you also must testify.’ Bosch writes,

The term “witness” is a very fitting one for what Luke wishes to communicate. It is evident, from Acts, that this task is entrusted to very fallible human beings who can do nothing in their own power, but are continuously dependent upon empowerment by the Spirit. But also, in a sense, they are not really called to accomplish anything, only to point to what God has done and is doing, to give testimony to what they have seen and heard and touched.

The task of witnessing is inextricably linked to the outpouring of the Spirit. The disciples are commanded by Jesus to wait until the giving of the Spirit before they embark on the mission of witnessing even to the ends of the earth. It is the absence of Christ’s physical presence that marks the pouring out of the Spirit.

Paul’s missionary paradigm similarly demonstrates the principles that we have been discussing. The foundation of Paul’s ministry is that he has been ‘sent’ by the Lord Jesus Christ to preach the gospel. (1 Cor. 1.17) Apostleship and proclamation are two key themes. Paul’s task is to make Christ known, and there is no question that Paul views this as a responsibility that rests on him. Having said this, it is not that he sees himself as adequate to the task, possibly the opposite. (1 Cor. 2.3). He knows that apart from Christ he can do nothing, however, he also knows that he is ‘in Christ’. He knows that in Christ and by the power of the Spirit, he is able to do what he has been called to do by God. (2 Cor. 3.4-6) Paul describes himself and his co-workers as Christ’s ambassadors, ‘as though God were making his appeal through us.’ (2 Cor. 5.20) He is in Christ’s service, but astonishingly, as his fellow-worker. In Chapter Three we argued that Spirit Christology gives us a certain perspective on human agency, allowing us to bring the notion of human agency to the fore without compromising the sovereignty of God. This is very much reflected in Paul’s own metaphors and understanding of his task. Paul’s conversion is perhaps one of the clearest examples in Scripture of the immediate work of God in a person’s life. The effect it had on Paul, however, was to inspire him to work tirelessly in spreading the gospel. Paul believes that those who do not yet know Christ need to hear the message of Christ’s salvation and Lordship. An essential part of that process is the proclamation of the gospel and that it is through the service and cooperation of Paul and others that this will be accomplished. He writes,

‘How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!”’ Romans 10.14-15

The idea that preaching is somehow a redundant form of communicating the gospel has some currency among contemporary thinkers, especially in the ‘emerging church’ movement on the grounds that it is incompatible with postmodern culture and that
dialogue and listening should be the primary form of communicating the gospel.\textsuperscript{499} We will go on to discuss the question of dialogue in much more detail in later chapters, but a word on preaching and proclamation. The nervousness about proclamation in a postmodern context is because in contrast to dialogue, it lacks the element of reciprocity.\textsuperscript{500} Is an attitude of humility totally incompatible with proclamation? First, we should not confuse preaching and proclamation; they are not one and the same, and secondly, there may be contexts in which proclamation takes on a different form and is not associated with imperialistic tendencies. We have noted the emphasis in Luke on the power of the Spirit given for speech, for prophecy, praise, defense, proclamation etc. Gunton defines preaching in terms of both the word and the Spirit; ‘[t]he practice of preaching is a request to the Spirit to retell the biblical narratives and promises in a new context. It takes place in the belief that the Spirit will free Jesus from the past history to make his victory live in the lives and world of those who participate in the proclamation.’\textsuperscript{501} Kerygma is an essential aspect of mission in the New Testament and in some form needs to be part of our practice of mission today, but only if we are able to allow the Spirit to apply the truth of Scripture with fresh relevance to the contexts in which we find ourselves. We see preaching therefore, as part of the ongoing work of the Spirit in the church, in terms of the interpretation and the application of Scripture. Paul’s own understanding and experience of preaching was that it was conducted in the power of the Spirit and accompanied by signs and wonders. (Romans 15.17-19) Bosch notes that in Romans 15.15-21, Paul gives ‘the most profound and most systematic presentation of a universal Christian missionary vision.’\textsuperscript{502}

We do not need to assume that the preaching that Paul was engaged in was not also in some sense dialogical, and it is this that we have been arguing is appropriate for our own culture. Ida Glaser, writing about Paul’s preaching in Ephesus in Acts 19, notes the following:

\textsuperscript{499} For a good overview of the place of preaching in the emerging church see Bohanan, J.S., \textit{Preaching and the Emerging Church: An Examination of Four Founding Leaders: Mark Driscoll, Dan Kimball, Brian McLaren, and Doug Pagitt}, (USA: E-Book, 2010). Bohanan describes some of the developments in and ambivalence towards preaching within the emerging church movement.

\textsuperscript{500} Sanders, A., ‘Missiology, Epistemology, and Intratraditional Dialogue’ in Kirk and Vanhoozer (eds.), \textit{To Stake a Claim}, p.76.

\textsuperscript{501} Gunton, C., \textit{The Actuality}, p.178.

\textsuperscript{502} Bosch, D., \textit{Transforming Mission}, p.129.
There he spoke to the Gentiles as well as Jews every day for two years. As in Athens, it is not said that he ‘preached’ but that he ‘discussed’ or ‘disputed’ (19:8-9). The Greek word is dialegomai, from which we get ‘dialogue’. Whatever Paul discussed, and however he did it, the result was that ‘all the Jews and Greeks who lived in the province of Asia heard the word of the Lord’ (v.10). The picture is of a centre where people can come to learn, discuss and ask questions, and from which people travel and tell others about what they have learnt. We can imagine Paul’s message being passed from person to person, just as an interesting item of news might be spread. Even those who did not believe it could have passed it on. There were also many healings and miracles and signs of the power of Jesus over other powers.503

Preaching does not preclude dialogue, humility, listening and reciprocity. It may be that the practice of preaching in the past and in some places has occluded this element of communication, but this does not necessarily have to be the case. Taking up Del Colle’s emphasis on Spirit Christology I would argue that preaching is still an essential aspect of mission, even in a postmodern context. Moreover, if we really want to affirm our commitment to Logos Christology in conjunction with Spirit Christology, the concept of the revealed Word at the heart of the gospel will still need to be articulated.

The act of preaching, therefore, is where we see the possibility of a convergence of Logos Christology and Spirit Christology as a basis for theological reflection. Preaching by its very nature is ‘logocentric;’ it is ‘the ministry of the Word.’ Preaching is based on the theological presupposition that revelation has been given to the world in Christ, the Word made flesh, and that that revelation comes to us through Scripture.504 Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh, is the person in whom God

addresses humanity, and the Bible bears witness to this address. Based on a Barthian view of the Word and the Spirit, Coffey talks about the ‘objective’ nature of the givenness of the Word understood ‘subjectively’ through the Spirit. ‘Christ the Word comes as offer and truth’ and the Holy Spirit enables us to accept and love him. The task of preaching, therefore, is the Spirit-filled and Spirit-led interpretation and application of truths revealed to us in Scripture. As Gunton points out, preaching is a task undertaken under the tutelage and guidance of the Spirit. It may be that for a postmodern context, the practice of preaching needs to change, that the framing of preaching is modified in some way. It does not have to mean that it is a monological and imperialistic pursuit, but can be practised in the context of dispute, discussion and dialogue. Moreover, preaching should be in the context of signs and wonders, the laying on of hands for the healing of the body and the spirit, and the ministry of the church to the poor.

These then, ambassadorship and preaching with signs and wonders following are two aspects of Paul’s ministry, but they are not the only aspects of his ministry and calling. One of the main features of Paul’s ministry is not that he simply points to Christ, or witnesses to him, and demonstrates the power of his name and his Spirit through signs and wonders, but that he lives a Christ-like life and embodies in his own life, a life worthy of one sent from God. (2 Cor.2.17) His preaching then, is authenticated by a life of sincerity, integrity and truth. It is not that he is already perfect, but that his understanding of the work of the Spirit and Christ in a person’s life is that sincerity, integrity, power in Jesus’ name, truthfulness, peace, joy and sacrificial love become characteristics that we should expect to flourish. Bosch writes, referring to I Thess 1.6, (‘You became imitators of us and of the Lord; in spite of severe suffering, you welcomed the message with the joy given by the Holy Spirit.’) ‘Of particular significance in this respect is Paul’s apostolic self-consciousness and the way in which he presents himself as a model to be emulated, not only by his fellow-workers, but by all Christians.’ Paul’s own behaviour and character become an ineluctable aspect of his calling. ‘Paul’s life cannot be distinguished from what he preaches; his life authenticates his gospel.’ It is not that Paul thinks of himself more

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506 Coffey, Did You Receive, p.95.
507 Bosch, D., Transforming Mission, p.132.
highly than he ought, but that he has a developed understanding of what it means to be a ‘new creation’ in Christ.

Gordon Fee, commenting on the Christology of 2 Corinthians, and specifically on 2 Cor. 3.18, discusses this point with reference to the risen Christ and the notion of the transformation of the Christian life. In other words, it is not that Paul is *imitating* Christ *per se* but that Paul is becoming like Christ as he is created anew by the power of the Spirit. Fee writes,

> The christological point, of course, is that Christ himself in his humanity perfectly bore that image, so that as believers now behold him as the risen One, they are themselves being “transformed” back into that image/likeness. But the emphasis in these passages is not on Christ’s humanity — that is assumed as inherent in the imagery itself. What we have, rather, is the true image being borne by the one who shares the divine glory, the one who, when turned to in devotion and obedience, transforms believers, by his Spirit, into the image of God that we had been created for in the first place.\(^{508}\)

We have already discussed the transforming work of the Spirit in Chapter Three. Becoming Christlike is not a question of imitating Christ, but of being transformed into Christlikeness in the power of the Spirit. It is important to emphasize the incarnational aspects of mission based on the biblical testimony of Jesus’ life on earth, but not at the expense of a theology of the risen Christ.\(^{509}\) In other words, we can hold Jesus’ life up as the one we are to imitate, but without a corresponding emphasis on the life in the Spirit of the risen Christ, we cannot achieve this goal. We have already noted that Spirit Christology is a unifying Christology allowing us to emphasize both the historical Jesus that we read of in the gospels and the Christ of faith, or a functional Christology and an ontological Christology. Similarly, with Spirit Christology, we are able not only to focus on the incarnate Jesus of Nazareth and the power of the Spirit in his earthly life, but also the work of the Spirit as the Spirit of the risen Christ in our lives, transforming us into his likeness. For Paul, the beginning of this new life is receiving the Spirit of Sonship, first given to Christ and

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\(^{509}\) This is something which is exemplified in Frost, M., and Hirsch A., *ReJesus: A Wild Messiah for a Missional Church* (Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 2009).
then through him to us. (Rom 8, Gal 4) The freedom from slavery into sonship and daughterhood is the beginning of the re-created life through Christ in the Spirit. It is from there that we are then transformed by the Spirit into Christ’s likeness as we share in his Sonship. It is not a question of mimesis, of copying Jesus the man or following an ethical code, but of becoming like him in our very beings. Moreover, this is the work of the Spirit in the church and in human relations and not just in the lives of individuals.

This transformational or holistic view of mission is something that we introduced with the work of Del Colle as ‘inclusion, obedience and hope’ and that is expanded in the work of Moltmann, Yong, Gelpi and others. A transformational view of mission has profound ethical implications. Salvation is not simply the idea that we are saved from this sinful, earthly life for the eternal life to come, but encompasses the idea that our lives are transformed in this world, as the beginning of the life to come. The emphasis of mission is on the effect of God in this world as it is lived now; the work of Christ and the Spirit through the church to transform us and those around us. Followers of Christ, therefore, have to take seriously what it means to be witnesses to him. Mission and discipleship are inseparable.

If we understand mission and evangelism in terms not just of a confession of Christ, but a lifetime of following Jesus Christ, we also note the importance of the Spirit in the sanctification of the believer, in the overcoming of sin, temptation and the devil. As we have noted, the disciples are empowered to cast out demons and to heal the sick. In Luke this ministry has an explicitly pneumatological foundation. Not only this, but Luke also emphasises Jesus’ ministry to the poor, the outcast and the oppressed, in what Bosch calls ‘boundary-breaking compassion.’ Mission is not limited to one aspect of life, or the one event of an individual confessing Christ as Lord. The transformation that God brings into lives and communities will affect every area of life, hence our understanding of mission as also the preaching and practising of justice. Dabney links this specifically to a theology of the Spirit in relation to the resurrection. He emphasizes the far-reaching implications of the power of the resurrection and the significance of it for creation, linking it with a strong pneumatology. He writes,

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510 Bosch, D., Transforming Mission, p.84.
[o]ver and against such reductionist accounts, a theology of the Spirit of resurrection is about the presence and activity of the God who raises the dead, about creation’s ‘baptism in the Spirit’ in and through the risen Christ, the “pouring out of the Spirit on all flesh” which ever and again brings about emergent new creation out of the old and thereby brings forth anticipatory witnesses to the new creation of all things in ways that are always surprising and unforeseen.511

For Dabney, the transformation of the material, the embodied and the social is a pneumatologically driven work of God. Through his followers who are called to be ‘fishers of men’ the Spirit of God works for the transformation and liberation of all creation. Christ comes for the re-creation of all creation through the mediation of the Spirit. He is the one who ‘both breaks the demonic power of sin and death and breaks the bread to feed the hungry, who both sheds his blood for the sins of the world and clothes the naked, who both proclaims the coming of the Kingdom and summons the little children to come to him.’ The spiritual and the material are no longer divorced or held apart as somehow separate concerns, but we view the two together as integrated aspects of human being. The Holy Spirit works through all ‘things’ as ‘part and parcel of God’s baptizing of creation with the Holy Spirit.’512 Thus, if Matthew’s Gospel needs to be read in the light of the Great Commission, the key text for understanding Luke is Luke 4.16-21, not only for understanding Christ’s own mission, but that of the church.513 Bosch summarizes Luke’s understanding of mission as the ‘fulfilment of scriptural promises’ that becomes possible after the death and resurrection of Israel’s Messiah. Its ‘central thrust is the message of repentance and forgiveness; it is intended for “all nations”; it is to begin “from Jerusalem”; it is to be executed by “witnesses”; and it will be accomplished in the power of the Holy Spirit (Luke 24:46-49)’514

In exploring the New Testament accounts of mission, we are able to highlight some of the main characteristics of the biblical understanding of mission that

513 Bosch, D., Transforming Mission, p.84.
514 Bosch, D., Transforming Mission, p.91.
converge with many of the insights we have already gleaned from Spirit Christology: the coinherent missions of the Spirit and the Son, the essentially Christological nature of mission, led and guided by the Spirit, the immediate and mediated work of the Spirit in the world, the freedom of the Spirit to be ‘in control’ of the mission and the responsibility of the church to be Christ’s ambassadors and witnesses to him. We have also noted the importance of our understanding of discipleship as the transformation of the human being into the likeness of Christ, who himself is the perfection of humanity. Mission is ‘christologically directed, pneumatologically driven’ and mediated through the church.

We have made the point that it is essential to ground our understanding of mission in the Bible and the person of Jesus, and to then apply this to our lives lived today. However, it is not always a simple process to extrapolate a practice of mission directly from the biblical models and witness. Bosch cautions against drawing hasty conclusions and applying these to our contemporary situation, forgetting that these strategies were formulated and developed in very specific and different contexts. In relation to Paul, but with relevance to all that we have surveyed so far, he writes,

The only way out of the dilemma is once again,…to extrapolate from Paul, to allow him to “fertilize” our imagination and, in dependence on the guidance of the Holy Spirit, to prolong, in a creative way, the logic of Paul’s theology and mission amid historical circumstances that are in many respects very different from his.516

As we continue to develop ideas in respect of mission in the West, we will do this in relation to the categories that we have previously outlined: mission as witness, invitation, response, dialogue, the primacy of people over institutions, contextual evangelism and the preaching and practice of justice. We have demonstrated that this is not only a biblical understanding of mission, but have argued that if these practices are rooted in the person of Christ and carried out in the power of the Spirit, they will become effective ways of reaching people in contemporary Western culture.

516 Bosch, D., Transforming Mission, p.170.
Mission, Martyrdom and Suffering

We cannot discuss the notion of witness and mission in the New Testament without also considering the questions of suffering and martyrdom. In Chapter Three we saw the relation of the anointing of Christ by the Spirit not only for power, but for affliction, endurance, perseverance, suffering, for the time of testing and trial and ultimately for his death. The Spirit is given, not just for the demonstration of the power of the kingdom, for healing and restoration, for deliverance and wholeness, but also for strength, wisdom, courage and perseverance in the face of suffering and persecution. (Rom. 8.17; Matt. 10.19) The New Testament makes it clear that as well as the benefits of the kingdom in terms of the fruit of the Spirit - love, joy, peace etc. - there is also the expectation that discipleship will in some sense be costly. The model that we have in Jesus is the one who emptied himself to become as we are, to take up a cross for the sake of the world, and therefore the crucifixion stands at the centre of the Christian faith. A church that is not representing this aspect of Christlikeness is presenting only a partial gospel. Yong writes,

those who bear witness to the gospel are oftentimes also martyrs for the cause of Christ....Why not, if the way of the cross is a “way of negation”? The Spirit who is always hidden and points to the Son also leads followers of Jesus to empty themselves in the service of the Son. Hence salvation understood as baptism in the Holy Spirit is nothing less than receiving the gift of the Spirit of God, which enables human participation in the self-sacrificing death and resurrection life of Jesus the Christ.517

We noted in our discussion of Matthew’s gospel that the mission of the disciples is to be carried out on the understanding that they share not only in Jesus’ missionary authority, but also in his suffering.518 In fact, it is impossible to read the gospels without realizing that it is not just the mission of Jesus that ends in a crucifixion, but that Jesus prepares his disciples and thus all his followers for suffering, and even the possibility of martyrdom in mission. (Matt. 5.10-11; Mark 8.34-35; John 15.20) In the New Testament we read of Jesus predicting the martyrdom of Peter, the actual

517 Yong, A., The Spirit Poured Out, p.112.
518 Bosch, D., Transforming Mission, p.75.
martyrdom of Stephen, the suffering and trials of Paul and the people of the early church. Moreover, global church history is littered with accounts of Christians suffering and dying for their faith up until the present day. We often find in the West that very little is said regarding these issues in relation to mission. This may be partly explained by the fact that it is rarely part of our experience.

The suffering, hardship and persecution referred to in the New Testament in relation to discipleship is specifically in the context of mission, of witnessing to the truth of Jesus Christ and God’s kingdom. It is expected that this will, on many occasions, invite opposition. (1 Cor 4.12; 2 Cor 4.8-12; 2 Cor 1.5; Gal 6.14; Phil 3.10; 1 Thess. 3.4; 2 Tim 1.8, 3.12) However, the Spirit is given so that the disciples of Jesus will have the strength to respond with grace, forgiveness and truthfulness. (Matt. 10.19) The pouring out of the Spirit in Acts 1.8 is to empower the followers of Jesus to be witnesses (martyres), but there is the possibility that witnessing to Jesus Christ will bring with it opposition and persecution. In the face of this, Christians are called to love their enemies, bless those who persecute them and pray for those who abuse them.

As we have seen the anointing of the Spirit is for affliction as well as for power and ultimately for glory. The implication of this is that the work of the Spirit and in one sense the power of the Spirit is manifest as much in what looks like weakness and vulnerability, in oppression and powerlessness, in futility and failure, as it is in power, glory, triumph, healing and miracles. The importance of this for mission is that being ambassadors for Christ in the power of the Spirit will not always look like the latter – power, glory, triumph, healing etc., but will often look like the former – weakness, vulnerability, powerlessness, futility and failure. This, however, is no less a work of the Spirit. The Western church became accustomed to dominance, both as a church allied to the state and as a church that sent missionaries out to the whole world. It is common in the West to hear Christians argue that we should be involved with the poor, the marginalized, the oppressed, and the outcast. This is entirely biblical and right, and this is the situation that we find ourselves in in the affluent West. Here though, we are dealing with a different concept. The persecuted

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519 Raniero Cantalamessa writes, ‘[a]bove all, however, the Spirit gives Jesus the strength not to become downcast (cf. Isa 42:4). One could say the Spirit is given to Jesus more with a view to failure than to success (that same day in Nazareth, he had to flee for his life!); the mission of the servant, accepted by Jesus at his baptism, passes by way of rejection, failure, defeat.’ Cantalamessa, R., The Holy Spirit in the Life of Jesus (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1994), p.40.
church does not just align itself with the poor and the suffering, but instead the church is the poor and the suffering, the imprisoned, and the persecuted. What then, becomes of preaching, of witnessing to the hope we have in Christ, when we are no longer the ones who have the power or who control the situation, when we are the ones who speak out of vulnerability and weakness, and when we are the ones who can no longer simply leave when we wish? What becomes of our prayers when they are for those who are persecuting us, for those who have power over us?

The proclamation of Christ as Saviour and Lord uttered by those who have lost everything and who are at the mercy of others loses all traces of imperialism, of dominance, of control. It becomes a wholly different utterance. My point is twofold. First that the Spirit is as much in those situations as in any others that we might experience, but also that the nature of our witness would be radically different. Weakness and power go hand and hand in the Christian life. It is not possible to have one without the other, and witness that is carried out in weakness can often be more powerful. Paul writes about Jesus ‘For to be sure, he was crucified in weakness, yet he lives by God’s power.’ (2 Cor 13:4) Smail writes,

[i]n this gospel the way of the cross and the way of the Spirit are one and the same. The Spirit leads us as he led Jesus, to glory fashioned in suffering, to victory won through defeat, to power exercised in weakness, to a throne that is the same shape as a cross. This Spirit will never lead us away from or past the cross of Christ; rather, he will constantly bring us back to it, because it is the one source of that strange power by which God through Christ has overcome the world.520

That principle applied to mission gives us a radically different form of mission. Cruciform suffering is suffering for a greater good, for a greater triumph. Jesus endured the cross ‘for the joy set before him.’ (Heb. 12.2)

Vanhoozer explores the question of martyrdom and mission with specific reference to what it means to stake a truth claim in Western culture, in a society which he views as rife with cynicism and suspicion. He argues that with the demise of foundationalism and the crisis that we now face in the West in respect of

epistemology, that we can now barely rely on propositional knowledge to verify our truth claims. Instead we must be prepared ‘to stake a claim’ which means ultimately ourselves, in the pursuit of rendering an account of the Christian faith.

In the Christian tradition, testimony is a way of knowing, and the Greek term for one who testifies – martyr – catches both the aspect of “giving witness” to and “giving one’s life” for the truth. Martyrdom, I shall contend, is ultimately what is required in staking a theological truth claim, for it is the whole speech act of testifying, and not only the proposition, that ultimately communicates truth claims about the whole of wisdom.521

By martyrdom, he does not necessarily mean the death per se, but the willingness to stake one’s life on the truth of the gospel, rather than an equivocal approach to faith. He argues that this is what is needed in our current cultural milieu in order to make any significant impact. Because a truth claim is no longer a matter of propositional content only, what ‘is at stake is the very notion of truth as a way of life, and thus the notion that truth matters (individually and socially). What is needed in an apathetic age and situation of ironic indifference is a truth for which one can live and die (Kierkegaard).522 Truth claims therefore need to be underpinned and justified by actions and personal integrity, and the martyr ‘displays several character traits related to the epistemic virtues’. ‘Indeed, martyrdom may well be an instance of epistemic responsibility taken to the limit. A belief is justified, in other words, when it is held by a person with epistemic virtue, who knows of what he speaks and is willing to suffer on its behalf.’523

Much of what Vanhoozer says may sound extreme to Western ears, unaccustomed as we are to the idea that Christian belief might be a matter of life or death. Vanhoozer is aware with any talk of martyrdom that there are dangers of fanaticism inherent in any concept of martyrdom and that we must distinguish between fanaticism and religious conviction.524 What he is proposing is that in our

522 Vanhoozer, K., The Trials of Truth in To Stake a Claim, p.139.
523 Vanhoozer, K., The Trials of Truth in To Stake a Claim, p.139.
524 Vanhoozer deals with the difference between a fanatic and a martyr. A fanatic is ‘consumed with his or her own self-interest, and their passion for truth is untempered by the other intellectual virtues’ and they demonstrate a ‘deregulated passion for truth lacking wisdom and humility and open-mindedness’.
society, religious conviction in terms of a belief that we are willing to stake our lives on, is the only stance that will ultimately bear the weight of the scepticism and cynicism around us. On the grounds that we no longer have recourse to the propositional as being a foundation for knowledge, Vanhoozer argues that in a postmodern context, theology ‘must reorient itself to wisdom rather than to knowledge.’

Our truth claims should not be an attempt to prove the existence of God, but the wisdom of God and the ultimate test when it comes to verifying a theological truth claim in a Christian way, is not a debate but a ‘trial of life and death.’ He argues that virtue epistemology is the way that people are going to arrive at an understanding of what is true or not. Virtue epistemology is ‘an affair of the heart.’

‘Everything begins with a desire for truth… Certainly a passion for the truth is a requisite when it comes to the knowledge of God, for this is an affair which engages the whole person: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind” (Matt. 22:37).

When we believe someone’s testimony, we are not just believing what someone says, but we are believing in them as a person. Thus, as we have been arguing, life and witness are inseparable. He concludes,

[b]oth the form and content of the evangelical truth claim work against the notion of “Christendom” and its imperialistic overtone of imposing truth on others. Those who stake theological truth claims, then, should not oppress but rather suffer oppression. To associate the theological truth claims with expressions of the will-to-power is effectively to contradict Christian witness…The power of the cross is the weakness and wisdom of God (1 Cor.

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pp.153-4 Nazir-Ali writes on the topic of martyrdom and fanaticism, ‘[n]evertheless it must be said that there have been occasions when unwise behavior and almost a death wish have led to martyrdom. Nobody denies that there can be a fanatical or intolerant attitude behind some martyrdom.’ ‘Martyn and Martyrs: Question for Mission’ International Bulletin of Missionary Research (April 1999) 56-60, p.59.

527 Vanhoozer, K., The Trials of Truth in To Stake a Claim, p.133.
1:23-24). From the perspective of an epistemology of the cross, truth – even rationality – is vulnerable.\textsuperscript{530}

We have been arguing that this may well be a characteristic of a Spirit-led mission.

Rosato claims that Spirit Christology ‘might well allow Christian theologians to present Jesus Christ in a way more understandable to contemporary secular culture and also more appropriate to the current spiritual and pastoral needs in the Christian community.’\textsuperscript{531} We have begun to explore some of the implications of a Christological and pneumatological model of mission in Western society, arguing that this gives us the most biblical and the most relevant foundation for an understanding and practice of mission today. We have argued for a trinitarian understanding of the \textit{missio Dei}, which also includes the concept of the Spirit as the one who sends, and the church as the one who is sent. We have identified certain aspects of our culture and society that need to inform our thinking on mission: the reality of a pluralist society; certain attitudes to religious belief and faith; ways of knowing and establishing a truth claim; the need to reach individuals, and have argued that Spirit Christology gives us a way to respond to some current trends and acts as a rich theological basis for our thinking and practice of mission. Spirit Christology means that we root all our mission in the person of Jesus Christ and his Lordship, in the six salvific events outlined in the beginning of the chapter. The gospel is the gospel of Jesus Christ. How that is communicated is diverse, contextual, personal, accompanied by signs and wonders, or possibly in weakness and vulnerability. Spirit-led mission is unpredictable because the Spirit is in control and blows where he wills, but the Spirit-led life will be identified by the character of Christ, and it will be the love of Christ that compels the mission. Hauerwas describes his thinking when he began to question the process of how we communicate the Christian truth in a language that people essentially are alienated from.

The heart of much of what I do depends on the assumption that the Christian language \textit{works}. At the time I was educated, there was an assumption that there was something wrong with Christian language, because people didn’t

\textsuperscript{530} Vanhoozer, K., The Trials of Truth in To Stake a Claim, pp.147-8.

understand it, and it had to be translated into terms that they understood. I thought that if Christian language doesn’t work, it ought to be abandoned. Quit trying to resuscitate a corpse. My big question – and it owed much to reading Wittgenstein, as well as to my theological convictions – was, What kind of people do we need to be to be able to perform this speech? What kind of communities do we need to be to perform this speech? I also take it for granted that part of what the Christian speech says is that you have to be transformed to speak it.532

We will develop this theme in later chapters. Through the mission of the early disciples, the church was formed, and has become God’s vehicle for the proclamation of the Good News to the world. How this has developed is something we will discuss as we turn to a brief survey of mission throughout history.

CHAPTER FIVE

MODELS OF MISSION II

The Church and Mission

In this chapter I survey a number of Western models of mission associated with certain denominations and church movements particularly in recent history, comparing the salient features of these models with a model of mission based on Spirit Christology. In the second section I examine some contemporary mission models that claim to be particularly suited to contemporary Western culture and assess some of their strengths and weaknesses in the light of Spirit Christology.

The church throughout the ages has interpreted what it means to be ‘salt’ and ‘light’, to be the ‘city on the hill’, the witness to the saving grace of God in Jesus Christ, and to live that out in different ways. Each denomination at different times in history and in diverse cultures has gone about this task in a variety of ways. With each model we see different theological emphases, with priority given to certain aspects of church life and worship over others. The relationship of the idea of ‘church’ to ‘mission’ is complex. Immediately we encounter the problem of terminology, what we mean by ‘church’. Which ‘model’ of church from the New Testament do we see as the dominant or controlling one? What we think of church will affect how we view mission and vice versa. Whether we understand church to be the world-wide church, the local church, a denomination, a group of people who gather in the name of Jesus for worship and the preaching of the word, or all of the above will then influence and determine how we answer the question of what is the relationship between that group and those outside it. What is the mission of that group, community, or institution and how should that mission be allowed to reshape it? Related to this is the question of the difference between ‘kingdom’ and ‘church’, the latter being understood as a ‘sign and disclosure of the kingdom of God’ and the former being understood as a much broader concept of the works and reign of God,

533 Dulles, A., Models of the Church (New York: Doubleday, 2002). Dulles examines the difference between various models: the church as institution, mystical communion, sacrament, herald, servant, and community of disciples.

but not necessarily coterminous with the church. The church is seen as a ‘foretaste of the coming kingdom’ (showing forth God’s purposes for humanity), but is not synonymous with the kingdom.\textsuperscript{535} What we mean by ‘church’ will have a significant impact on what we subsequently have to say about the relationship of the church to a plethora of theological concepts related to mission: those outside the church, the notion of kingdom, evangelism, salvation, the \textit{missio Dei}, the missions of the Son and the Spirit, the possibility of the work of the Son and the Spirit outside the church, community, discipleship, belonging, how we may enter the church and a whole host of other issues. To discuss the whole breadth of questions pertaining to the relationship of mission, church and kingdom is clearly beyond the scope of this chapter, however, it is important to clarify what we mean by church.

Avery Dulles, writing on models of the church, and in an attempt to define how we might understand the church categorizes the church in four different ways: institutional, sacramental, herald and servant.\textsuperscript{536} These are all useful and biblical metaphors. At the end of his book, he settles for a very broad definition of the church as any ‘community of disciples’ and argues that this is an adequate overarching term. This, however, on its own, leaves the term too undefined. Miroslav Volf, also writing on ecclesiology and seeking a definition of church bases his definition on Matthew 18.20 ‘where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them’. Volf’s concern is that rather than always speaking in the abstract about church, that we are able to answer the question, ‘Where is the church?’ in a meaningful way. He therefore offers the following definition:

\begin{quote}
[i]n summary, the ecclesiality of the church can be defined as follows. \textit{Every congregation that assembles around the one Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord in order to profess faith in him publicly in pluriform fashion, including through baptism and the Lord’s Supper, and which is open to all churches of God and to all human beings, is a church in the full sense of the word, since Christ promised to be present in it through his Spirit as the first fruits of the gathering of the whole people of God in the eschatological reign of God.} Such a congregation is a holy, catholic, and apostolic church. One may rightly expect such a congregation to grow in unity, sanctity, catholicity, and
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{535} Cray, G., (ed.) \textit{Mission-Shaped Church} p.95.  
\textsuperscript{536} Dulles, A., \textit{Models of the Church}, Chapter XIII.
apostolicity, but one may not deny to it these characterizing features of the church, since it possesses these on the basis of the constitutive presence of Christ.  

As Volf’s definition encapsulates much of what we have already been demonstrating, the necessity of a theology rooted in the person of Christ as Saviour and Lord and the presence of the Spirit, the possibility of diversity, the imperative of the Christian life to be lived out in community, the importance of ongoing growth in discipleship, the transformation of the people of God into Christlikeness and the emphasis on the universal nature of the church as well as the particular, local gathered community, I will rely on this definition for ‘church’.

Models of Mission II: Ecclesial Models of Mission

Different denominations have gone about mission and evangelism in such diverse ways and behind these different practices lie theological convictions that shape and inform what is done. It is beyond our interests to conduct a thorough survey of the history of mission, but we will highlight a number of dominant trends in mission, both in history and in the present day with a view to noting some of the lacunae in these models in the light of Spirit Christology and a model of mission that is shaped by both the coinherent and co-equal missions of the Son and the Spirit. In the brief survey that follows, I focus more on the Protestant church tradition, partly as this is the one that I am most familiar with, but also because Catholic ecclesiology has not been subject to the many fluctuations and revisions that have affected Protestant ecclesiology since the Reformation. In addition, Protestant denominations have largely been more concerned with personal models of evangelism, which is something we will go on to look at in more detail in Chapter Six.

Bosch begins his own survey by describing how mission was understood in the Medieval Catholic Church, which for him typifies a ‘church-centred’ and ‘cultic-
institutio’ approach to mission and would now be associated with a ‘high church’
liturgical tradition. This he calls the ‘metaphysical incarnational paradigm’, in which
the gospel is understood to be proclaimed ‘through doxology and liturgy’.

In the final analysis mission was based on the divinity, holiness, and
immutability of the church; in the classical Catholic view mission was, after
all, the “self-realization of the church”. …This understanding of mission and
the church has its roots in Cyprian’s famous dictum extra ecclesiam nulla
salus there is no salvation outside the church.539

With a strongly institutional ecclesiological foundation to this understanding of
mission, the dispensing of sacraments was necessarily crucial, and the means by
which ‘souls were won for Christ’, creating a complete dependence on the sacerdotal
system. Although the Medieval Catholic Church and its practices are from a distant
past, there is still criticism among missiologists of mission theology that is seen to be
fundamentally ‘institutional’. A contrast is often set up between ‘institutional’ and
‘Christendom’ models of church and more marginal, ‘organic’, or sometimes what is
seen as ‘Spirit-led’ models with the former being viewed negatively and the latter
positively.540 The tension between the ‘cultic-institutional’ view of church and the
more anti-authoritarian and anti-juridical view of the church is a dominant theme
within the contemporary emerging church movement and some postmodern missional
movements.541 Bosch claims that the cultic-institutional smothered the personal-
ethical, ‘since it was the official church which not only sanctioned the penitential
practice, but also defined exactly which human thoughts and actions were sins; in

539 Bosch, D., Transforming Mission p.218.
540 See Frost, M., and Hirsch, A., ReJesus (Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson, 2009) and The Shaping of
Things to Come: Innovation and Mission for the 21st Century Church (Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson
Publishers, 2003); Murray, S., Post-Christendom: Church and Mission in a Strange New World
(Cumbria, UK: Paternoster Press, 2004); Dulles, A., Models of the Church pp. 196-197; Allen, R.,
Missionary Methods and Spontaneous Expansion, Mission-Shaped Church; Cole, N., Organic Church:
Growing Faith Where Life Happens (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2005). For an anti-institutional and
anti-authoritarian view of reading the Bible in a modern context, see Pietersen, L., Reading the Bible
541 See Brewin, K., The Complex Christ: Signs of Emergence in the Urban Church (London: SPCK,
2004); Cole, N. Organic Church: Growing Faith Where Life Happens (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass,
2005); Easum, B., Leadership on the Other Side: No Rules, Just Clues (Nashville: Abingdon, 2000);
Publishers, 2003); Murray, Stuart Post-Christendom: Church and Mission in a Strange New World
(Cumbria, UK: Paternoster Press, 2004) for some examples of advocates of leaderless or non-
hierarchical church structures.
addition, of course, only the church, through its ministrations, could guarantee restitution.’ Bosch believes that with this model soteriology gets divorced from Christology and subordinated to ecclesiology. This complaint is often echoed in contemporary missiological thought, and other models are sought that will privilege the personal-ethical over the institutional. The difficulty with this is, of course, that it is impossible to avoid institutionalization in any organization. Moreover, it is debatable whether the institutional should always be viewed so negatively.

Those who advocate a looser leadership structure and a greater dependence on lay members of the church for participation in mission, often view the cultic-institutional model as sometimes patriarchal, imperialistic and/or controlling. But while there are some important and valid criticisms to be made of a strongly institutional view of the church (e.g. disempowerment of the laity, patriarchy, a rigid view of who is ‘in’ the church and who is ‘outside’ the church), it would be incorrect to assume that any local expression of church exists without some aspects of institution, even if this is not immediately apparent. Most churches and even the loosest of groups aim to gain adherents not just to Jesus Christ, but to their particular group, church or denomination. There are processes for appointing leaders, defining and authenticating who may minister, establishing a hierarchy, controlling the way the group functions and codes or guidelines for membership. All movements eventually die out or become institutionalized and to claim otherwise is disingenuous. Pinnock observes, ‘In any social movement there is going to be an institutional dimension. Any pattern of collective behavior that becomes habitual will become in some ways institutional; not in the sense of a business corporation, but in ways appropriate to it.’ Similarly Volf argues, ‘[t]he essential sociality of salvation implies the essential institutionality of the church. The question is not whether the church is an institution but rather what kind of institution it is.’ Institutions per se are not inimical to freedom, the work of the Spirit, or to effective mission.

We have noted, however, the problematic role of institutions for many in contemporary culture, and therefore, some contemporary models of mission will also need to have a strong emphasis on the personal-ethical and be careful not to subordinate that to the institutional. Moreover, we have also noted Lossky’s criticism

which we accept may be true in a qualified form; that extreme Christocentrism obscures diversity. Institutionalism therefore needs to be balanced with an understanding of the freedom of the Spirit to act in transforming and renewing ways. In our model of mission we will argue for a prioritizing of the personal over the institutional without denying the inevitability of human organizations also being and becoming institutional. John Zizioulas, writing on the church from an Orthodox perspective, roots ecclesiology firmly in Christ and the Spirit, arguing that Christ institutes the church and the Spirit constitutes the church.\textsuperscript{545} This principle is entirely consonant with Spirit Christology. The hope for the church is that whatever its form is, the Spirit is allowed to renew and reconstitute the institution in response to new moves of God and changing currents in society. This has happened constantly throughout history with more or less dramatic effect depending on the flexibility of the institution to adapt.

The upheaval in theology and doctrine with the Reformation and then the Enlightenment had a huge impact on ecclesiology and ideas about mission. As Protestantism burgeoned, so ideas about what the gospel actually was that was being proclaimed and who was to proclaim it underwent a radical transformation. The two most dominant Protestant streams were Protestant orthodoxy and Pietism, both with different emphases. Bosch differentiates between the Protestants of the first two centuries who by and large still operated within the framework of a close liaison between church and state and the Anabaptists, Pietists, some exponents of the Second Reformation and the Puritans who believed that the church should be separate from the state.\textsuperscript{546} The Pietists were critical of the Protestant orthodox position that put all the emphasis on the objective nature of faith, leaving little room for a personal experience of salvation. In contrast, the Pietists themselves emphasized the personal nature of faith and experience. They also claimed that the church was not the bearer of mission, neither was it the goal.\textsuperscript{547} The positive effect of this was that mission became something that the ordinary Christian could participate in, and the control of the church over the preaching of the gospel was loosened. This has become a dominant idea in the Protestant understanding of mission; that individuals can and should bear the responsibility for sharing and spreading the good news about Jesus

\textsuperscript{546} Bosch, D., \textit{Transforming Mission}, p.261.
\textsuperscript{547} Bosch, D., \textit{Transforming Mission}, p.253.
Christ. Bosch writes that Pietism combined ‘the joy of personal experience of salvation with eagerness to proclaim the gospel of redemption to all’.  

The negative aspect of this for mission was that the Pietists often emphasized the subjective and experiential side of religion, at the expense of right doctrine. Moreover, this laid the foundation for individualism to take precedence over community in terms of response to the gospel.

Mission in the wake of the Enlightenment went through yet another change. During the Enlightenment and the spread of empires, mission and colonialism went hand in hand. Mission was linked with concepts of nationalism, imperialism and civilization. Although not all missionaries by any means treated indigenous populations in an imperialist manner, it was certainly often advocated by governments, and unquestioned in many circles, and governments were able to use missionary endeavours to further their influence in colonized nations. The effect of this today in some churches is that we are sensitized to post-colonial guilt and often withdraw from any mission pursuit that smacks of imperialism, paternalism, or imposition. This in itself is a positive development, although coupled with the difficulties of proclaiming the uniqueness of Christ in a multicultural society, this has often led to the church being reticent about making claims or dogmatic statements about the unique or universal truth of the gospel, and capitulating to a meaningless relativism.

Another strong feature of the Protestant approach to mission is a reliance on the preached word, making it the central event of worship and the means by which non-believers are drawn into relationship with Jesus Christ. We have already discussed the issue of preaching in some detail in the light of Spirit Christology in Chapter Four, advocating that preaching should be accompanied by prayer for healing and in the context of the church’s mission to the poor and marginalized. In some churches, the work of the Spirit is understood as being present in and through the preacher, the exposition of Scripture, and the listeners, applying the truth of Scripture to the hearts and minds of the listeners, convicting of sin and righteousness and thus effecting salvation. Whilst there is nothing problematic in this per se, if the

548 Bosch, D., Transforming Mission, p.252.
549 Bosch, D., Transforming Mission, p.306.
550 This particular perspective on preaching has its roots in the Reformed tradition; Luther’s notion of the *viva vox Dei* where the preached word is none other than the word of God, or Calvin’s view that
emphasis is on the words of Scripture as being sufficient in themselves to effect salvation, then preaching can easily become divorced from praxis. The work of the Spirit is understood to be somehow implicit in or coterminous with the preaching of the word and not necessarily as having a separate but related role; that of bringing the word to life and revealing the truth of Scripture to us, as well as effecting transformation in the lives of the hearers. The latter model is more consonant with Pentecostalism or the charismatic expressions of church where the Spirit is understood to be working in different ways, perhaps confirming the preached word with signs and wonders or with the baptism or filling of the Spirit. Spirit Christology allows us to identify a coinherent but differentiated role for the Spirit in mission, and not one that is simply hidden within an entirely logocentric model of evangelism. John Studebaker, of the Evangelical tradition, is critical of certain evangelical models of exegesis that fail to acknowledge the work of the Spirit both in the inspiration and illumination of Scripture, and adopts instead a theology of biblical authority that is rooted in the authority of the person of the Spirit. ‘The Bible is our “final authority,” having the privileged status of judging all other disciplines and authorities, and possesses “full authority,” having universal application for all times. Biblical authority, however, ultimately emerges from the Spirit’s divine authority (as a divine Person).’

In the 19th century, personal models of evangelism were greatly influenced by preachers such as Dwight Moody (1837-1899), who Bosch notes typified the gospel of the individual. Moody preached a message of the sinner standing alone before God with the Holy Spirit being understood as ‘working only in the hearts of individuals and… known primarily through personal experience.’ In both these related models, we see the emphasis very much on evangelism to the exclusion of the broader concerns of mission. Transformation in society was understood to be possible only through individual conversions, and this was solely the choice of the individual. Through this, one person at a time, society would be transformed. Bosch notes the Arminian tendency of Moody’s preaching and other Protestant evangelists of the

preaching the Gospel is the central means by which men and women will repent and believe. Institutes of Christian Religion III.3.19.

552 Bosch, D., Transforming Mission, p.317.
time and notes the impact of this rampant individualism on social concerns. He writes,

as revivalism and evangelicalism slowly adopted premillenialism the emphasis shifted away from social involvement to exclusively verbal evangelism. In the course of time virtually “all progressive social concern, whether political or private, became suspect among revivalist evangelicals and was relegate to a very minor role”. By the 1920’s “the Great Reversal”…had been completed; the evangelicals’ interest in social concerns had, for all practical purposes, been obliterated.

This trend in Protestant evangelicalism is still evident today, however, in recent years, there have been many changes that have affected the church’s view of mission. Some discernible changes are the rise of the Pentecostal church and the spread of the charismatic movement through many denominations. This has had a considerable impact on the world-wide church and thinking about the Spirit and mission. There is also a new interest in Protestant denominations for justice issues, work among the poor, ecological issues and social concern. As we noted in the last chapter, a renewed emphasis on the Spirit is leading theologians and ministers to view the work of the Spirit of God as the transformation and liberation of all creation. Christ comes for the re-creation of all creation through the mediation of the Spirit, both breaking the demonic power of sin and death and breaking bread to feed the hungry, both shedding his blood for the sins of the world and exhorting his disciples to clothe the naked, to care for the orphans and the widows. The Holy Spirit works through all things, both material and spiritual, and God’s concern is not just for eternal souls, but for life here and now.

Bosch optimistically believes that the view of Jesus as supra-national, other-worldly, and predominantly spiritual has come to an end. This may not be entirely

553 Bosch notes that one of Moody’s repeated phrases was, ‘Whatever the sin is, make up your mind that you will gain victory over it.’ Transforming Mission, p.317.
556 Bosch, D., Transforming Mission, p.20.
true, although perhaps it is now generally accepted that Jesus ‘ministered, lived and thought almost exclusively within the framework of first-century Jewish religious faith and life’ and that this is accepted as being crucial to our understanding of Christology and mission.\textsuperscript{557} In other words, the gospel needs to be ‘translated’ for each generation and culture, and not only this, but that as the gospel is appropriated and accepted by different groups, they will then shape and contextualize it to their own setting. Other significant developments have been that other religions are no longer seen to be ‘false’, but to have elements of truth within them, mission work largely means not just preaching, but a broader range of transformational activities, specifically work among the poor and disadvantaged, and there is generally a greater emphasis now on salvation for life in this world rather than a focus on getting to the next world. Moreover, the accent is now on community and society rather than solely on the individual.\textsuperscript{558} Bosch however, remains critical of Western missional and evangelistic practice as he believes that it is still tainted by the legacy of Enlightenment imperialism. He feels that the impulse in the Western church to ‘remake the world, once again in the image of the West’\textsuperscript{559} is almost compulsive, with still a strong sense of the stronger party giving to the weaker, one giving and the other receiving.\textsuperscript{560} In Chapter Six, we will be considering some of these particular criticisms, and the ways in which a model of mission and evangelism built on the foundations of Spirit Christology may succeed in countering some of these specific difficulties.

Finally, we shall take a brief look at mission within the Pentecostal and charismatic traditions which have been increasingly influential in the last century. Lord in his book, \textit{Spirit-Shaped Mission},\textsuperscript{561} discusses both the charismatic and Pentecostal theology of mission in some detail. Although there are a number of differences, there is also considerable overlap between the two. Both Pentecostal and charismatic traditions emphasize the dynamic ‘experience’ of the Spirit through sung worship, prophecy, healing, laying on of hands, deliverance and signs and wonders. Kim gives a summary of widespread features of Pentecostalism: ‘an oral, rather than written liturgy; spontaneity, applause and laughter; dancing and singing as part of

\begin{footnotes}
\item[557] Bosch, D., \textit{Transforming Mission}, p.29.
\item[558] Bosch, D., \textit{Transforming Mission}, p.322.
\item[559] Bosch, D., \textit{Transforming Mission}, p.326.
\item[560] Bosch, D., \textit{Transforming Mission}, p.334.
\end{footnotes}
worship; practice of simultaneous loud praying; the exercise of ‘gifts of the Spirit’ (1 Cor. 12-14; Rom. 12.3-8); evidence of signs and wonders’, including healing; personal testimony to what God has done and a general emphasis on experiencing the Spirit of God; frequent use of interjections such as ‘amen’ and ‘hallelujah’; and interpretation of dreams and utterances in ‘tongues’.\textsuperscript{562} All these features (apart from perhaps interjections such as ‘amen’ and ‘hallelujah’) are also recognizable within the charismatic church as well. Kim also notes the emphasis on spiritual warfare and power encounters, especially in relation to mission.\textsuperscript{563} She writes, “‘Power encounter’ or ‘spiritual warfare’ has been strongly criticized within the Evangelical movement and outside it because of its naïve use of the Bible and antagonistic method but the sense of being involved in spiritual conflict is common in Pentecostal-charismatic Christianity.”\textsuperscript{564}

For both Pentecostal and charismatic traditions, the missionary nature of the church is central to their mission theology, and charismatic practices and worship within the church as identified above are seen to be effective for drawing people into a relationship with Christ. The world-wide Pentecostal and charismatic church is bucking the trend and growing rather than shrinking. Lord notes that the English charismatic tradition has been deeply influenced by John Wimber, who placed a great emphasis on signs and wonders for evangelism.\textsuperscript{565} These ideas are still highly influential in charismatic circles.\textsuperscript{566} One example of a charismatic mission theology is found in The Alpha Course. Alpha has the dual emphasis of an appeal to the rational basis for faith through apologetic presentations on the life and person of Jesus, and the stress on the work of the person of the Holy Spirit in an individual’s life, through the laying on of hands and prayer to be filled with the Spirit. Recent developments in contemporary Anglican mission thinking also include a consideration of Celtic Christianity and monastic models of church and community.\textsuperscript{567} As we have already noted, the term ‘holistic’ is being used in relation to mission, as something we should

\textsuperscript{562} Kim, K., \textit{Joining in with the Spirit}, p.101.

\textsuperscript{563} Kim, K., \textit{Joining in with the Spirit}, pp.130-131. Kim notes the influence of the teaching of John Wimber and Peter Wagner.

\textsuperscript{564} Kim, K., \textit{Joining in with the Spirit}, p.130.


\textsuperscript{567} See Maclaren, D., \textit{Mission Implausible: Restoring Credibility to the Church} (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2004).
aspire to, meaning mission that will focus on the whole person (body, mind and spirit), whole communities, and the many aspects of life and society. With the Pentecostal and charismatic paradigm, the church and mission are viewed wholly through a pneumatological lens. There are many advantages to this: vitality, freedom in worship, an expectation that God will work among the people in new and surprising ways, the exercising of spiritual gifts in worship. Pinnock sees this as wholly positive, describing charismatic worship in the following way:

[a] new model of church is rising where people gather not to hear a well-prepared lecture (the Protestant way) and not to witness a sacerdotal liturgy (the Catholic way) but to experience the presence of the living God. The meeting throbs with life. The power of the original event of Pentecost is prolonged ritually. God is experienced as doing new things. There is the expectation that God will move with power. Around the speaking and the singing, there is room for improvisation. Faces shine. There are shouts of joy. Gifts are in operation. There is broad participation. There is an empowerment of laity. It is not so much a theory of church as it is an experience of the church now charismatically alive.

This is a perhaps an exceptionally rosy picture. In reality, there are also numerous difficulties with charismatic and Pentecostal forms of worship including extreme pneumatocentrism, or sometimes the neglect of the sacraments, Scripture or Christology. One of the potential difficulties for this ecclesiology as a basis for mission is that charismatics might rely more on the inbreaking or immediate work of the Spirit to achieve all aspects of mission, rather than acknowledging the responsibility of the community in the making of disciples. Mission and evangelism stands in danger of being tainted by what is, in effect, a docetic bent as the incarnational aspects of mission and making disciples are obscured. With Spirit Christology we have been advocating a balance between logocentrism and pneumatocentrism: preaching, but in the power of the Spirit; Word-based ministries,

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but accompanied with signs and wonders; inspired speech, but authenticated by lives that witness to the truth of the gospel. We will say more of this in Chapter Six.

In all these examples we see behind them assumptions about how God will work through the church and through whom. Recently there has been a lot of work on the idea of the Spirit as the one who drives, inspires and leads the church in mission. The idea that mission is simply ‘seeing what the Spirit is doing and joining in’ is a dominant theme in mission literature, and is being adopted by many different denominations and traditions. In *Mission-Shaped Church*, churches are encouraged to discuss and explore the following questions:

> [h]ow can you learn better to discern the creativity of the Spirit in your own communities? Do you have ways of exploring and acknowledging what the Spirit is doing? How will such discernment affect the way your church plans for mission in the future?\(^{570}\)

In the next section we will consider some of these proposals.

In conclusion, therefore, we have noted the basis for mission in the New Testament and gone on to examine some of the trends through history in mission movements, identifying some of their strengths and weaknesses, advantages and disadvantages. We have established that the church is both the agent of mission and the result of mission, that although the institution of the church needs to be flexible and willing to adapt and change, we cannot wholly dispense with any understanding of the church as institution. Moreover, we have noted that ecclesiology is inextricably bound up with Christology and pneumatology, and separating the two will have deleterious effects on both the church community and our mission. The church is a community of disciples and as such is always only human, but also the body of Christ, anointed and empowered by the Spirit. The humanity of the church means that it will never be the perfect expression of Christ on this earth. Bosch writes,

> ...“church in the power of the Spirit” is not yet the reign of God; it is blundering and often unfaithful, and yet it is the anticipation of that reign in history. Christianity is not yet the new creation, but it is the working of the

Spirit of the new creation; it is not yet the new humankind, but it is its vanguard.571

Bosch goes on to articulate the dual nature of the church as a human and therefore sinful community, which is at the same time, the people of God in whom his divine nature is also manifest. Bosch calls the church a ‘theological and a sociological entity, an inseparable union of the divine and the dusty.’ The church is God’s chosen vehicle to witness to the world.

Looking at itself through the eyes of the world, the church realizes that it is disreputable and shabby, susceptible to all human frailties; looking at itself through the eyes of the believers, it perceives itself as a mystery, as the incorruptible Body of Christ on earth. We can be utterly disgusted, at times, with the earthliness of the church, yet we can also be transformed, at times, with the awareness of the divine in the church. It is this church, ambiguous in the extreme, which is “missionary by its very nature”, the pilgrim people of God, “in the nature of” a sacrament, sign, and instrument, and “a most sure seed of unity, hope and salvation for the whole human race.”572

**ReJesus: A Contemporary Missional Christology**

In this section I turn to consider a number of contemporary models of mission. The first is based on a Christology in which there is almost no reference to the work of the Spirit. The subsequent models are all mission models that claim, in contrast, that we should ‘start with the Spirit.’ I compare some of the more ‘one-sided’ models (those that focus more on Christology or the Spirit) with a model of mission based on the coinherent missions of the Son and the Spirit and some of the insights already gleaned from Spirit Christology. I highlight their strengths and weaknesses and what they contribute to the discussion on contemporary mission in the West, before going on to form my own model of mission based on Spirit Christology.

Alan Hirsch and Michael Frost, two contemporary missiologists, argue that there is a pressing need in the Western church to be called back to the foundational

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missional principle; that knowing Jesus, following him, and seeking to be like him should be at the heart of mission. They contend that all theologizing should begin with Christology. For them, this is the ‘primary issue’. ‘We have elsewhere asserted that it is Christology (the exploration of the person, teachings, and impact of Jesus Christ) that determines missiology (our purpose and function in the world), which in turn determines our ecclesiology (the forms and functions of the church).’ There is no difficulty with their fundamental premise that Christology should be the point of departure for our thinking on mission. Having established this, however, we then face a more complex issue of ‘which Christology?’ If Christology is to be determinative for all other theologizing, then as we have been arguing throughout, where we place our emphases in our Christological understanding will be crucial to all our thinking on mission and the church.

Like many other commentators on the current situation in the West vis-à-vis Christianity, Frost and Hirsch also use the word ‘crisis’. ‘There is no doubt that we face a spiritual, theological, missional and existential crisis in the West.’ The response to this, they argue, is to recover the biblical view of Jesus and for Christians to learn to live lives like his in the situations that we find ourselves. At the heart of their argument then, is the claim that we can and should recover the biblical picture of the life and person of Jesus and seek to imitate this in our own lives. This imitation of Christ they label as becoming ‘little Jesuses’. Thus, in the course of the book, not only do they describe the person and life of Jesus as they understand this depicted in the New Testament as a model for our own, but the book is punctuated with stories of other people, men and women in history, who in their view, best exemplify the life of Christ. We will discuss three aspects of their work: their view of the Jesus of history and how that relates to the traditions, creeds and history of the church; their theology of sanctification, of how we may become like Jesus; how this relates to the Trinity and more specifically, the person and work of the Spirit.

Frost and Hirsch ground their argument in an uncompromising Christology from below. Becoming like Jesus is a process that begins with the Jesus of the Gospels, the first century Palestinian Jew, who lived a life in the same way that we

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574 Frost and Hirsch, *ReJesus*, pp.5-6.  
576 Frost and Hirsch, *ReJesus*, p.6
live our lives, albeit as the Son of God. The task of the Christian then is to steep himself or herself in the gospel stories of Jesus, placing themselves under the authority of Scripture and allowing the gospels to speak of the person and work of Christ. They believe that the task before the church is to be ‘taken captive by the agenda of the flesh-and-blood Jesus’ and that ‘a rediscovery of the biblical Jesus will radically reshape our view of God, the church, the world’. They add ‘[o]bviously, this will involve a preparedness on our parts to resist capturing Jesus for our ends or molding him to our theological or political agendas.’\textsuperscript{577} Their assumption is that the immersing of the individual in Scripture will be sufficient to safeguard the church against some of the ‘wrong’ interpretations of the life and person of Jesus, which they deplore: ethereal, feminized, Arian, or otherworldly portraits of Jesus. The immersing of the church in the gospel stories in itself will enable us to resist moulding Jesus to our theological or political agendas.

It becomes apparent that this extreme Protestant view of Scripture and the individual, springs from a correspondingly negative view of tradition. Frost and Hirsch are dismissive of much of church history, the value of the priesthood, grand or beautiful buildings belonging to the church and a number of aspects of church life and worship associated with Roman Catholic, Orthodox and Anglican traditions. They ask ‘[w]here is the poor, itinerant rabbi’ in all of this?\textsuperscript{578} Consequently, they go on to argue that the creeds and Christological questions and formulae of the early church have obscured the real person of Jesus; that the church has often represented the following of Jesus in purely metaphysical terms and that this has had a deleterious effect on discipleship in the way that they envisage it. Frost and Hirsch rely on the work of Adolf von Harnack and Jacques Ellul, adopting the view that the Hellenization of Christianity was ‘part of the process by which Christianity was essentially subverted into something significantly less, if not entirely different, from the original way Jesus set down for us.’\textsuperscript{579} Harnack’s view is that there is a kernel of the gospel which has been overlaid by the husks of Hellenistic metaphysical concepts alien to the teachings of Jesus.\textsuperscript{580} The result of this in his opinion was that the

\textsuperscript{578} Frost and Hirsch, \textit{ReJesus}, p.3.  
\textsuperscript{580} Frost and Hirsch, \textit{ReJesus}, p.9.
primitive stories of Jesus were ‘corrupted by official church dogma’.\textsuperscript{581} The view that somehow the creeds and councils of the church have obfuscated rather than clarified the questions pertaining to Christology is a recurring theme in the book.\textsuperscript{582}

They not only take a negative view of the early church’s Christological reflection, but believe that the whole pursuit of Christology has been blighted by academia.

For far too long Christology has been the province of academic and professional Christians, who seem far more concerned with an examination of how the divine and human are related in Jesus’ person than they are in the details of his life or the content of his teaching and vision. As theologians attempted to use speculative philosophy and ontology to explore the two natures of Christ, Christology became something of a complex science that in effect excludes the theologically uninitiated person. When the study of the remarkable life and teachings of Jesus becomes the sole province of theologians and religious professionals, when it is done in abstract and divorced from our daily concerns and from the missional context of the church, it will tend to degrade the vitality of our Christianity. The system we have historically constructed to try to probe the nature of Christ reaches Gnostic proportions and takes years to comprehend in a meaningful way.\textsuperscript{583}

They go on to decry the practice of doing theology in isolation from our daily concerns and from the missional context of the church, contending that this will degrade the vitality of our Christianity. This is no doubt a legitimate concern, and one which others share. In a recently published conversation between Del Colle and a number of Protestant theologians, Macchia, asks a similar question. ‘For example, where is Jesus the Jew in Nicaea or Chalcedon? It seems to me that the dogmatic

\textsuperscript{581} Frost and Hirsch, ReJesus, p.9.
\textsuperscript{582} Harnack speaks about distinguishing the kernel or what is essential in the gospel from the husk and believes that we look for our material at Jesus Christ and the Gospels which gives us a simple gospel. For Harnack, Hellenism is characterized by traditionalism and intellectualism, both of which he uses in a pejorative sense. He believed that the emphasis of the early church on logos rather than Messiah was a Christological error and lost the historical essence of the Gospel, and that we need to be able to distinguish between what is original and what is ‘alien growth’. Rumscheidt, M., (ed.), \textit{Adolf Von Harnack: liberal theology at its height} (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991) pp.78, 81, 82, 205, 224. This particular view is highly contested and has subsequently been widely criticised.
\textsuperscript{583} Frost and Hirsch, ReJesus, pp.13-14.
witness to Christ in history has participated in that gradual bifurcation between Jesus and Judaism that has plagued the witness of the church and provoked modern attempts at restating the hypostatic union. Clearly, Harnack’s criticisms are still deemed to be relevant. Del Colle responds, ‘Dogma is a witness (or, in Catholic terms, is revelatory) of the divine reality to which it points. We don’t confuse the reality with the dogma but the dogma indeed does have a positive claim on our knowledge of God.’ Del Colle’s response highlights the need to understand the different place that dogma has in the history of the church to that of meditation on Scripture. The two should not be confused, and to some extent have different purposes, although they are both aspects of revelation. Dogma is rooted in the revelation of Scripture, but meditation on Scripture alone, just as dogma alone, is not sufficient to guard the church against all kinds of damaging heresies, as history well attests, and the church will not progress in its mission by abandoning one or the other.

Whereas some might be sympathetic to the view that Christology can sometimes become a complex science excluding the theologically uninitiated, and whereas Frost and Hirsch rightly wish to draw attention to the fact that the study of Jesus Christ should be rooted in the biblical witness, in Jesus’ own culture and context, and then grounded in church life and practice, the suspicion of dogma and the negative reading of tradition raises more problems than it solves. To encourage students to open their Bibles ‘and form their views of Christ afresh’ without any recourse to church history or tradition has been likened by Spence to ‘encouraging a child to break up the largely completed family jigsaw puzzle and begin again so that this time he can do it by himself, properly, with just a little guidance.’ The devaluing of theological reflection in church history completely fails to account for the role that theologians have played in interpreting the biblical account of Jesus Christ, in answering some of the more complicated questions in respect of his personhood as the God-man, and in defending the truth of the gospel from various heresies throughout the ages. It also fails to recognize that these questions will be asked over and over again with each generation, and will therefore need to be answered. Moreover, it does not acknowledge some of the more complex issues around hermeneutics, interpretation, revelation, discernment, how the church arrives

585 Yong et al, Christ and the Spirit, p.23.
at ‘truth’, and the possibility that sinful human beings may distort or manipulate Scripture for our own ends, which are all questions ineluctably bound to the question of mission.

Interestingly, Frost and Hirsch eventually part company with Harnack, claiming that he became guilty of the very thing he was inveighing against, namely making Jesus in our own image, leading Harnack to a Jesus cast in the mould of liberal Protestantism.\textsuperscript{587} However, their own argument and their own portrayal of Jesus is vulnerable to the same charge. Their own portrayal of Jesus does, of course, serve their particular theological agenda. For Frost and Hirsch, the Jesus of the Gospels is first and foremost a revolutionary, which is the role in which they cast themselves, describing themselves as ‘iconoclasts, as holy vandals, defacing the church’s cherished but unhelpful images of Jesus.’\textsuperscript{588} The Jesus that they see in the Gospels is scandalous, wild and subversive. He is radical and challenging, anti-institutional and as we have seen, has nothing to do with any ethereal, otherworldly, Arian, and feminized portraits of Jesus that they claim have been evident throughout the history of the church. So they argue, ‘Our point is that to reJesus the church, we need to go back to the daring, radical, strange, wonderful...unsettling, disturbing, caring, powerful God-Man.’\textsuperscript{589} Their hagiography therefore is made up of their view of a holy life that conforms to this criteria, men and women chosen because of their involvement in some sort of subversion of the status quo or human rights campaigners or those who have worked with the poor and marginalized: Kierkegaard, Bonhoeffer, Fannie Lou Hamer, a Civil Rights campaigner, Archbishop Janani Luwum, a Ugandan beaten and murdered under Amin’s regime, Alan Walker, an Australian evangelist devoted to social activism, Jean Vanier, and Mother Theresa. The list is impressive and in many ways, their depiction of Jesus and the examples that they choose of normal people living Christlike lives is striking, challenging, attractive and provocative. The picture that they paint is important; that the Christian life should be one characterized by forgiveness, confession, caring for the needy, praying for the sick, calling others to discipleship, practising hospitality, humility, justice, welcoming

\textsuperscript{587} Frost and Hirsch write, ‘Harnack’s quest for an emancipated Jesus led him to one without such concepts as revelation, incarnation, miracle, and resurrection, which he considered unscientific.’ pp.9-10.

\textsuperscript{588} Frost and Hirsch, ReJesus, p.92.

\textsuperscript{589} Frost and Hirsch, ReJesus, p.111.
the outcast and creativity.\footnote{Frost and Hirsch, ReJesus, pp.56-60.} Their call for the church to challenge consumerism, greed, hatred, to be engaged with the poor, and to reject empty and idolatrous forms of worship is crucial. Moreover, their emphasis on the humanity of Christ, as a buffer to any creeping docetism in the church and as a basis for our understanding of mission is in harmony with much of what I have been arguing. However, there is a need for caution in respect of this Christological method.

There are various issues that they fail to address, which serve to weaken their argument and to detract from their overall purpose of wanting to inspire and equip the church for mission. These are issues which we have already argued can be adequately addressed using Spirit Christology as a dogmatic foundation for our thinking. In respect of Christology we have noted some of the weaknesses of simply doing Christology from below without a corresponding emphasis on Logos Christology as non-negotiable for theological reflection: the dangers of adoptionism; Ebionitism; or the view that Jesus is the perfection of humanity, but that he is merely human. Moreover, the divide between the Jesus of history and the Christ of faith that we referred to in Chapter Three, is compounded by their views. This is especially true because their Christology is developed without reference to the Spirit. We will say more of this below. The devaluing of the process of theological reflection in church history fails to acknowledge that the church will always face the challenge of how we interpret Scripture, how we arrive at ‘truth’, and questions regarding discernment. In these matters, those well versed in church history, biblical scholarship and the implications associated with various dogmatic claims will have much to offer. Luke Bretherton comments on precisely this trend in contemporary Christology, which has gained currency in the emerging and missional church movements in recent years, in which Frost and Hirsch are leading figures.

To emphasize the person of Jesus and the Kingdom of God as somehow necessarily in opposition to the history of the church is to fall into a kind of ‘Jesuology’: an attempt to escape history as if Christians can simply copy the primitive church or ask what would Jesus do and ignore two thousand years of Church history. It is also a refusal to acknowledge the providential and ongoing work of Christ and the Spirit in history thereby separating the humanity
and divinity of Jesus Christ so that, in practice, Jesus becomes little more than a historical example of radical ethical conduct. My point here is not to legitimize an existing status quo or oppressive practices or undermine the centrality of a focus on the person of Jesus Christ as central to any renewal and reinvigoration of the church. Nor is it to subsume the Kingdom of God into the church: the Kingdom of God includes but is greater than the church. Rather, it is to say that we cannot escape grappling with the difficult and at times painful task of discerning how God has been at work in the history of the church and how what we seek to do now, as participants in the visible church, cannot but build on the prior providential work of God.591

This brings me to my final concern with the work of Frost and Hirsch, namely the question of discipleship and the almost total lack of reference to the Spirit, the latter being at the heart of the other difficulties that we encounter with their work. Having constructed a Christology from below rooted solely in the stories of Jesus, the first century Palestinian Jew, and devoid of the subsequent theological reflection of the church, Frost and Hirsch then bind themselves to the idea that discipleship is a process of imitation of the earthly life of Jesus and nothing more, which is problematic in several respects. First, apart from the very subjective and individualistic approach, we then have to distinguish how the life of Christ differs from our own and to qualify which aspects of Jesus’ life are replicable in our own lives and which are not. So Frost and Hirsch rightly assert, ‘We can’t die for anyone’s sins, but we can embrace selflessness, sacrifice, and suffering.’592 However, the other distinctions between our lives and Christ’s are open to debate. Frost and Hirsch contend that we cannot ‘walk on water’ or ‘feed thousands with just a few loaves and fishes’, but we can ‘embrace the values of hospitality and generosity’ and ‘adopt the values embodied in Jesus’ life and teaching’.593 A Pentecostal or Revivalist, however, may wish to draw the lines in other places. They might want to insist that we too could walk on water and perform great miracles if only we had enough faith.594 While

592 Frost and Hirsch, ReJesus, p.6.
593 Frost and Hirsch, ReJesus, p.61.
594 Bill Johnson at Bethel Church in Redding, California teaches precisely this in the Bethel School of Supernatural Ministry.
a completely different view of the relationship of Christ’s life and ours may lead us in yet another direction. Regardless of where the lines fall, what is more important is that we should not divorce this question from pneumatology. The difficulty with explicating this relationship in terms of imitation or mimesis is that it then becomes a question of what we may or may not do rather than a question of who we may or may not become.

In contrast, as we have noted with Spirit Christology, living a life of obedience to the commands of Christ is not a question of imitation, but of empowerment and transformation by the Spirit. Del Colle’s categories of inclusion, obedience and hope are not simply Christological but wholly pneumatological. So, rather than adopting a Hebraic worldview in order to understand Jesus more fully with a view to becoming like him, we trust in the work of the Spirit in our lives to conform us to his image and to inspire us to love him, from whence the desire to obey him springs. At one point Frost and Hirsch describe the process of loving Jesus and becoming like him in the following way: ‘our commitment to live in conformity to him, is in effect an inbuilt spiritual mechanism at the heart of the church’s theology and experience that provides an instrument for our ongoing renewal.’

Why do they not name this as a work of the Spirit? It is interesting to compare Frost’s and Hirsch’s Christology and model of discipleship with Owen’s Christology and theology of sanctification, which is developed pneumatologically. Owen advocates the contemplation of Christ, which in one sense, Frost and Hirsch are also arguing for. ‘It is true that the person of Christ, as God-man, is the proper and ultimate object of our love: but a clear, distinct consideration of his natures and their excellencies is effectual to draw forth our love towards him.’ However, becoming like Christ is impossible without the grace imparted by the Spirit.

We are to know Christ so as to labour after conformity to him; and this conformity consists in a participation of the graces whose fullness dwells in him. And we cannot regularly press after this, but by an acquaintance with the work of the Spirit on his human nature, which therefore deserves our most diligent study.

595 Frost and Hirsch, ReJesus, p.8.
597 Owen, J., The Holy Spirit, p.131
The human nature of Christ is not something that we study in order to copy, not a question of mimesis, because this is an unreachable goal. Becoming like Christ is possible through participating in his life through the power of the Spirit. It is through being ‘in Christ’ that his personhood is transformative of our human nature. ‘Sanctification, as here described, is the immediate work of God by his Spirit upon our whole nature, proceeding from the peace made for us by Jesus Christ, whereby being changed into his likeness, we are kept entirely in peace with God, and are preserved unblameable, or in a state of gracious acceptance with him to the end.’

As we have already noted in the work of Fee, sanctification of the human being is rooted in the risen Christ and effected by the Spirit.

The christological point, of course, is that Christ himself in his humanity perfectly bore that image, so that as believers now behold him as the risen One, they are themselves being “transformed” back into that image/likeness. But the emphasis in these passages is not on Christ’s humanity – that is assumed as inherent in the imagery itself. What we have, rather, is the true image being borne by the one who shares the divine glory, the one who, when turned to in devotion and obedience, transforms believers, by his Spirit, into the image of God that we had been created for in the first place.

The marked neglect of pneumatology similarly affects Frost and Hirsch’s ecclesiology, which although rightly Christocentric, has no complementary place for the Spirit. Thus the church is purely the body of Christ over which he is the head, and who solely relates to him, existing only in him and for his glory. In contrast, Owen’s ecclesiology is ineluctably tied to the work of the Spirit.

But yet, of all the promises given to them concerning a future and more glorious state of the Church, next to that of the coming of Christ, those are the most eminent which respect a more full communication of the Spirit. Accordingly we find in the New testament (sic), that whatever concerns the

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conversion of the elect, the edification of the Church, the sanctification and consolation of believers, is so appropriated to him, that, without his special operation, nothing of it can be enjoyed or performed. So careful was God to secure the faith of the Church in this matter, as he knew its eternal concerns to lie therein.\footnote{600 Owen, J., \textit{The Holy Spirit}, p.29.}

In conclusion, there is much in Frost’s and Hirsch’s observations and exhortations for the church that is to be welcomed: that Christians should be steeped in Scripture and seek to follow Jesus’ example; that the church needs to stay close to the teachings of Jesus; that Christians are ‘all bound to the revelation of God given in and through Jesus’; that the life of Jesus needs to be seen in the church in forms of active service, giving to the poor, fighting for justice for the oppressed, generosity, forgiveness, humility.\footnote{601 Frost and Hirsch, \textit{ReJesus}, pp.78-9.} Moreover, there is significant parity with some of the principles for mission that we have already outlined: an emphasis on the \textit{missio Dei}, God’s mission to the world, and the sending at the heart of the Trinity that is extended to the sending of the church; the importance of human beings as ambassadors of Christ;\footnote{602 Frost and Hirsch, \textit{ReJesus}, pp.25-30.} the emphasis on the community nature of mission;\footnote{603 Frost and Hirsch, \textit{ReJesus}, p.31} the importance of the church to be the one to bring wisdom to the community.\footnote{604 Frost and Hirsch, \textit{ReJesus}, p.32} It is important, however, also to reiterate the truth that the Spirit of Jesus Christ has never left the church, even though there is much to grieve over. The excesses and abuses of a powerful church are certainly something that the church needs to face and repent of. Of this, there is no doubt. The mistake is to assume that these excesses and abuses are somehow enshrined in institutions rooted in the past, and that new movements will somehow be free of them. The neglect of the work of the Spirit in Christ, determines their ecclesiology and view of sanctification and thus, vitiates their understanding of mission. We now turn to a number of models of mission that in contrast to Frost and Hirsch, emphasize the work of the Spirit in mission.
The Spirit and Mission

As we have noted, in recent years, there have been a number of proposals for models of mission that ‘start with the Spirit.’ Among those who have pursued this line of thinking are Kim, Stephen Bevans, Yong, Macchia, Lord and Steven Studebaker. There are also those who have applied the insights of Spirit Christology to a particular cultural context: Kim, Sang-Ehil Han and Christina Manohar. In this section, I discuss some examples of Western pneumatological models of mission that ‘start with the Spirit’ comparing them with Del Colle’s approach of starting with the coinherent and mutual missions of the Son and the Spirit.

Kim’s theology is predominantly focused on cultures other than the Western culture, although she does also refer to mission in the West at times. In contrast to Frost and Hirsch, Kim proposes that our mission should start with the Spirit rather than the historical Jesus, on the grounds that this may help us to communicate the gospel more meaningfully to our own culture. In the preface to her book, The Holy Spirit in the World, Kim writes,

Back in Britain after ten years away, I was struck by a new openness toward spiritual experience of all kinds….This book is the result of my endeavours to try to make sense of these varied experiences of the spirit, and of the meanings and meaninglessness of the concept. It is also the fruit of a hunch that, in the contemporary West, we may be able to put the gospel message across more meaningfully if we begin from the Spirit, rather than the historical Jesus. And after all, it is the role of the prevenient Spirit to prepare the world to receive Christ.605

With Moltmann, she views mission as a trinitarian activity, an extension of the missio Dei, but in fact, for Kim, this is primarily pneumatological. Since ‘it is by the Holy Spirit that God is at work in the world, mission as missio Dei is a pneumatological paradigm of mission. The Holy Spirit is thus, the ‘chief agent of mission’.606

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Discernment then, is the first act of mission. Following James Dunn, Kim sees mission as ‘finding out where the Holy Spirit is at work and joining in’. The missionary seeks signs of the Spirit already at work in people and cultures. Kim is clear that by the Holy Spirit she means the Spirit of Jesus Christ, however, one of her other claims is that the ‘Holy Spirit is not present only where there is explicit Christian confession but where there is a likeness of Christ.’ The question then for those involved in mission is to discern where, in what communities we may discern that ‘likeness’ of Christ and to go to them. Yong argues very similarly about the notion of discernment and both Kim and Yong begin to work out criteria for discernment, however, this remains a problematic area for theological reflection.

What form does ‘Christlikeness’ take when there is no confession of Christ and no acknowledgement of him or the work of the Spirit? And as Del Colle asks in relation to theologies of the Spirit/spirit, how do we prevent a theology of experience being reduced to anthropology? The ‘rules’ of discernment need to be laid down carefully and in the context of the wider church community in order to prevent it becoming an entirely subjective exercise.

Kim puts her theories into practice in her work on Indian pneumatological models of mission. Here she advocates that we should go beyond models based on the Catholic doctrine of grace or the Protestant pattern of Word and Spirit, the very models that we have explored in this thesis. By going beyond, she means that we need to loosen our understanding of the Spirit as always inextricably tied to the Christian confession of Christ and the formation of the church. She writes that in an Indian context ‘it seemed obvious to our theologians that the Spirit’s mission could not be limited to praeparatio evangelica because it was not clear that the Christian community alone represented the best hope for India’s future. Furthermore, their shared perception due to their Indian cultural background was of a cosmic Spirit also involved in varied ways with the other communities of India.’ Instead, they see the presence and activity of the Spirit outside the Christian community, and that ‘mission starts from the immanence of the Spirit in the world…the Spirit present and active in

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607 Kim, K., The Holy Spirit, p.34.
609 Kim, K., The Holy Spirit, p.36.
610 See Kim, K., Joining in with the Spirit, pp.34-36 and Yong, The Spirit Poured Out pp.253-257.
611 Kim, K., Mission in the Spirit, p.240.
human hearts, in society and in creation.’ In her view, this will lead to an encounter with Christ who reveals God the Father. 612 I will argue below, however, that immanentist and universal theologies of the Spirit on their own are not sufficient.

There are other aspects of Kim’s work, however, that are thought-provoking for mission in the West. In another work, Kim argues that the key to mission in the secular West is the role of the Spirit of the crucified and risen Christ who is the Spirit of Wisdom. This Spirit of Wisdom is the key to the universe, able to inform the scientific outlook with ‘wonder beauty, reason, truth and imagination’ as well as providing a spiritual and ethical dimension to life. ‘The Spirit is the spirit of Wisdom which, if heard, can enrich all aspects of modern society.’ 613 Kim is right to emphasize the role of the Spirit in all aspects of life, and especially how this view may enrich and liberate the lives of those caught up in a scientistic and materialist culture. Another theme in her work is that mission in the power of the Spirit will be characterized by reconciliation. ‘The Spirit of Jesus Christ, who is breathed into us (John 20.21-3), makes us ambassadors of God’s reconciliation (2 Cor. 5.20).’ 614 Communities will be healed and differences will be reconciled. Moreover, she sees a promise for ecumenism in Spirit-shaped trinitarian mission, in the idea of the Spirit forming unity in diversity and allowing for diversity in unity. 615 These are some of the themes that we have emphasized throughout. In the end, however, Kim’s approach is less Christological than the one we are advocating here and fails to address some of the more problematic questions of discernment that occur when we disengage the work of the Spirit from the confession of Christ. Del Colle’s Spirit Christology is a Christology modified by the Spirit which gives a far more robust definition to the person and work of the Spirit that the one we find in Kim’s work.

Bevans’ work is another example of a pneumatological model of mission and, like Kim, believes that we should start with the Spirit, but has a greater emphasis on the Spirit as the revelation of Christ. 616 With many others, Bevans is concerned that the work of the Spirit has been marginalized in our thinking and theologizing, especially in respect of mission, and is critical of Western Christocentrism. He quotes John V. Taylor, arguing that the Spirit needs to become ‘so central to our thoughts

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613 Kim, K., Joining in with the Spirit, p.193.
614 Kim, K., Joining in with the Spirit p.255.
615 Kim, K., Joining in with the Spirit p.267.
about God and about man that when the name “God” is used our minds go first to the Spirit, not last.  

617 Bevans contends that we should reverse the order in which we think of the Son and the Spirit in the world, on the basis that God first sent the Spirit, and then sent the Son in the context of the Spirit's mission, ‘to bring to completion - perhaps not precisely the work of the Spirit, but the work that God conceived as one work to be executed in two steps of the twofold mission of first the Spirit and then the Son.’ 618 With others that we have already considered, he believes that this change in perspective, and the emphasis on the Spirit’s chronological and experiential priority, has profound implications for the theology of Christian mission. The first part of his proposal is that we understand the essential nature of the church as radically ‘eccentric’ and ‘centrifugal’, as moving from the inside out. He applies the same logic to God, claiming that the Spirit is ‘God Inside Out’ as the one who reaches out to the world in love, limited neither by space nor time. It is the Spirit, through his work of mission to creation, and in human history and experience, who is the one through whom we know God in his divine mystery. The Spirit precedes Jesus, ‘not only in our own lives but in the history of the world and in cultures that have not known him’. 619 He goes on to argue that Jesus is the concrete “face” of the Spirit, whose task it is to follow the Spirit’s lead. 620 The specific missionary implications of the Spirit as ‘God Inside Out’ are spelled out in the following way:

I propose that the church will live out its mission worthily only to the extent that it allies itself with and is transformed by the Spirit. Only in this way can it live in fidelity to its Lord, who himself was allied to the Spirit in his mission and was transformed by the Spirit's power. If the Spirit is the first way that God sends and is sent, the Spirit's activity becomes the foundation of the church's own missionary nature. If the church is to express its nature, therefore, it needs first to look to the Spirit's activity. Its task is, like that of Jesus, both to follow the Spirit's lead and to be the concrete “face” of the Spirit in the world. 621

618 Bevans, S., God Inside Out, p.1.
620 Bevans, S., God Inside Out, p.2.
621 Bevans, S., God Inside Out, p.2.
He goes on to argue that the church’s task is to participate in the mission of God, much as we have been discussing in detail throughout the thesis. Bevans’ description of that mission is taken from the biblical witness to the work of the Spirit both in the Old Testament and the New. The activity of the Spirit from the Bible in the Old Testament is as the Life-giving one who brings order out of chaos and sustains creation. (Gen 2.7; Job 33.4) The Spirit endows the prophets with authority to call Israel back from unfaithfulness, (Ezek 2.2; Mic 3.8; Hos. 10.12) announcing God’s healing, forgiveness and freedom. (Isa. 61.1-3) He gives flesh to dry bones and turns hearts of stone into hearts of flesh. (Ezek 37.1-14, 36.25-28)\(^{622}\) In the New Testament, Bevans notes the work of the Spirit in the life of Jesus that we are now familiar with in line with Spirit Christology. He adds to that, rooting his work firmly in ecclesiology.

The Acts of the Apostles, often called the Gospel of the Holy Spirit, is a theology of history that reflects on the role of the Spirit in the coming-to-be of the church. Acts is the amazing story of how the Spirit challenges and stretches the early community's prejudices and presuppositions and calls it beyond anything it dreamed possible - or, as Donald Senior puts it, how the Spirit “drives” the community to universal mission and to its identity as “church.” Paul attests that the early communities are not only “created and formed by the Spirit”; they are “a fellowship of the Spirit” as well.\(^{623}\)

Thus, the Spirit is the one who not only leads Jesus in his mission, but leads or drives the church into mission. In respect of Christology, Bevans sees Jesus as ‘aligning himself with the Spirit’s work’, making what God had been doing through the Spirit since the creation of the world, historically concrete and visible. The Spirit’s hitherto anonymous presence is concretized in Jesus Christ, lived out and demonstrated in his life, death and resurrection, the same creative, prophetic, life-giving, saving work of the Spirit. Jesus is led by the Spirit and is the one who draws people in to the life of God. Jesus then ‘lavishes that Spirit in a concrete and focused way’ on those who believe in his name.

\(^{622}\) Bevans, S., God Inside Out, p.3.
\(^{623}\) Bevans, S., God Inside Out, p.3.
There are a number of problems with Bevans’ Christology, which stem from a priority of the Spirit over Christ. One of the problems is a modalist tendency in his theology which makes it almost impossible to discern any real difference between Christ and the Spirit apart from the humanity and embodiment of Jesus, which clearly cannot be ascribed to the Spirit. The idea that Jesus is the divine second person of the Trinity who assumed human nature with the specific purpose to be the Saviour of God’s creation through his death and resurrection is therefore obscured. Bevans fails to articulate what is new about the incarnation, or about Pentecost in the economy of God, and due to his proposal that the Son continues the work of the Spirit, fails to differentiate properly between the missions of the Spirit and the Son. In contrast, with Spirit Christology we are able to articulate the differences between the missions of the Spirit and the Son, without subordinating one to the other. It is Jesus and not the Spirit who is the one who forgives sins. It is Jesus who becomes the sinless one so that sinners may be freed. It is the Spirit who is the one who applies the truth of Jesus to the believer’s heart, not Jesus who ‘concretizes’ the truth of the Spirit in the world. The Spirit is the one who leads directly to the love and obedience of Jesus and not the other way round. Bevans’ work on the Spirit in the Old Testament and as the one who also in some senses precedes Jesus has some value and is not dissimilar to Coffey’s work on the different taxes of the Trinity. In mission, as we have previously noted, it is possible to say that the Spirit precedes Christ in a qualified way, preparing humanity to receive him and his truth, but only as the one who was also sent by Christ, and then through Christ, forming the church. The problem with Bevans’ proposal is that he fails to include the sending work of the Son described in the Gospels, which culminates in Pentecost. So whereas, with Bevans, we affirm the sending and preceding work of the Spirit, we also emphasise Jesus Christ as the one who sends. The divergence of Bevans’ and Del Colle’s work is apparent.

Despite Bevans’ problematic Christology, many of his observations regarding pneumatology in relation to ecclesiology, mission and evangelism are germane to our argument. The church is a community of believers who share and continue Jesus’ mission to the world. (However, for Bevans, as we have seen, this mission is to give shape to the life-giving, challenging, renewing and uniting power of the Spirit. In contrast to this, we see this mission as God’s mission in Jesus, which is unique to him, as the one sent by the Father, in the Spirit, to bring salvation to the world.) He emphasizes that the church’s task is not to ‘do it all’, but to point, name, witness to
and cooperate with God’s powerful and transforming presence.’ Proclaiming Jesus is proclaiming knowledge of Jesus, ‘and the knowledge of Jesus is to be transformed, like him, by God's out-reaching love in the Holy Spirit.’ Bevans quotes Taylor again who comments insightfully, ‘Our theology would improve if we thought more of the church being given to the Spirit than of the Spirit being given to the church.’

One of the strengths of Bevans’ work, which is lacking in Kim’s work on Indian pneumatology, is his emphasis on both the transcendence and the immanence of the Spirit, which he describes as ‘transcending immanence’. The Spirit is God thoroughly involved in the world (immanence). This involvement constantly amazes and challenges us, but at the same time the Spirit as God is beyond our capacity to control, grasp or express (transcendence). The Spirit is not only the S/spirit within, but God as Spirit given to the world. Bevans argues that the church must work as the Spirit works, being involved in all aspects of life, in the midst of history, and as a living sign in its community of creation’s future. He makes the same distinction as Bosch between mission and evangelism, differentiating between what he calls ‘cosmic mission’ and ‘evangelism’, the task of proclaiming the good news of the gospel.

The church's mission is world mission in the fullest sense; one might even speak of cosmic mission. Nation building, earth keeping, ecological action, education, preserving and transforming culture, enhancing the quality of life, cultivation of the arts - all these are the fields of activity for those who are given to the Spirit. The church's mission, like God's mission, arises out of passion for all that is and can be. It does not replace God's mission, of course, but it points to and cooperates with God's activity with all its heart.

But at the same time, he roots this in the practice of evangelism, warning that we cannot shirk the task of evangelism – ‘woe to us if we do not preach the gospel (1 Cor. 9:16).’ Again it appears that Bevans is drawing on Bosch’s categories that we noted at the beginning of the chapter. The notion of witness is foundational as we have seen. He also includes the other concepts of invitation, response, dialogue, the primacy of people over institutions, contextual evangelism and the preaching and

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624 Taylor, J., Go-Between p.133 cited in Bevans, God Inside Out, p.4.
625 Bevans, S., God Inside Out, p.6.
practising of justice, all of which he links to the work of the Spirit. So he writes that evangelism needs to be rooted in inculturation and dialogue at all levels. Invitation and dialogue is to be carried out in all humility, the attitude of the church being crucial. Bevans writes, ‘Mission carried out in obedience to the Spirit is the “mission in bold humility”’ that David Bosch wrote about so eloquently and lived so convincingly: “We know only in part, but we do know.”

Mission and evangelism carried out in bold humility goes forward not through ‘strategies’ or ‘worldly powers’ but through the ‘persuading, cajoling presence of the Spirit, with the power that comes from vulnerability and openness’. Bevans talks of the passion for mission being a passion of ‘relationship’ defined not by being and doing ‘for’, but being and doing ‘with’. This is not a passive or feeble attitude, but one which will engage with and challenge systems and structures that destroy. It will mean opposing injustice, being involved in political processes, building communities of solidarity and resistance. Aligning ourselves with the Spirit is ‘to take the risks involved in hope, in joy, and in fearlessness.’ The calling of people out of sinfulness is not done out of judgment or superiority, but out of a conviction of the sinner’s ‘basic goodness and tragic “missing the mark”’ and a belief in the fundamental holiness of creation.627 These are themes that we will pick up in chapter six.

For Bevans, following the leading of the Spirit means going in directions that may seem strange and uncomfortable, and being responsive to the unpredictability of that leading. “Unless the missionary movement can be responsive to the unpredictability of the Holy Spirit,” wrote Max Warren, “it will cease to be a movement.”628 The Spirit works in ways we cannot foreknow, and sometimes cannot define, unfolding possibilities, bringing newness and creativity and challenge to people and situations. He writes,

[the Spirit's unpredictable and unsettling lead will never violate the “logic of salvation” - it will never contradict the truth of Christ or suspend his law of love. But mission in partnership with and obedience to God Inside Out might reveal depths to that “logic” that human minds could never come to by

626 Bosch, D., Transforming Mission, p.489 cited in Bevans, S., God Inside Out p.6
627 Bevans, S., God Inside Out, p.6.
themselves. Who in Jerusalem, through their own insight, would have concluded that even Gentiles could be saved?... [T]he Spirit lavished through Jesus turns his disciples inside out as they include unthinkable people and go to unthinkable places. Thinking missiologically about the Holy Spirit can turn the church inside out, perhaps making it more responsive to where God is really leading it in today's world.’

All of these are valuable and pertinent observations arising from Bevans’ work on the Spirit: the involvement of the church in the world, the emphasis on holistic mission, on the practice of justice and challenging the unjust structures in the world, on following the leading of the unpredictable Spirit, on the imperative to speak in humility. These themes will re-emerge in our dialogical model of mission. The weakness of Bevans’ argument lies, as we have seen, in his Christology and in his emphasis on continuity at the expense of difference, discontinuity and dialectic. Thus, he claims that Christ’s mission is continuous with the Spirit without identifying how it is different, that the church’s mission is continuous with Christ’s without articulating how it also cannot be simply equated with the mission of Christ, that the creation is ‘holy’ without describing how it is also unholy, and that Christians are ‘in relation with’ those of other faiths simply on the grounds that we share an existential religious questioning which is a gift of the Spirit. Bevans claims that the Spirit works in all creation, but fails to acknowledge that the creation is marred and distorted by sin. He does not attempt to tackle the complex issues of how we might say that the Spirit works ‘outside the church’ and what that might mean, if anything, on the grounds that all that the Spirit does points to Christ. Throughout his essay, there is no mention of the Father and the reality of coming into relation with the Father as sons and daughters and co-heirs with Christ, and, as we have seen, he neither refers to the atoning work of Christ on the cross nor the new work of God through Jesus Christ and through the Spirit at Pentecost. This is a model based on inspiration but weak on incarnation, or rather on the Incarnation as a dogmatic foundation for missiology. Whilst some of his work on the Spirit and mission is valuable, these dogmatic concerns need to be answered more rigorously. As we have seen, Spirit Christology gives us a far more robust foundation for this.

629 Bevans, S., God Inside Out, p.7.
Other contemporary models of mission based on the work of Christ and the Spirit echo many of the concerns we have raised in previous chapters on the basis of Del Colle’s proposals: a theology of Christ and the Spirit, a theology of experience, a transformational or holistic view of mission, the liberating work of the Spirit, an emphasis on the human agency in mission, the anointing of the Spirit for mission, the notions of unity and diversity etc. Some examples of how this has been developed is exemplified in the work of Yong, Macchia and Studebaker.

Yong utilizes some of the insights of Spirit Christology in conjunction with Gelpi’s theology of experience for a contemporary model of mission. He views Gelpi’s understanding of conversion as an ongoing transformative process as especially significant, as this acts as a basis for a holistic Pentecostal understanding of mission. This is something, however, which is developed more in Yong’s later work. In his earlier work, *Beyond the Impasse: Toward a Pneumatological Theology of Religions*, Yong constructs a pneumatological model of mission in relation to other religions. Like Kim, his emphasis in this work is less on Spirit Christology and more on the work of the Spirit in the world. His proposal is that, in dialogue with the other, we should first focus on what the Spirit is doing rather than attend to issues of Christology. Yong has three axioms. The first is that ‘God’s presence and activity in creation speaks to the universality of the Spirit.’\(^{630}\) The second is that ‘God’s Spirit is the life-breath of the imago Dei in every human being and the presupposition of all human relationships and communities.’\(^{631}\) And the third that the ‘religions of the world…are providentially sustained by the Spirit of God for divine purposes.’\(^{632}\) Mission then becomes a dialogical pursuit based on the gift of discernment, of discerning where and how the Spirit of God is working as it is the Spirit that is the ‘meeting point between Christian and non-Christian, and between both and God.’\(^{633}\) In respect of this particular thesis, Habets finds Yong’s ‘appeal to the category of pneumatology as a way beyond the impasse created by Christian truth claims engaging but problematic.’\(^{634}\) Thus, while acknowledging the interest of Yong’s

\(^{631}\) Yong, A., *Beyond the Impasse*, p.45.
\(^{632}\) Yong, A., *Beyond the Impasse*, p.46.
\(^{633}\) Yong, A., *Beyond the Impasse*, p.100.
work, he sees Yong in danger of both creating a religion of the Spirit and an implicit tri-theism.\textsuperscript{635}

In his later work (\textit{The Spirit Poured Out on All Flesh}) Yong modifies his earlier pneumatocentrism and introduces a Spirit Christology. His explication of Spirit Christology however is brief in comparison to the extensive work of Del Colle and Coffey and he does not discuss the dogmatic complexities of Spirit Christology in relation to other doctrines such as Christology proper or the Trinity, for example. In Yong’s Spirit Christology, he acknowledges the need to adhere to Logos Christology, but at the same time develops a theology of anointing from the Lukan material.\textsuperscript{636} So like Del Colle and Coffey, he advocates that Spirit Christology be seen as a complementary Christological model to Logos Christology, but in practice, his focus is the former and not the latter. Yong develops a theology of anointing in line with much of what we have already discussed and a transformational holistic view of mission that includes the experience of the Spirit. The Synoptic material, and in this case, the Gospel of Luke, provides Yong with the material for a Spirit Christology. ‘Jesus is the revelation of God precisely as the man anointed by the Spirit of God to herald and usher in the reign of God.’\textsuperscript{637} This anointing in turn is passed on to Jesus’ followers. With a different emphasis from the pneumatological model of mission in \textit{Beyond the Impasse}, Yong develops a trinitarian Pentecostal soteriology; one that is ‘christologically directed and pneumatologically driven’.\textsuperscript{638} Baptism in the Spirit becomes a metaphor for salvation, but for Yong this is inextricably linked to the person of Christ. He views salvation as personal, familial, ecclesial, material, social, cosmic and eschatological.\textsuperscript{639} Moreover, this is rooted in the experience of the Spirit; ‘the pentecostal experience of the Spirit is the experience of the transformation of lives and communities as confronted by the living God.’\textsuperscript{640}

Macchia’s work, like Yong’s, is a specifically Pentecostal theology, although he hopes that this will have global significance. His emphasis, like Yong’s, is on Spirit-baptism, which Macchia defines as a trinitarian act that is not distinct from conversion, but integral to it. Spirit-baptism is not an optional adjunct for the justified person, but the key to faith in Christ and to ‘our empowerment for gifted service in

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{635} Habets, M., \textit{The Anointed Son}, p.237.
  \item \textsuperscript{636} Yong, A., \textit{The Spirit Poured Out}, pp.86-88.
  \item \textsuperscript{637} Yong, A., \textit{The Spirit Poured Out}, p.86.
  \item \textsuperscript{638} Yong, A., \textit{The Spirit Poured Out}, p.91.
  \item \textsuperscript{639} Yong, A., \textit{The Spirit Poured Out}, p.97.
  \item \textsuperscript{640} Yong, A., \textit{The Spirit Poured Out}, p.81.
\end{itemize}
Macchia argues that with Spirit-baptism as an organizing principle, divine love then becomes the centre of the Christian life and the key to mission. Spirit-baptism is ‘this love that is at the substance of the power for mission.’ The heart of mission for Macchia is the infilling of the Spirit and the transforming experience of God’s love and forgiveness which comes from the Spirit. This is not dissimilar to Coffey’s theology of the Spirit and love; love of God and love of neighbour. Yet again, this is a transformational model of mission, the work of Christ and the Spirit applicable to all aspects of life and one that Macchia roots in the church. The emphasis in this model is not simply the individual experience of the baptism of the Spirit which is the process of conversion, but that the individual is transformed by the Spirit of the crucified and risen Christ within the church. It is a trinitarian, ecclesial and community model of mission. The church ‘will participate by Spirit baptism in Christ’s reign of self-giving love as revealed in the way of the cross.’ The reign committed to the Son in self-giving love by the Father and given back to the Father by the Son in self-sacrificial love is opened through Spirit-baptism to the church that humbly accepts it as a “kingdom of priests” and prophets. The Spirit-baptized church “incarnates” this reign in living witness to the crucified Lord of glory. In the living koinonia of love in the Spirit, the church embodies and bears witness to the reign of God in the world. Macchia’s work is a welcome addition to Pentecostal perspectives on Spirit-baptism. His emphasis on the Christological and ecclesiological work of the Spirit, and the Spirit as the love of God at work in our lives, is in line with much of our argument thus far. Moreover, the explication of a model of mission based on the love of God for the world and the love of the church for others is a crucial insight. These are themes which we will return to in Chapter Six.

Steven Studebaker develops Macchia’s work, claiming that Spirit-baptism is the fundamental soteriological promise based on his exegesis of Acts. 2.17-21 and Joel 2.28-32. In an argument that we have already encountered in Yong’s work, he argues against the model of justification associated with Protestant scholasticism in

642 Macchia, F., Baptized in the Spirit, p.259.
643 Macchia, F., Baptized in the Spirit, p.271.
644 Macchia, F., Baptized in the Spirit, p.162.
which Christ is seen as the achiever of salvation and the Spirit as the applier of salvation in a two-fold movement that bifurcates the work of Christ and the Spirit. He claims that this model, in fact, subordinates the work of the Spirit in the work of salvation. Justification is achieved by Christ and sanctification by the Spirit, and thus justification is divorced from the work of the Spirit. With Macchia and Yong, he opines that salvation is ‘comprehensively pneumatological.’ This he names ‘redemptive soteriology’ not wishing to assign pre-eminence either to Christ or the Spirit. ‘Christ and the Spirit achieve salvation and actualize it in the believer. This salvation consists of purification from sin, renovation of life, and restoration to fellowship with the triune God. These aspects correspond to the death, resurrection and ascension of Christ.’ Justification in these terms is ‘the act of God’s Spirit creating new life and sanctification in the person.’ This Pentecostal perspective on the Spirit and salvation, however, has a different emphasis from Del Colle’s and Coffey’s that we encountered in Chapter One. On the basis of a Western model of Spirit Christology, Del Colle argues more for what Studebaker would call an ‘achiever-applier’ model of salvation. We have argued for the role of the Spirit in any model of the atonement, that we understand that the work of the Spirit in Christ in the cross and the resurrection. One caution however, is that the work of the Spirit is not then seen to eclipse or take precedence over the work of Christ on the cross. It is the proper mission of the Son and not the Spirit to take on flesh and die in place of sinful humanity. It is in Christ that sins are forgiven. It is in sharing in his death and resurrection through baptism that we are made new. In all this, the Spirit is at work, and Del Colle and Coffey have demonstrated that it is possible to have what Studebaker calls the achiever-applier model of salvation without actually subordinating the person and work of the Spirit to that of Christ.

In summary, we have surveyed a number of contemporary models of mission, highlighting their contributions to the question of Christ, the Spirit and mission in the contemporary West. We have noted a model based on the historical Jesus in Frost and Hirsch, a model based on a more immanentist and less Christological view of the Spirit in the work of Kim, Bevans’ Spirit Christology that has a greater emphasis on

649 Studebaker, S.M., ‘Pentecostal Soteriology’ p.266.
the Spirit than Christ and various Pentecostal perspectives on mission in the work of Yong, Macchia and Studebaker. When discussing the work of the Spirit and mission, it is attractive to emphasize the work of the Spirit as the free, endlessly creative, boundary-breaking person of the Trinity. However, Lesslie Newbigin issues a salutary warning.

[The Spirit is the Spirit of Christ. The decisive mark of his presence is the confession that Jesus Christ is Lord (1 Cor.12:1-3, cf. 1 Jn. 4:1-3). His coming in power is the fruit of hearing and believing the Gospel of Jesus Christ crucified and risen. He takes the things of Christ and shows them to us. He leads men to Christ, in whom we are baptized into one body, the body of Christ... The Spirit binds men to Jesus...Mere vitality is not necessarily the mark of the presence of the Holy Spirit. Everything which grows vigorously is not thereby proved to be of God. The endless proliferation of new sects in the name of the freedom of the Spirit is not the same as what St. Paul calls the building up of the body in love (Eph. 4:16).]

The relationship of Christ to the Spirit and of Christ and the Spirit to the church and then to mission is complex. We wish to adhere to the maxim that all the work of the Spirit is necessarily christological and that there can be no Christology without pneumatology. Through our discussion of the mutual and coinherent missions of the Son and the Spirit, I have also suggested that there may be times when we understand that in some ways the work of the Spirit precedes Christ, more particularly in the praeparatio evangelica. The Spirit is the one who leads in mission, but is not separated or divorced from Christ. In all the models of mission that we have surveyed, there are strengths and weaknesses. There are a number of challenges for anyone wishing to articulate a theology of mission in relation to Christ and the Spirit: how to express the work of the Spirit and the work of Christ as being distinct but inseparable; how to express the relationship of the individual to the church and vice versa; how to define the church in relation to mission. In addition, we face the question of how we might express the work of the Spirit ‘outside’ the church and how we engage in the task of discernment.

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651 Newbigin, L., Trinitarian Doctrine, pp.79-80.
Yong summarizes the rationale for retrieving and appropriating Spirit Christology. He argues that first, Spirit Christology ‘reengages the complex question Jesus posed through the entirety of the gospel witness, “Who do you say that I am?” and results in a new appreciation for his humanity.’ Second, and in respect of the debate we have already discussed, ‘it requires us to locate patristic consensus in specific Hellenistic contexts even while it enables us to approach the christological question afresh using contemporary anthropological and existential categories.’ Third, ‘it participates in the renaissance of pneumatology in contemporary theology even as it contributes to the quest for a robustly trinitarian theology. Fourth, it provides bridges to the practical relevance and the implications for Christian living – Jesus as the man of the Spirit models our lives as anointed by the Spirit – not as well developed by traditional christological accounts.652

We have surveyed and assessed various models of mission in the light of Spirit Christology. Yong, in his summary, brings out the way in which Spirit Christology provides a framework for a more dialectical approach than we have seen in some of the previous models. Our focus on Christology and pneumatology means that we do not lose sight of the fundamental Christological question, “Who do you say that I am?” whilst at the same time, as we have seen, allowing us to acknowledge the full humanity of Christ. Moreover, Spirit Christology allows us to emphasize the historical Jesus and the importance of the work of the Spirit in applying the truths of the gospel to each generation in fresh and relevant ways. On the Lukan portrayal of Christ and the Spirit Bosch writes,

[Luke’s community] realized that the following of Jesus, in completely different circumstances, could not consist in a simple, slavish imitation of Jesus or a reproduction of the past but had to be reinterpreted…Luke realized that Jesus’ mission and ministry had to [be] reinterpreted for the church of his own time, and he believed that this reinterpretation would be mediated by the Spirit. He did not introduce this notion only at Pentecost. The ministry of the earthly Jesus is already portrayed in terms of the initiative and guidance of the Spirit.653

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653 Bosch, D., Transforming Mission, p.113.
Smail argues, the Spirit is an ‘artist whose one subject is the Son, and who is concerned to paint countless portraits of that subject on countless human canvases using the paints and brushes provided by countless human cultures and historical situations.’\textsuperscript{654} Or as Del Colle posits, the identity of Christ is still eschatologically outstanding and therefore does not entirely foreclose the meaning of that identity in the church in history.\textsuperscript{655}

A pneumatic Christology gives us an understanding of mission that allows for the inbreaking and growing work of the Spirit with an equal emphasis on the cooperative work of the church. In addition, we are able to articulate a theology of transcendence and immanence, of the universal and the particular, of the one and the many. Moreover, we also acknowledge that as we live in an age where ‘totalising metaphysics and metanarratives are dismissed’, in ‘a pragmatic state of intellectual and moral skepticism’\textsuperscript{656} we need a model of mission that is responsive to our particular circumstances; one that is able to express certitude whilst at the same time listening to the other; one that is rooted in a dialogical approach without losing sight of the reality that it is the love of Christ that compels us. In the final chapter we will explore some of these principles in more detail, developing our work on Christ and the Spirit in respect of these concepts and giving some examples of how this might affect the practice of mission.

\textsuperscript{654} Smail, T., \textit{The Giving Gift}, p.77.
\textsuperscript{655} Del Colle, \textit{Christ and the Spirit}, p.206.
\textsuperscript{656} Dabney, D.L., ‘Starting with the Spirit’, p.13.
CHAPTER SIX

THE IMPORTANCE OF HUMAN BEING

The Christian faith is a historical faith. God communicates his revelation to people through human beings and through events, not by means of abstract propositions. This is another way of saying that the biblical faith, both Old and New Testament, is “incarnational”, the reality of God entering into human affairs.657

Human agency and humans in relation

In this final chapter we focus on the yield of Spirit Christology for a model of mission in terms of practice in mission and evangelism, focusing specifically on dialogue, interpersonal relations, and the significance of human agency. Drawing together the themes that have emerged throughout, I argue that Spirit Christology allows us to articulate a dialogical model of mission, based on incarnation and anointing and inbreaking and response. It is my contention that model which includes all these aspects of mission is not only more faithful to the biblical witness but is more suited to address the exigencies of our time. We have been discussing throughout the importance of articulating the participation of humanity in the mission of God, while at the same time asserting that God is in control of the mission through the work of the Spirit in the world. I have argued that we should understand the life of Christ as a prototype and paradigm of the human life, and that this life is exemplified by a human life empowered and filled to the full measure with the Holy Spirit. Then we are able to understand our own lives as being fulfilled in Christ. The goal of humanity is to be restored to God our creator and Father, and as sons and daughters in the Son, we become ambassadors of Christ in the world. In this it is the love of Christ, communicated by the Spirit that compels us. The sending at the heart of the Trinity extends to our own lives and to the church through the coinherent missions of the Son and the Spirit. Del Colle describes it in the following way:

657 Bosch, D., Transforming Mission, p.181.
Spirit-christology, therefore, functions as a dogmatic model in which the convergence of the christological and pneumatological missions point to the connection between the divine economy and the social praxis of the church. The witness and deeds of the church in mission are human actions that participate in the agency of the risen Christ through the energizing power of the Holy Spirit. They are historically specific but full of the eschatological life of the Spirit. The relationship between salvation from God and liberation in history is indirect but profound. It entails the mediation of divine agency – specifically, the “two hands of God” through the human agency of the People of God. Such agency means that human emancipatory action in history may be a sign of God’s salvation, the parabolic manifestation of the Holy Spirit who is the liberating grace of God – “For the law of the spirit, the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, has freed you from the law of sin and death.” (Rom 8:2)

First, Spirit Christology therefore allows us to say that the ‘witness and deeds of the church in mission are human actions that participate in the agency of the risen Christ through the energizing power of the Holy Spirit.’ Christologically underpinned, a model of mission sees the crucified and risen Christ as ‘the human ground in God for the ultimate transfiguration of created reality.’ It is rooted in the salvific events of Christ; the agency of the risen Lord through the crucifixion and resurrection is all-embracing and fundamental, so that humanity may commune fully with God. The Holy Spirit’s work is as the agent of ‘inclusion, conversion and transfiguration’ and it is the Spirit who works in the various discrete concerns of human life which are both inculturated and historically specific. She unites the human with Christ through ‘the divine inhabitation.’ Humanity is part of this divine work, obviously as the object of salvation, but also as ‘those who are anointed with the Spirit even as Jesus was so anointed’. Human beings are bearers of the Spirit and enter into the process of inclusion, conversion, and transfiguration; in a fundamental sense through their identification with Christ in baptism (justification/regeneration), and in ‘a processive and discrete sense through their immersion into and life in the Spirit

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(sanctification/mission).

We do not collapse pneumatology into anthropology, but ‘rather through the insights of Spirit-christology the humanum is the locus for the temporal (and eschatological!) missions of the Son and the Spirit.’

Human actions become part of God’s liberating action in history as we relate one to another.

Secondly, therefore, our identification in Christ and with Christ means that we also view humanity as persons in relation. Our model of mission is based, not just on the transformation of an individual human life, but of humanity in community. We do not understand human beings in individualistic terms but as persons moulded and shaped in communion with others. Murray Rae writes,

[a]s it is for Christ’s human life so may it also be for ours. The formation of persons, the realisation of what we were created to be, does not take place in a self-directed and individualistic manner, but rather in relation. People are formed in community, or we might say, in communion. Their formation is, in large part, a function of the company they keep…Paul…proposes an account of individual formation that is directed by the Spirit and relentlessly relational. True freedom, and thus also a true and faithful human agency is enabled and exercised in communion or koinonia with God and with neighbour.

Human existence is ‘relentlessly relational’. A new existence in Christ is a christologically oriented and pneumatically shaped relational existence. This principle is also central to our model of mission. So far the categories that we have used to describe mission are all interpersonal and relational: presence, witness, invitation, response, dialogue, people and not institutions, attention to context and the preaching and practice of justice.

Thirdly, a missiology rooted in Christ and the Spirit will mean that our pattern of relationality will be rooted in the person of Christ and his example. If we understand this pneumatically, the witness of the church as the Christ-like ones will be characterized by the power of the Spirit, but this power is for weakness, endurance, perseverance and suffering as much as it is for signs and wonders, healings and deliverances. The gift of the Spirit is as much for the Christlike character

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659 Del Colle, R., Christ and the Spirit p.205.
of humility and self-sacrifice in regard to others, as it is for the preaching of the gospel in power. If mission is fundamentally relational then our attitudes towards others must lie at the heart of it, and this, as an endorsement and authentication of the truth of our message, will then be a liberating force in the lives of others. Our attitude towards others, which should be characterized by Christlike love, will become foundational to the integrity of our mission. Ford and Hardy sum this up.

At the heart of human dignity is the free respect given by one person to another, recognizing their otherness, their distinctive life, the irreducible pluralism of being persons in relation. The other must be allowed to speak, to act, to understand, to be free to respond or not. There is not a simple symmetrical relationship of equality, but an asymmetrical one of looking up to the other as transcending oneself. Preferably, this should be mutual but, as our interpretation of Paul’s letter to the Philippians showed, at the centre of his concept of Christian living is the determination, even in the absence of mutuality, to persevere in respecting others, and to take the role of the servant to the point of rejection and death.662

Or as John V. Taylor puts it, ‘Christ-like evangelism consists in the passionate serving of the personhood of men in protest against all the depersonalizing pressures of the world.’663

Fourthly, this relational humanity acknowledges the importance of our bodily and material existence. Everything we do is done in and with our physicality in a material world. We cannot be relational without ‘things’. God is spirit and works in and through our spirits but by the Spirit inhabits our bodily existence. This is why we emphasize presence, witness, invitation and dialogue. These are uncompromisingly rooted in the particulars of life now, in the ‘thisness’ of our own unique existence. Because of this, words may not be separated from deeds. Bosch writes,

[t]here is no single way to witness to Christ….The word may therefore never be divorced from the deed, the example, the “Christian presence”, the witness

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of life. It is the “Word made flesh” that is the gospel. The deed without the word is dumb; the word without the deed is empty. Words interpret deeds and deeds validate words, which does not mean that every deed must have a word attached to it, nor every word a deed.664

Moreover, if words and deeds cannot be separated from ‘who I am’ and the community of disciples, then a good model of mission will also be able to account for the diversity and particularity of human existence. We have argued that a contemporary model of mission for the West will need all these elements; that a sceptical, pluralist, individualistic, consumerist and liberal society will need a model of mission that allows for unity and diversity, for certitude and open-endedness, humble proclamation and dialogue and one that reinterprets the idea of the uniqueness of the individual, so that ‘individualism’ is no longer a dominating and (ironically) a depersonalizing principle, but one that understands that human beings are only truly free and truly human in loving relation to God and to one another.

One of the difficulties that we have noted with some models of mission is the failure to emphasize both the transcendence and the immanence of God or to acknowledge both the universal and the particular, and we have been arguing that Spirit Christology gives us a way to speak about both, without emphasizing one over against the other. Mission that is characterized by both incarnation and anointing will be able to articulate the work of God in both the universal and the particular, the transcendent and the immanent. Spirit Christology gives us a way of speaking of mission in terms of unity and diversity, the universal and the particular, of certitude and open-endedness. It is to this that we now turn.

**The Universal and the Particular: Unity and Diversity**

We begin by returning to the work of Gunton, who offers an extensive consideration of the universal and the particular in relation to Christ and the Spirit, with an equal emphasis on both the second and third persons of the Trinity. In *The Actuality of Atonement*, Gunton argues that a theology of Christ and the Spirit should underpin a trinitarian understanding of both the universal and the particular. In a discussion of

how we may understand the atonement trinitarianly, he first brings out the cosmic significance of Christ. He notes that many of the theologies of the New Testament (Paul, John, and Hebrews) root their accounts of salvation in this cosmic significance: ‘Christ is the mediator of salvation because he is also the mediator of creation.’ When this mediator of creation takes flesh, then he is related not only to all flesh, but to the whole order of creation. The eternal Word comes in person, and in time, thus the particularity of Christ is crucial to the economy of salvation, but as this person, Christ’s purpose is to free the whole of creation from slavery to sin and corruption; ‘to renew and reorder the entire creation and to redirect creation to its original and eschatological destiny.’ Gunton contends that underlying ‘such a conception of the relation to the world is the Trinitarian bedrock: to be part of the creation means to be related to the Father through the Son and in the Spirit.’ As he goes on to discuss, the cosmic nature of Christ becomes meaningful in the enhypostatic humanity of Jesus. The ontological relationship that he outlines between the creator and the created that is grounded in the Word ‘and reordered in the enhypostatic humanity of Jesus’ must also become ontic…Christology universalises: but the universal salvation must then take concrete shape in particular parts of the creation.

For Gunton, the particularity of Christ is actualized in and by the Spirit, whose role it is to particularise the work of Christ in creation. Gunton’s view (held also by Davidson and discussed in Chapter Three) is that the particular work of the Spirit in an individual’s life is the basis of free response to God. Gunton describes the work of the Spirit as the creation of space, ‘in which the creation has room to breathe and expand, to move in freedom to its appointed end.’ So Gunton expresses the work of the Spirit as specifying the way in which the universal atoning work becomes real. These ideas are developed in *The One, the Three and the Many*, in which he explicates in more detail the idea of particularity in relation to the work of Christ and the Spirit. The purpose of this book is to demonstrate that it is through Christ and the Spirit ‘who bring us and our world, perfected, to the Father, that people and things

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666 Gunton, C., *The Actuality of Atonement*, p.169. One of the recurrent themes in Gunton’s work is the eschatological hope and promise in the giving of the Spirit. The Spirit’s work is not just to relate the individual to God, but ‘realise in time the conditions of the age to come’ and to bring the creation to perfection. See Gunton, C., *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1991), p.50.  
can come to be that which they are particularly called to be.' Following Irenaeus, Gunton sees God’s will as a particularizing will; ‘a will giving rise to the existence and directedness to perfection of the world and the beings within it.’ The significance of this is that it gives rise to a theology based on the particularity of human life. On the one hand, this disallows a separation between divine will and created particularity, and on the other hand, it emphasizes the centrality of the material and embodiment in matter. The relation of God to the world is enacted through the Son and the Spirit ‘holding the world in continuing relation to God the Father.’ He sees this relating as a dynamic and perichoretic interaction between the Son and the Spirit, which then opens up all kinds of possibilities.

For Gunton the significance of this is that it brings a theology of creation to the fore. The temporal and the spatial are infused with the divine economic movement of the Son and the Spirit. In this perichoretic universe, the persons of the Trinity interact dynamically and eternally together; the universality of Christ and the particularity of the Spirit inhere. Although Gunton’s work on universality, particularity and the Trinity stresses the cosmic nature of Christ, this is not at the expense of particularity. His emphasis is on a theology of creation, and the importance of understanding the work of God in the material, temporal and spatial world. The work of the cosmic Christ and the Spirit is to bring the created world to perfection. This is pertinent to our understanding of mission for a number of reasons. First it roots missiology in a theology of creation, where the creation is understood as God’s good creation which he is transforming through Christ and the Spirit. Any contemporary theology of mission will need to have a robust doctrine of creation as ecological concerns are now often at the forefront of political and social concern. Secondly, it gives us a cosmic and universal perspective on mission, which we do not wish to lose sight of, while also emphasizing the particularity of the work of God in humanity. Gunton avoids immanentist views of the Spirit, arguing as he does, for the bestowal of the Holy Spirit on creation as gift, but at the same time, is able to articulate a theology of particularity. Thirdly, therefore, Gunton’s theology is predicated on the premise that the material world is the ‘place where meaning,

669 Gunton, C., *The One, the Three and the Many* (Cambridge: CUP, 2002), p.73.
670 Gunton, C., *The One, the Three and the Many* p.54.
671 Gunton, C., *The One, the Three and the Many* p.54.
including theological meaning, can be found. The Spirit works in and through the material world, renewing and reshaping, and bringing creation to the perfection which is the will of God. The centrality of the embodied and the material, historical locatedness and more specifically, the particularity and complexity of human lives, communities and relations are all central concepts in our understanding of the meaningfulness of Christ and the Spirit in the contemporary world. The Good News is not good news for humanity unless it is actualized in daily lives. Fourthly, Gunton’s Irenaean emphasis on the work of Christ and the Spirit bringing humanity to fulfilled existence, true freedom and to what we have been created to be, has a particular appeal for a society that is now so focused on the notion of ‘self’; self-improvement; self-fulfillment; nurturing and caring for one’s own needs, bodies, material well-being etc. We often see this in its narcissistic form in our culture; an obsession with the self that excludes the needs of others, or an obsession with the body that becomes all-consuming. This is, of course, in opposition to the message of the gospel where the fulfilled life is the Christ-centred life. However, a model of mission that is able to transform destructive and distorted views of ‘the self’ into something which will result in individuals being able to become other-centred will be more effective in the West than one in which any notion of the self is dismissed. The love of God for individual persons is at the heart of the gospel, and is the root of self-love in its redeemed form which, in this form, becomes a liberating love of others. (Mk. 12.29-31) The connection and interplay between a theology of the individual and the community is essential for a Western European context and we will develop the idea of relationality below.

Although Gunton’s work is valuable for his theology of creation and his emphasis on the eschatological Spirit, he does however, tend to ascribe universality to Christ and particularity to the Spirit. With our emphasis on the coinherent missions of the Spirit and the Son, I wish to attribute both universality and particularity to both the Son and the Spirit. Theologies of the universal and the particular are often developed in a way that suggests that particularity might be appropriated to the Spirit, and universality to Christ or in some cases, exactly the opposite. Although this may appear to be a neat division, it avoids the complexities of the truth that universality is a concept that we can discuss in relation to both Christ and the Spirit, as is

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particularity. It is problematic to assign only one either to Christ or to the Spirit. This is illustrated in a discussion by Lord in relation to the work of the Spirit in what he calls the Pentecostal-Moltmann dialogue, where one party sees the work of the Spirit in mission primarily in the ‘particular’ and the ‘transcendent’ and the other in the ‘universal’ and the ‘immanent’.673 Lord notes that where the Pentecostals understand mission as a work of the Spirit solely through the church in ‘signs and wonders’ and conversions (the ‘particular’ and the ‘transcendent’), Moltmann emphasizes the work of the Spirit in ‘creation’ and outside the church (the ‘universal’ and the ‘immanent’).674 Lord proposes a compromise with the notion of ‘polarity’: when two seemingly mutually exclusive concepts when combined form something similar to a magnetic ‘field’. 675 Thus he proposes that in order to hold the concepts of the universal and the particular, the transcendental and the immanent together within our understanding of the work of the Spirit, we should understand them in terms of ‘polarity’. He writes,

the movement between these polarities represent (sic) the two movements we identified with Moltmann (particular to universal) and Pentecostal scholars (universal to particular)…Theologically, the “particular” can be seen as grounded in Christology and the “universal” grounded in the “kingdom of God”. Both are further grounded in the Holy Spirit who provides the essential link between the two.676

Thus Lord holds together the universal and the particular both grounded in the Holy Spirit in creative and dynamic tension, rather than speaking of them in a bifurcated manner. The work of the Spirit is in both the universal and the particular. At Pentecost, the Spirit falls on a particular group of people at a particular time, for a particular purpose. At the same time, we see the Spirit unifying disparate ethnic

675 Lord bases his definition of polarity on John McIntyre’s work. McIntyre distinguishes between a ‘polarity’ and a ‘contradiction’. With a contradiction, two options are ‘mutually exclusive and it is logically impossible for any entity to be both at the same time’. A polarity however, is defined in the following way; ‘while the pure forms of the two members of the antithesis seem to be opposed and negative to one another, in fact they form the foci of what in magentics would constitute a “field”’. McIntyre, J., The Shape of Pneumatology (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1997), p.211 quoted in Lord, A., ‘The Pentecostal-Moltmann Dialogue’ pp.284-5.
groups with one supernatural language, and Peter claiming that this particular event of Pentecost is the fulfilment of the prophecy that the Spirit would be poured out ‘on all flesh’. The Spirit does not only fall on particular people for particular tasks, but is also the same eschatological Spirit who is working to bring all humanity to the knowledge of God, and all things together under him.

In the same way, Jesus Christ is the ground for both a theology of the universal and a theology of the particular. The reality of the man Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh, at a particular time in a particular place in a particular way is an unparalleled example of God working through a specific, historically located reality. On the other hand, Scripture testifies to Christ as being the one ‘through whom all things were made’, who declares himself to be the way, the truth and the life, in whom all things hold together and through whom ‘God will reconcile to himself all things.’ (Jn 1.3; Jn. 14.6; Col 1.17,19) The once and always historical figure of Jesus of Nazareth also towers over history as the universal Saviour. If we accept with Spirit Christology that the work of the Spirit and the Son are always coinherent, then we are also bound to acknowledge and articulate both the work of the Son and the Spirit in both the universal and the particular. However, this does not mean that there is no distinction between the work of the Son and the Spirit, and that we cannot differentiate between the roles or tasks of the Son and the Spirit, as we have seen in previous chapters. In the course of this discussion, we will highlight some of these differences. With this in mind, we will develop a theology of particularity both christologically and pneumatologically, starting with the Spirit.

We have noted that on the one hand, the ‘modern age needs a theology of being in which the particular bulks large,’ while on the other, affirming that this theology of being is essentially relational. Among other things, Gunton describes the work of the Spirit as opening out people and things to one another; relating beings and realms that are opposed or separate. This process however, is not one in which otherness or difference is dissolved, but a relation which establishes the other in its true reality. John V. Taylor argues in a similar vein.

My spirit, therefore, is never uniquely mine as are my body, my life, my individuality. It resides only in my relatedness to some other. Spirit is that

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677 Gunton, C., The One, the Three and the Many, p.182.
678 Gunton, C., The One, the Three and the Many, p.182.
which lies between, making both separatedness and conjunction real. It generates a certain quality of charged intensity which from time to time marks every man’s relationship with the world around him and with whatever reality lies within and behind the world.679

Taylor also develops this idea more specifically in terms of the Spirit being the means by which we relate to and come to know other people. He calls the Holy Spirit, ‘the elemental energy of communion itself, within which all separate existences may be made present and personal to each other’.680 Taylor identifies the first essential activity of the Spirit as the one ‘who gives one to the other and makes each really see the other.’681 Thus he argues that there can be no mission without the Spirit as he is the one who opens our eyes to the truth of God and the truth of each other. The Spirit works in our spirits enabling each of us to be truly present to each other and it is the Spirit of God that is the ‘power of communion which enables every other reality, and the God who is within and behind all realities, to be present to us.’682

The Spirit is the one who relates us to others, who crosses boundaries and who opens up people one to another. At the same time he is the one who preserves particularity: richness, variety and autonomy. Gunton writes, ‘This is especially evident in biblical characterisations of the work of the divine Spirit, the perfecting cause of creation.’683 In relation to the church, there is no homogenization of the community of God. It is a particular community (not a collective) into which particular people are initiated by the leading of the Spirit. This is the expression of ‘relational dynamism.’684 The implications of this Gunton notes, is that rather than accepting the world as a fragmented plurality, a theology of the Spirit gives us the possibility of a unified but varied relational existence; a ‘rich complexity rather than a warring Babel’685 where otherness and difference are celebrated rather than annihilated. The particularity of created beings is thus established ‘by the particularity at the heart of the being of the Creator’ 686

683 Gunton, C., The One, p.182.
685 Gunton, C., The One, p.187.
Gunton’s critique of modernism is that particulars become insubstantial because ‘it is assumed that their substantiality can be affirmed only by means of underlying universals which are in modern thought no longer believed to exist.’\textsuperscript{687} In his view, everything hangs on the notion of ‘substance’, and the question that we are faced with is ‘Are the things of our everyday experience substantial?’ His complaint is that ‘most quests for the concept of substance have focussed on that which underlies rather than “the particular that meets the senses”’.\textsuperscript{688} The exception, he notes, is Duns Scotus, who called attention to the ‘thisness’ or ‘haeccitas’ of the individual. The ground of being thus becomes the singular, not the common essence. Gunton attributes the refusal in modern and postmodern thought to acknowledge that a thing is what it is primarily and concretely ‘in its temporal and spatial relationality and limitedness’ to an inadequate doctrine of creation.\textsuperscript{689} Not only does the positing of the goodness and rationality of the temporal and limited follow from a belief in the world as the creation of God, but it gives us a theology in which both the unity and diversity of things can be grounded. He writes,

[m]y suggestion is that something is real – what it is and not another thing – by virtue of the way it is held in being not only by God but also by other things in the particular configurations in space and time in which its being is constituted…This is not a thesis about the transparency of things to the finite human mind but about the concreteness of things in their particular configurations in space and time.\textsuperscript{690}

With a robust doctrine of creation we are able to affirm the goodness and the particularity of being; ‘[e]veryone and everything is what it uniquely is as hypostatic being.’\textsuperscript{691} Our theology of being, however, is one that is infused with the understanding of existence as relational dynamism. The work of the Spirit in this creation is to work in this or that particular life, but the Spirit is also the one who crosses divides and brings unity and understanding. We understand the Spirit working in mission as the one who makes God present to us and us present to one another. The

\textsuperscript{687} Gunton, C., \textit{The One}, p.193.
\textsuperscript{688} Gunton, C., \textit{The One}, p.197.
\textsuperscript{689} Gunton, C., \textit{The One}, p.200.
\textsuperscript{690} Gunton, C., \textit{The One}, p.201.
\textsuperscript{691} Gunton, C., \textit{The One}, p.207.
Spirit is able to bring unity and meeting among people of diverse cultures, languages and backgrounds; this is the ministry of reconciliation in the Spirit. This unity is not a homogenizing unity, but one in which difference and diversity is sustained and celebrated. Pentecost both affirms unity and diversity at one and the same time. Any contemporary model of mission will need to be able to accommodate and celebrate plurality, particularity and diversity whilst at the same time, be able to give an account of the unifying work of Christ and the unity of the church in him. Taylor also highlights the importance of the particularity of the Word, and as we will see, in line with Spirit Christology, firmly roots the Spirit’s work in the person of Christ.

Henceforth [Jesus] is the criterion which makes it safe for us to trust the Spirit’s unpredictable promptings. Whatever else he is up to the Spirit always points to Jesus and makes us see him more clearly...This is how we may recognize the Spirit of God: every spirit which acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, and every spirit which does not thus acknowledge Jesus is not from God. (1 Jn. 4.2-3) If our life of response to the Spirit needs the clarity and particularity of the Word made flesh to give it discrimination, our life in Christ needs the Spirit’s gift of awareness to ensure that it is indeed the living Word we are responding to.692

Thus we see that the particularity of Christ roots the universal work of the Spirit and in a different way, the particularity of the Spirit applies the universal work of Christ.

Gunton argues that the perichoretic, interacting and yet distinctive ways of God working through the Son and the Spirit express the unity-in-variety of the divine economic involvement in the world.693 In Chapter One we noted Lossky’s criticism of the Western church; that Western liturgy leads to an excessive Christocentrism which is then reflected in the life of the Christian. The pentecostal aspect of the church is ‘relegated to an ancillary function vis-à-vis that of Christ.’694 The church is seen to be taken up into the one hypostasis that is Christ, thus obscuring the uniqueness and diversity of human beings, as this diversity is absorbed by the uniformity of conforming to the person of Christ. As we have noted, this criticism is probably

693 Gunton, C., The One, the Three and the Many, p.163.
overdrawn, but Gunton’s view of the unitive and universalizing role of Christ and the particularizing and diversifying role of the Spirit, addresses this issue. The newfound stress on pneumatology now gives space for the uniqueness and diversity of human beings within the one person of Christ that Lossky believes is so lacking in Western ecclesiology. A robust doctrine of creation not only affirms the goodness but the diversity inherent in creation. The sheer abundance of variety in the created world is undeniable: the innumerable variety of species in the animal and plant kingdom; the uniqueness of one individual from another; multifarious languages and cultures; different expressions of art and music; differences in personalities, facial expressions, gifting, relationships, siblings and all things human; the endless scope for discovery and newness in the world that we live in. Heterogeneity is God-given and a part of who we are. The church should be a place where this diversity is celebrated and not extinguished. Paul writes of diversity as an integral part of what it means to be part of the ‘body of Christ’ and attributes this to a work of the Lord and the Spirit (1 Cor 12). The work of the same Spirit and the same Lord gives rise to a multiplicity of gifts within the church, all given for the building up of the body. The Spirit unifies, but at the same time, anoints the creativity and possibilities that arise from difference.

Unity, therefore, is achieved ‘in Christ’ and the calling to be ‘Christlike’ is a calling to be like the only one, unique, incarnate Son of God. To that extent, there is only one standard by which to measure the fullness of human existence and the wholeness of human being: Christ the prototype of humanity. This pattern, however, is not a thing that can be ‘copied’ or applied to individuals in a uniform way. The Spirit is able to transform humanity into Christlikeness without extinguishing the uniqueness of the particular, the diversity of culture, background, gifting, personality and the myriad elements that make us into unique creations. Moreover, a robust theology of the particular rooted both christologically and pneumatologically allows us to affirm diversity, rather than forcing differences to be subsumed under one all-consuming metaphysical concept which underlies a theology of being.

Thus, we have argued with Del Colle that the identity of Christ does not entirely foreclose the meaning of that identity in the continued Christian confession. To become Christlike, which is the work of the Spirit, is not an inevitable path to homogeneity. Richard Bauckham, addresses this issue in relation to mission in contemporary society. ‘Mission takes place on the way from the particularity of God’s action in the story of Jesus to the universal coming of God’s kingdom. It happens as
particular people called by God go from here to there and live for God here and there for the sake of all people." Mission begins with the particularity of Christ. It then spreads in a universal fashion as Christ’s followers go out into the world as his witnesses. ‘God singles out individuals and groups to be bearers of God’s blessing for all. God’s purpose never ends with the particular but moves on from particular to particular in the direction of the universal.’ The universal is to be found not apart from but within other particulars. Bauckham argues that because of this, Christianity is never a ‘totalizing’ movement. This is further reflected in the biblical narratives. He makes the point that the Bible is a collection of many different narratives within one universal over-arching message. It does not ‘subsume all other stories but assimilates them into its story.’ We see this idea lived out through the history and formation of the church. Each individual follower of Christ has his or her own story, his or her own background, experiences, nature and personality lived out in different ways. At the same time, there will be an over-arching unifying story, rooted in the person of Christ, and his story will be the one that shapes ours and thus shapes us. This, and the experience of the Spirit, the experience of being sons and daughters of the Father will be the story that harmonizes the many and varied narratives. The story of Christ is told and re-told, incarnated in different ways in different cultures and embodied in a variety of ways.

On its way to the kingdom of God it does not abolish all others stories, but brings them all into relationship to itself and its way to the kingdom….The universal that is the kingdom of God is no dreary uniformity or oppressive denial of difference, but the milieu in which every particular reaches its true destiny in relation to the God who is the God of all because he is the God of Jesus.

This means that the coming of God’s kingdom will look different in each culture and in different contexts. Thus, the results of the coming of God’s kingdom, will to some extent be open-ended and unpredictable. Bauckham contends that the move to the

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universal is not in some pre-determined and programmed fashion, not a path mapped out from ‘Pentecost to the kingdom.’ Rather, the reality of Jesus’ story invites our trust in God, as the future unfolds. In our attempts to communicate the gospel to the people around us, we have to accept that the embodiment of this will defy predictable outcomes and pre-determined patterns, as the story of Jesus shapes and moulds our own particular stories.

Gavin D’Costa argues similarly in Sexing the Trinity. The outcome of God’s interaction with the world, rather than foreclosing meaning, will be unpredictable and endlessly creative. As God interacts with creation, as the triune God works in the world through human beings, the church and culture, the results of this work will be to bring about new and fresh encounters. D’Costa roots his theology in theories of language, narrative and meaning. He builds on the premise that ‘language itself is the source of our indwelling’ and because it is always open-ended, ‘and can only exist in being shared’ it must therefore defy any ultimate closure of meaning.

If language constructs us and is constructed by us, and language is utterly relational, then it follows that we only find a sense of who we are through our relationships with each other, the divine and the world. Furthermore, if language in its endless possible relationships cannot be given a frozen and singular signification then neither can we.

The work of God in this world resists and deconstructs that closure of meaning, because meaning is always ‘contexts-determined and therefore, never static’. The interaction of God with the world and with creation is therefore unpredictable, both in terms of what will result for us as a consequence of new encounters with each other, and also in terms of what we will discover about God.

As creation comes under the mercy and judgment of God, it cannot look the same, but neither is it destroyed and erased. This is a two-way process in

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701 D’Costa, G., Sexing the Trinity, p.99.
702 D’Costa, G., Sexing the Trinity, p.159.
which we cannot always predict beforehand what we will discover about the living triune God in the light of our negotiations with culture.703

We have already noted the postmodern suspicion of metanarratives or totalizing systems of thought. D’Costa argues that the Christian story is not about closure of meaning and the settlement of signs, which in postmodern thought is seen to mask and construct ‘tyrannical powers’. Instead, as Christ’s story is retold, it is lived out in ‘non-identical repetition’, ‘whereby the story, like the revelation it discloses, is not an event of the past, but always the possibility of revelation in the present through its mode of inspired retelling and its graced reception.’704 The work of the church is to continue the ministry of Jesus, embodying his transformative love in the world in the power of the Spirit. However, as this is always culturally embedded, this can only be carried out through the process of non-identical repetition. This does not detract from the truth of the message of the gospel. He is not saying that there is only an endless play of signifiers detached from any ultimate meaning. Meaning is grounded in the being of God, and the meaning of the gospel in the person of Christ. We are constrained to preach Christ crucified and the church as the means to salvation, ‘but the way that these are understood and practiced cannot be decided in advance.’705 We noted in Chapter Four that one of the main features of the culture that we now inhabit is pluralism, both cultural and religious. Contemporary mission models in the West, rather than seeking to extinguish the differences of culture, will need to be able to celebrate diversity and to allow the gospel to take shape within different contexts. Anything else will be treated with deep suspicion.

D’Costa makes much of language as our primary form of communication and writes of the ‘co-creative’ power of the Spirit working ‘through and with humans using their language’ at Pentecost.706 Of course, language is central to the way that we communicate and the way that God communicates to us. We cannot ignore the givenness and the centrality of language. However, God is neither restricted or bound by our human languages and other forms of communication must also be acknowledged. At Pentecost, the Spirit gave the gift of tongues, a language that neither functions like our human languages, nor is intelligible in the same way.

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703 D’Costa, G., Sexing the Trinity, p.159.
704 D’Costa, G., Sexing the Trinity, p.168.
705 D’Costa, G., Sexing the Trinity, p.149.
706 D’Costa, G., Sexing the Trinity, p.121.
Tongues are not ‘translated’ they are interpreted, discerned. Moreover, there are other forms of communication that we rely on as human beings which frame and contextualize our spoken words when we are present to one another. If we focus solely on the linguistic aspects of communication, we will miss other important factors that are at play in communication. Not only this, but we are in danger of excluding those human beings who cannot rely on spoken discourse to communicate, but create meaningful relationships nonetheless. In due course, we will explore the supernatural and sometimes pre-linguistic work of the Spirit as well as other extra-linguistic aspects of communication.

We have made a case for Spirit Christology giving us a basis for a theology of the universal and the particular, which will be both liberating and relational. The convergent missions of the Son and the Spirit allow us to root the concepts of the universal and the particular, the transcendent and the immanent in the being of God without specifically assigning one to either Christ or the Spirit. In this way, not only do we not separate the work of Christ from the Spirit, but we also do not restrict the way God works in this world to one person of the Trinity (notwithstanding that we understand the incarnation of Christ as a unique form of particularity). This is turn gives us a strong account of unity and diversity, not only rooted in the persons of Christ and the Spirit, but also in a theology of creation which we have then applied to a theology of mission, celebrating the uniqueness of individuals and of cultures. The universal mission of Christ is actualized in the lives of individuals by the work of the Spirit. However, this is not a totalizing or homogenizing process, but one in which diverse peoples are brought into relational harmony without the creativity of difference being extinguished. This means that the outcome of mission is unrestricted by our own preconceived models and expectations, and will be as diverse as human beings are themselves.

**The ‘Unpredictability’ of Mission**

We have demonstrated that we are able to approach the topic of unity and diversity both pneumatologically and christologically. Jesus Christ is the centre and the cornerstone, from whom and about whom the truth of the gospel flows, but this truth manifests itself in new and creative ways throughout history in ‘non-identical
repetition’. Smail writes of the coinherence and mutuality of the Spirit and Christ in this process:

the creator Spirit brings forth a new likeness of Jesus. There are no stereotypes of sanctity. All the saints are gloriously various, but out of all the differing colours and textures of their created natures and personalities the Spirit sets himself to paint a new ikon of the Lord. Being thus in process of being recreated by the Spirit, saints begin to be themselves recreative in the communities and societies to which they belong.\textsuperscript{707}

Missiologists describe this as inculturation or contextualization; the truth of the gospel incarnated in myriad ways in diverse cultures. Against Harnack, therefore, as we have already noted, inculturation presents a radical break from the idea of faith as ‘kernel’ and culture as ‘husk’\textsuperscript{708} or faith as the self-contained message of the gospel and human beings as receptacles for that message. The idea of double-listening, to the Spirit and to culture, of the interplay between the ‘faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints’ and the diverse ways in which that is enfleshed gives us a far more nuanced picture of mission, one in which we accommodate certitude and uncertainty at the same time.

We have been arguing in previous chapters that if the Spirit is truly in control of the mission and if the truth of Christ is applied by the Spirit in diverse cultures and peoples, that there is biblical and theological warrant for believing that, to some extent, the outcome of mission is never certain. If we are not called simply to ‘take Christ’ to other people and cultures but to ‘allow the faith the chance to start a history of its own in each people and its experience of Christ,’ then to some extent we will not be able to predict what the Christlike faith will look like in that culture.\textsuperscript{709} Moreover, we have also argued that mission is following the Spirit who has gone before, who in the way that we have described, precedes Christ in order to illuminate him and precedes the church because it is in the Spirit’s coming that the church is formed. The reality of living with the unpredictability of mission, of waiting for something to ‘emerge’, of being dependent on the work of Christ and the Spirit in

\textsuperscript{707} Smail, T., \textit{The Giving Gift}, p.180.
\textsuperscript{708} Bosch, D., \textit{Transforming Mission}, p.454.
\textsuperscript{709} Bosch, D., \textit{Transforming Mission}, p.454.
others is a testing process for the church. Allowing spontaneity and creativity is a far more challenging pursuit than following programmes and patterns decided on beforehand. Vincent Donovan reflects on his experiences with the Masai tribe in Tanzania and has recorded his observations in his seminal work, *Christianity Rediscovered.*

Donovan describes the disorientation and ill-preparedness he experienced going among a foreign people with whom he had nothing in common. His experiences encapsulate the reality of having to make the radical break with the modernist paradigm of ‘kernel’ and ‘husk’ that Bosch describes. I will quote from his work at length in order to convey, in his own words, the depth of his disorientation and the extent to which his experiences forced him to reconsider much of his ecclesiology and theology. He records, ‘[t]here were times in the cold mornings as I faced those nomads when I found myself bitterly resenting the church that had sent me among them, so ill-prepared to deal with them, times when I wondered about the sincerity of that church which styled itself as missionary.’

His attempts to preach the gospel to an alien culture in a foreign land transformed his ideas on mission, the church and the work of the Spirit. Before he was sent out to the Masai, he had been taught that the ‘church was the receptacle of salvation, and the cultures and nations of the world were the ones to whom salvation was to be doled out by the church.’ His experience was that ‘[c]ulture is all encompassing and all important in the history of salvation.’

The crucial and painful lesson for him was that he had to realign all his ideas about his own purpose, his own task, and his own goals.

The Church? Church-planting and church-establishing have often been used as descriptions of a missionary’s task. But such descriptions can be misleading since they necessarily imply a kind of fixed and predetermined outcome to the preaching of the gospel. Because a missionary comes from another already existing church, *that* is the image of church he will have in mind, and if his job is to establish a church *that* is the church he will establish. I think, rather, the missionary’s job is to preach, not the church, but Christ. If he preaches Christ

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and the message of Christianity, the church may well result, may well appear, but it might not be the church he had in mind.713

His ‘original plan’ had been thwarted, moulded, re-shaped and implemented in a completely different way from how he and his superiors had envisaged. It had, however, moved the work forward; men and women had become Christians but what was to follow was as unpredictable as what had already been. He writes,

It had changed the direction of the mission work in the area. It opened a door into an unknown space, filled with countless surprises and possibilities. In that space were many other doors, beyond each of which were undoubtedly more revelations and more shocks. The secret was to keep opening doors and to rest with no unanalyzed assumptions, not even those made just five years before.714

He goes on to describe this process as a work of the Spirit. If the Spirit is the one who precedes us in mission and then leads us into it, then we will not be the ones creating the opportunities, but we will be the ones responding to her divine initiative. If the Spirit is the one who is in control of the mission, then we will not be.

**Mission and Dialogue**

Thus far we have outlined a theology of the particular and the universal, of unity and diversity rooted in Christ and the Spirit, arguing that a contemporary model of mission requires a theology for all aspects of the work of God in the world through the Son and the Spirit. Moreover, we have stressed the participation of humanity in the mission of God, touching on the importance of the gospel being incarnated or embodied in different cultures, the importance and indeed necessity of diversity, different stories and narratives, and the possibility of new, unforetold and unpredictable expressions of the Christian faith lived out in particular communities and churches. The idea that human beings play an essential role in the spread of the gospel, the church as witness, is linked to the all-important question of dialogue. All

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that we have been discussing so far makes sense only if we understand mission and evangelism as some form of dialogue rather than a system imposed upon a person or people. This observation, of course, has been part of the conversation on mission for some time.

In recent years it has become *de rigueur* in any discussion on mission to see mission and evangelism as ‘dialogue’. It is hoped, it seems, that this discussion will help to counter accusations that for many years the church has conducted mission in an ‘imperialist’ or dictatorial manner, silencing the voice of the Other, ignoring cultural differences, being unwilling to adapt, and failing to recognize the value of other religions and perspectives. Whether this has yet been achieved is questionable, but recognition of the importance of dialogue is a step in the right direction. Yong, writing on Christ, the Spirit and mission to those of other faiths is not alone when he argues for a more intentional ‘incarnational dynamic’, that ‘inspires the Christian mission to be more fully and genuinely dialogical rather than monological’.\(^{715}\) I, too, am advocating that we should view mission and evangelism as some form of dialogue. There are, however, two problems with this discussion. One is the problem of how we define ‘dialogue’ and what we actually expect or hope this might look like in reality. The other is that it is often argued that dialogue as a practice should now replace proclamation and preaching, whereas I have argued that the two can and should co-exist as forms of missional communication and I will go on to argue that dialogue is more an attitude than a practice. Bosch has summarised the current view on mission and dialogue in the following way:

we regard our involvement in dialogue and mission as an adventure, are prepared to take risks, and are anticipating surprises as the Spirit guides us into fuller understanding. This is not opting for agnosticism, but for humility. It is, however, a bold humility – or a humble boldness. We know only in part, but we do know. And we believe that the faith we profess is both true and just, and should be proclaimed. We do this, however, not as judges or lawyers, but as witnesses; not as soldiers, but as envoys of peace; not as high-pressure salespersons, but as ambassadors of the Servant Lord.\(^{716}\)

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\(^{715}\) Yong, A., *The Spirit Poured Out on All Flesh*, p.246.

\(^{716}\) Bosch, D., *Transforming Mission*, p.489.
Before we go on to discuss some examples of Spirit-led mission and dialogue, we will first consider what is involved in the notion of dialogue itself.

In his book, *The Call to Personhood*, Alistair McFadyen explores notions of persons, relations and community from a theological perspective. He explores various features of personhood and community, seeking to understand how the two function in a number of situations. McFadyen’s concern is that we do not impose absolute and universal solutions on ethical or existential questions in a totalitarian manner, under the ‘misconception that people are problems to be solved by efficient administration.’ In an effort to address the depersonalizing tendencies of corporate and consumer society, he explicates a theology of personhood and community based on the particular, and the individual existing within relationships. With obvious parity with much of what we have already discussed, he constructs an uncompromisingly relational ontology, with the emphasis on the ‘thisness’ of individual human beings with their own experiences, backgrounds, cultures etc. Moreover, MacFadyen makes much of communication being an *embodied* pursuit. We are who we are in our own bodies; our existence and therefore our communication is only ever as corporeal beings. Thus, the notion of ‘presence’ also comes to the fore. MacFadyen defines dialogue in contrast to monologue. With monologue,

[t]he commitment in the relation and to the other is of a very different quality from that in dialogue. Because one is not giving one’s real ‘self’ to the other, there is no need to attend to the independent reflection of oneself from the other. Neither, of course, will there be a seeking of the other’s independent self-understanding, but only of her or his compliance. In dialogue, however, one’s self-understanding is genuinely present in communication. One gives oneself to and seeks the other as a real and independent other who may therefore provide new information about oneself, her or himself, or the world in the making of an autonomous response. Dialogue can only be sought where the meaning one has for oneself is the meaning one seeks to have for others.

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Although ‘dialogue’ is held up to be a practice that the church should follow in the pursuit of mission and evangelism, it is not always evident in the way that it is described above. Whereas there might often be gestures towards the idea of dialogue, the reality of ‘seeking the other’s independent self-understanding’ rather than only her or his compliance is not always a priority. The real dynamic of giving of oneself, possibilities of change, learning a new language, conforming to a new culture and being willing to listen, even to the point of changing one’s mind entails vulnerability, risk, discomfort and humility, as we have noted in the case of Donovan with the Masai. McFadyen writes, ‘In dialogue the social space-time offered to another is a recognition, acceptance and celebration of the other as partially understood and as, in the final analysis, a positive mystery.’

Genuine dialogue carries with it a profound respect and appreciation for the Other. Earlier on in this chapter we described this as a work of the Spirit. With respect to mission, it is only the Spirit who can bring about the type of genuine dialogue that we are speaking of. She is the one who breaks boundaries, who brings unity and understanding and who sheds light on the truth of the gospel, and works as a transforming presence not just in the hearers of the message but in the speakers of that same message. There is, with the dynamic of the Spirit and the uniqueness of different situations, people and contexts, an unpredictability and unrestrictedness about how and in what way this may happen.

D’Costa’s work unites many of the themes that we have now discussed in his work on the Trinity and other religions. He writes, ‘Trinitarian theology provides the context for a critical, reverent, and open engagement with otherness without any predictable outcome.’ In *The Meeting of Religions and the Trinity*, D’Costa states that what is really at stake ‘is the question of whether Christianity can be genuinely open toward the Other, such as to both learn from and critically engage with difference.’ (my italics) He claims that the distinction between the concepts of mission, dialogue and inculturation is false, arguing that ‘if the church must learn another language as its first language, if it is to engage in dialogue and mission, then both activities are intrinsically related...mission is impossible without dialogue and vice versa.’

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alter, the new language may even become our first language, and inculturation will follow. He writes,

[proper and legitimate inculturation or indigenization is always an act of continuity within a greater discontinuity: a taking up of what disciples from different cultures and religions may bring to the church, but in this taking up, this being raised, the configuration of new life that emerges can never be predicted or even fully assessed except retrospectively.]

D’Costa comments on Gaudium et Spes 44 (quoted below). Not only is it acknowledged here that there are elements of truth and goodness within Western modernity which may be a preparation for the gospel, but it is also acknowledged that other cultures, the ‘many voices of our age’, ‘may therefore have elements which will challenge and even change elements within the church, in its structure, formulations, and practice. D’Costa is clear that this is not to diminish or detract from ‘the claim that God’s fullness is known in Jesus Christ through his Spirit within the church’, and also, on the question of discernment, that the many voices are interpreted and judged ‘in the light of the divine Word’, however, and this is crucial, it is understood as the ‘church deepening its own understanding and practice of the gospel’ – even to the point where the church might see ways in which it has obscured the gospel. D’Costa is making the point that authentic dialogue always holds with it the possibility for change and transformation. In encounters with the Other, there is always the possibility that the self-understanding and practices of the church might be changed, renewed or transformed. He quotes from Congar commenting on this section:

725 D’Costa quotes the following section, ‘With the help of the Holy Spirit, it is the task of the entire People of God, especially pastors and theologians, to hear, distinguish, and interpret the many voices of our age, and to judge them in the light of the divine Word. In this way, revealed truth can always be more deeply penetrated, better understood, and set forth to greater advantage. Since the Church has a visible and social structure as a sign of her unity in Christ, she can and ought to be enriched by the development of human social life. The reason is not that the constitution given her by Christ is defective, but so that she may understand it more penetratingly; express it better, and adjust it more successfully to our times. She gratefully understands that in her community life no less than in her individual sons, she receives a variety of helps from men of every rank and condition….Indeed, the Church admits that she has greatly profited and still profits from the antagonism of those who oppose or persecute her.’ Gaudium et Spes 44 quoted in The Meeting of Religions, pp.111-112.

726 D’Costa, G., The Meeting of Religions, p.112.

The Church has...never before acknowledged so plainly that it too receives from the world...we must go briefly into the question of what the possibility of receiving from the world in this way means for the Church. In the first place it means that its dialogue with the world cannot simply consist of the conversation between doctor and patient, of which the encyclical *Ecclesiam Suam* speaks (AAS 56 [1964], 638f.). It is a question of dialogue, and this involves reciprocity; the world has something to contribute.\(^{728}\)

D’Costa himself applies this to the practice of interreligious prayer which, he claims, requires ‘risk’ and the idea that we will not know the outcome when we set out. His argument is that in encountering the Other in the practice of prayer together there is the possibility and challenge of real change because ‘there can be no a prori knowledge of what other religions may disclose.’\(^{729}\) Here he is not specifically addressing the question of mission, in the sense of evangelism. He describes praying with those of other faiths in this way as the real sharing of a gift ‘over which we have no control’, and with no underlying agenda to convert those that we are praying with. These ideas, however, are all applicable to mission and evangelism as dialogue.

If we take the idea of dialogue seriously, then mission will involve risk and the possibility of change, not just on the part of the hearers of the gospel but also for the church. Most evangelism is conducted on the basis that the hearer will be transformed, that the ‘sinner’ will repent. Clearly, we cannot be disingenuous about motive. The world-wide church intercedes for those who do not yet know Christ, not simply for their health, protection and blessing, but also that they would come to know him. We all come to a conversation with things we wish to say. However, evangelism as dialogue now opens up the possibility that the messenger may also need to repent, to change his or her mind. If we really embrace the idea of dialogue, then we must also face the idea that mission might lead the church to repentance of various practices or beliefs.

The clearest illustration of this is in Peter’s encounter with Cornelius as described in Acts 10. This story also exemplifies much of what we have already


\(^{729}\) D’Costa, G., *The Meeting of Religions*, p.133.
discussed in respect of Spirit Christology and mission. Peter is involved in a process of both listening to the Spirit and listening to those around him. He is led into a place where the Spirit has already gone before, and in that situation, he has to respond to what he encounters. There he discovers a new work of God, one which he could not have anticipated. We see both the inbreaking of God with the visions that both Peter and Cornelius receive and their corresponding obedience and cooperation leading to Cornelius’s conversion, and we see in Peter a conversion as radical and transforming for the church as that of Cornelius. The need for Peter’s repentance begins with the vision that he receives from God while praying. In this vision, Peter is commanded to ‘kill and eat’ all kinds of animals and creatures, some of which are unclean, according to Jewish law. Peter is initially resistant to the idea, probably repelled by it, to the point of questioning God’s command. God speaks to Peter again, ‘Do not call anything impure that God has made clean.’ Apparently, the significance of this does not immediately strike Peter, but this will prove to be the basis of a radical theological change about to take effect in the early church.

While Peter is wondering about the vision, the Spirit speaks to him, telling him to go downstairs and to accompany the men that have arrived at the house. The Spirit reassures him, that it was her also who sent these men to Peter. Thus Peter is led (or sent) by the Spirit to the house of Cornelius, a God-fearing and prayerful man, who himself in a vision, was instructed to send for Peter. The story illustrates the disorientation and upheaval brought about by the Spirit in this encounter of two men, two communities and two cultures. It is not only Cornelius who repents and changes his mind as he hears the gospel of Jesus Christ from Peter, but Peter as well, who undergoes his own ‘conversion.’ Peter’s ideas about mission, the church and covenant were altered beyond recognition in this encounter, first with God through the Spirit, and then with Cornelius. Peter was compelled to change his mind about everything that he had previously thought in relation to the spread of the gospel among the Gentiles. The effect of Cornelius’ conversion was to illuminate to Peter where he and the other Jews had been ‘obscuring the gospel’. Peter is deeply affected by this encounter and later on in Acts 15 we read of Peter himself exhorting the council at Jerusalem to listen to Paul and Barnabas on precisely this issue, defending Paul’s decision not to circumcise Gentile converts. The conversion of the Gentiles, beginning with Cornelius, not only transformed the ethnic mix of the early church, but
also changed its theology and practices. This began with Peter’s obedience and willingness to repent.

Peter and Cornelius’s story also demonstrates the importance of presence, both the presence of the Spirit interacting with human beings and communicating with them, and then the presence of the people with one another. The effect of this encounter between the two groups of people only had the radical effect that it did because of their actual meeting. It was from Peter himself and his personal visit that Cornelius heard the truth about Jesus Christ, it was during Peter’s ‘sermon’ that the Spirit fell on all who heard the message, and it was the anointing of the Spirit upon the Gentiles that convinced Peter that they should then be baptized. However, the real challenge came to the church through Peter’s physical presence in Cornelius’ house. It was only through this that God’s command, not to call anything unclean that he calls clean, was actualized and thus authenticated. The command of God, abrogating the law to keep Jews and Gentiles apart had to be acted upon to be realized. Moreover, Peter and his friends did not just visit but stayed. This meant that they had to sleep under the same roof, eat together, pray together, worship together. The new shape of the church had begun in that encounter. Neither Cornelius, nor Peter were ‘expecting’ this to happen. The outcome of their meeting was unpredictable, led by the Spirit, actualized in their encounter, and entailed repentance and the willingness to change for all those involved.

**The Embodied Nature of Mission**

One of the aspects of presence and personhood that we have touched on previously is that a person’s bodily presence has spiritual significance. Human beings are not simply bodies, but a complex entity of body, thoughts, emotions, spirit and intentions. An encounter with another leaves its mark, even if that encounter is a silent one. MacFadyen writes ‘[o]ne is present in one’s particularity even where only passively present. Presence, however passive, is still the communication of a particular personal identity. It therefore bears the form and content of a unique communicational spirit.’ In our understanding of mission and evangelism, we have argued that who we are matters and that it should not be divorced from the personal. The personal

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encounter, the impact that has, the effect of one person on another person’s life cannot be divorced from the message. Peter and his friends’ wholehearted acceptance of Cornelius and his household into the church was the lived-out and embodied acceptance of those men, women and children into the kingdom of God through the forgiveness of Jesus Christ. What was true for Peter and Cornelius is true for the church. How we conduct ourselves as Christians, how we behave towards others and in our relationships is an integral part of the message of forgiveness and acceptance that we witness to. McFadyen also writes,

[It]he body is therefore a communication transmitting the sort of person one takes oneself and others to be, and consequently the sort of relationships expected, sought and desired. In this sense, it is true to say that the form of bodily closure is an ethical act rather than an ontological fact. It is a social performance, rather than a naturally given form.731

Whenever we are addressed by another, we are engaged by them and we are called to respond. The approach of one person to another will often determine the response, depending on whether one is approached with warmth and kindness, hostility and aggression, or seeming indifference. The presence of others can bring challenge, comfort, healing, threat, surprise, delight etc. The meaning of the gospel will be inextricably linked to how it is communicated and lived out in lives around us. In a relational and embodied model of mission, we emphasize the importance of the presence of one person to another, and all that this signifies. Gunton writes, ‘it is an inescapable feature of our human situation that we are freed or enslaved by the way others love or hate us, thus enabling us to become or preventing us from becoming the people we were created to be.’732

Del Colle writes of the centrality of a theology of presence, the presence of Christ and the presence of the Spirit in the world. In a theology of mission, the presence of Christlike, spirit-filled humanity can be transformative of the world around us, and we have emphasized the transformational work of the Spirit in all aspects of life. This is seen as much in non-verbal signifiers as through language, perhaps sometimes more.

In a model of mission that is informed by Spirit Christology, we are able to affirm the work of the Spirit, not only in our minds, but in our bodies, and through our bodies. Physical touch can be healing, restorative and affirming. It is one of the ways we know we are loved and accepted. The following is a story of the transformative presence of one person to another, transforming not through words, but through touch. We have also argued that it is the Spirit who brings human beings together, who unites humanity to God and persons one to another. Human interreaction has so much about it that is unquantifiable, that defies description even by the greatest of writers. Human touch and presence is a powerful dynamic in the world and this can be used for ill or good. The following is an example of the healing power of presence.

Dusk was falling as we sprinkled holy water on the brown coffin in the dark grave. It was a very long day, the day of my mother’s funeral. I was at the end of my strength – everything bottled up since morning. I felt a hand on my back. My friend had arrived. The healing tears began to flow. It was the touch that did it. We notice those who are graced with a profound presence – it is in the way some teachers teach, some check-out assistants wait for you, some priests say Mass. We notice from time to time when parents listen and talk to their children, when someone takes control in a crisis. We feel safe, and known, by such people. The blind holy man could tell the state of soul of his visitors by the sound of their approaching footsteps. It is hard to stay closed in the aura of sensitive presence…³³³

A dialogical model of mission based on incarnation and anointing will place a great emphasis on the physical presence of the other, the embodied nature of existence and the notion that our lives, and therefore, our bodies, can be filled with the Spirit so that we become representatives of Christ on this earth. Communication, one to another cannot be reduced simply to conversation, it is not only logocentric, but has myriad unquantifiable aspects to it rooted in tone of voice, facial expression, body language, eye contact etc. Compassion is rarely communicated through words only.

Graham Hughes has begun some significant work on the embodied nature of communication and meaning in relation to liturgy. He recognizes that it is not only

with language that we communicate, but with extra-linguistic aspects of communication: attitude, stance, gestures, eye contact and the ‘multitude of tiny signals’ that contribute to the generation of meaning and communication between people. Not only does he emphasize the primacy and impact of the individual in meaning-making, but he explores the implications of the idea that the nature of meaning is such that communication consists not just of what is said, but of how it is said, and who it is that is speaking. The manner of something being said is integral to its meaning.

Hughes’ point is that participants in a worship event are able to assess the ‘authenticity’ of what is being said, of whether a prayer is actually prayed, and that people respond not just to the words and symbols of the liturgy but to the way in which they are said. In other words, he is not saying that the president must be morally perfect in order to preside, nor that the responsibility for worship lies with the minister, but that the president must be a truthful ‘worshipper’ in order to lead others in worship. He develops this idea of the reading of signs with reference to the ‘multitude of tiny signals’ that make up human and bodily communication, eye movements, facial expression, hand gestures, proxemics, kinesis, tactile communication and a whole host of non-verbal communication that accompanies words and language. It is through these that people receive the gift of meaning. Hughes’ observations on communication and meaning are relevant to our discussion on mission.

If the leader of worship must be a truthful worshipper, then it follows that the missionary or evangelist must be a truthful witness. The truthfulness of the witness will correlate to the proximity between the witness and the one about whom we witness. In other words the authenticity of the witness will be measured by the strength of the connection between the life of the witness and the life of the one of whom we speak. We have been arguing that being a Christian involves witnessing to the person and truth of Jesus Christ; being an ‘ambassador’ for him on this earth and

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734 Hughes, G., Worship as Meaning, p.110-124.
735 Hughes, G., Worship., p.5.
736 Hughes, G., Worship, p.171.
737 Hughes, G., Worship, p.100.
738 Cantalamessa writes on the importance of the integrity of witness. ‘We cannot say “Jesus is Lord!” unless “under the action of the Holy Spirit,” that is, unless we ourselves truly acknowledge this. If we say it, not “under the action of the Holy Spirit” but in sin, or disbelief, or out of habit, it remains a human saying that will not infect anyone: infection comes from contact with someone who has the illness, not with someone who talks about it.’ The Holy Spirit, p.49.
in the places and situations in which we find ourselves. The gospel stories are full of personal encounters with Jesus, and then with his disciples. Lives are transformed by the personal presence of Jesus and his followers, through speech, touch, proximity, and actions that authenticate their message. Physical presence, touch and the ‘multitude of tiny signals’ that communicate approval or otherwise are as much if not a more powerful demonstration of acceptance, love and forgiveness than words. In the gospel stories there are countless examples of this: Jesus accepting the extravagant touch and adoration of the woman who anointed him with oil; the request for water and the ensuing conversation with the Samaritan woman at the well; the calling of Zaccheus the tax collector and the table-fellowship with him; the healing of the lepers. These were all demonstrations through Jesus’ physical presence of his love, forgiveness and acceptance of the Other. Touch, inclusion, hospitality, accepting food at another’s table, are all powerful mediums for conveying the truth of God’s love to others and are in themselves transformative. If dialogue truly entails seeking another’s independent self-understanding and not simply his or her compliance, a giving of oneself, then these are not just practices, but are deeply rooted in attitude. Attitudes, for the most part, can only be thinly veiled, although, of course, it is possible to deceive for a time. However, we betray our attitudes towards others with a multitude of tiny signals, of which our embodiedness is an integral part. Our understanding of the transformation of human being is that the Spirit works in our minds, hearts and bodies, shaping our inner being, perspectives, attitudes and behaviour, so that our own sinful attitudes towards others are able to be transformed not through our own efforts, but through a yielding to the Spirit of God who brings forth the likeness of Christ in us.

Human agency in the spread of the gospel cannot be underestimated. I have argued that notwithstanding the inbreaking work of the Spirit in the world, that it is primarily through specific encounters with others that the truth of the gospel is impressed upon our hearts and minds. This leads us to the question of dialogue and of encounter with the Other. The impact of persons and communities on one another is often immense either for good or for ill, and is rarely ever neutral. As well as the inbreaking work of the Spirit, it is when we are confronted with a more plausible story, or a version of our own story that ‘makes sense’ or one which we can trust, that we are able to change our minds to believe something we have previously
discounted. We have discussed on the one hand, the importance of the role of the Spirit as the one who ‘breaks in’ to our experiences, our lives and our relationships, who precedes Christ, preparing us to hear the gospel, who goes before, but also as the one who works through human lives, ours and those around us, growing in us the life of Christ. This is communicated not just in words and in dialogue but through our physical presence. We have noted that in our postmodern European context many people are not looking specifically to the institution of the church for truth, but may still be impressed by authentic lives which witness to the truth of Jesus Christ. Thus, the church in the West needs to take seriously the role of being ambassadors for Christ, and all that that entails.

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739 Charles Taylor writes, ‘The bad model of practical reasoning, rooted in the epistemological tradition, constantly nudges us towards a mistrust of transition arguments. It wants us to look for “criteria” to decide the issue, i.e., some considerations which could be established even outside the perspectives in dispute and which would nevertheless be decisive. But there cannot be such considerations. My perspective is defined by the moral intuitions I have, by what I am morally moved by. If I abstract from this, I become incapable of understanding any moral argument at all. You will only convince me by changing my reading of my moral experience, and in particular my reading of my life story, of the transitions I have lived through – or perhaps refused to live through.’ Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity (Cambridge: CUP, 1989), p.73.
CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSION

We began with Del Colle’s preliminary thoughts on the yield of Spirit Christology for various human concerns. This thesis has been at attempt to develop Del Colle’s insights in relation to Spirit Christology and mission in Western Europe. So many in the church in Europe believe that we are now facing a ‘crisis’. The precise nature of this crisis however is difficult to ascertain. Is it a crisis in society, in the church or in both? The crisis for Christians in Europe is most keenly felt in the reality that the Christian worldview is now only held by a minority of the population; the church feels it is marginalized; the Christian voice is one among many, and the tides of secularism appear to have been successful in convincing many of the redundancy of faith. People respond in different ways to this indifferent, sometimes hostile soil. Should we just shout louder, retreat, or doggedly persevere doing what we have always done despite dwindling numbers and a dearth of young people in church? On the other hand, this might be a time for new opportunities; a challenge that needs to be met with fresh ways of thinking, integrity, humility and a truthful response.

Throughout this thesis I have attempted to show how it is that our theology informs our ecclesiology; what we really think about God shapes the way we do things and this is as true for mission and evangelism as it is for worship and prayer. I have argued that Spirit Christology is an invaluable theological resource for the post-Christendom church and have attempted to glean some of these resources to construct a model of mission that will be responsive and meaningful both for the church and for the world that we in Western Europe find ourselves in. For many years, missionaries have been aware that the gospel is culturally and historically located and that it needs to be ‘translated’ for each generation and culture, and not only this, but as the gospel is appropriated and accepted by different groups, they will then shape and contextualize it to their own setting. If the story of Jesus Christ needs to be retold to our own culture, which in so many cases, it does, then we must first come to terms with the culture and the society of which we are a part. This culture has been described as pluralist, individualist, secular, (post)modernist, scientistic, liberal,
economized, technocratic, bureaucratic, ecologically damaging, manipulative and exploitative of human beings, relentlessly consumerist. I have explored the yield of Spirit Christology for just such a society and delineated some of the ways in which Spirit Christology may underpin a theology of mission that will be meaningful for the church and those around us.

For two thousand years the church has attempted to articulate the mystery at the heart of the Christian faith: that in Christ, God has come to dwell among us. It is impossible for us to express this in any way that is conclusive, final or complete. The mystery of the incarnation will always defy our attempts to pin everything down or wrap everything up. This thesis has been an attempt to take one particular view of the incarnation and to begin to imagine how this view might transform and inform our understanding and practices of mission and evangelism. Spirit Christology is not a simple, easily defined Christology. As we have seen, it takes many different forms and still encompasses a wide range of perspectives. It is clear that Spirit Christology has gained something of a bad name for itself among those who believe that it is always tainted either by adoptionism, pneumatocentrism or modalism. Moreover, there is still suspicion in some quarters over any Christology that starts ‘from below’. In response, there are a number of theologians attempting to formulate a Spirit Christology that is not beyond the bounds of orthodoxy and one that conforms to the principles established at Nicaea and Chalcedon. We still need to define which Spirit Christology we are talking about and this will probably always be the case. I have argued that it is possible to articulate an orthodox Spirit Christology, but as is true of all Christian doctrines, there is yet more work to be done. Despite the fact that the terms and definitions in Spirit Christology are still under discussion it is becoming increasingly evident that this is no longer a marginalized theological perspective only held by a handful of theologians. Spirit Christology has become an important theological perspective that needs to be taken into account by anyone studying Christology.

The impetus to articulate better the role of the person of the Holy Spirit in the person and life of Christ, in the church, and in the world has come from a number of different sources: the belief that in doing this we are being more faithful to the biblical witness; the view that something is lacking in the dominant Western christological

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and trinitarian models; and the experience of the Spirit in prayer, worship and mission. Spirit Christology allows us to develop a number of different theological principles that Logos Christology on its own is unable to do. So notwithstanding that there is still much that we cannot say about God’s triune being and his work in the world, there are, however, some things that we can say in respect of the persons and work of Christ and the Spirit. Spirit Christology allows us to highlight and to emphasize certain truths that have hitherto often been neglected in the Western church. Primarily we are able to explain not just how the Spirit is sent from the Father or the Father and the Son, but also to speak of how Christ is ‘of the Spirit.’ We base our theologizing not just on the traditional taxis of Father-Son-Spirit, but on the reality that Jesus was conceived by the Spirit, filled with the Spirit, formed by the Spirit, sustained by the Spirit, led by the Spirit and raised from death to life in the power of the Spirit. On this basis we are able to speak of the distinct but inseparable missions of the Son and the Spirit, not one beginning where the other leaves off in some kind of sequence, but the Son and the Spirit working together in all aspects of the economy, in a mutual, reciprocal and coinherent way. Spirit Christology is a way of ensuring that there is no Christology without pneumatology and no pneumatology without Christology, while also emphasizing the hypostatic individuation of the Son and the Spirit and their respective missions. Thus our theologizing begins with the coinherent missions of the Son and the Spirit: ‘the Son’s mission as “incarnation” – the self-communication of the Father to the world in the person of Jesus Christ, and the Spirit’s mission as “grace”, – ‘the self-communication of the Father and Christ his Son to us, in the person of the Holy Spirit’.741

This, therefore, affects every Christian doctrine: the doctrines of God, creation, salvation, humanity, the church and the last things, and allows us to formulate doctrine in both Christological and pneumatological terms within the context of a balanced trinitarian framework. In this thesis, we have explored in particular the implications of Spirit Christology for mission and evangelism, and we began with the impact that Spirit Christology has on soteriology. A focus on the mutual and coinherent but distinct missions of the Son and the Spirit leads us to assert that the Spirit saves with Christ throughout. Rather than understanding salvation in a strictly two-stage bifurcated manner of justification as a work of the Son and

741 Coffey, D., Deus Trinitas, p.65.
sanctification as a work of the Spirit, we understand the Spirit as working in all the salvific events associated with Christ: the incarnation, the cross, the resurrection, the ascension, Pentecost and the parousia. Moreover, Romans 8.14-17 becomes central to our understanding of what it means to be ‘saved’. Humanity participates in the triune life of God, as sons and daughters in the Son, the reality of which is brought about through the cross of Christ and the giving of the Spirit. Forgiveness and reconciliation is won for us through the cross and resurrection of Christ, but the knowledge and love of God as Abba Father is poured into our hearts by the Spirit. This is not merely an assent to a creed, but is the basis of the assurance of our faith and relationship with the Father through the filling of the Spirit. It is the basis for a pneumatological theology of experience. The mission of the church therefore is rooted in the triune being of God. It is God’s mission to call humanity back to God the Father, through Christ and the Spirit.

By emphasizing the role of the Spirit in the life of Christ, we also, perhaps surprisingly, are able at the same time to emphasize his full humanity. The caution that many have regarding Logos Christology on its own is that it can sometimes appear to take on an Apollinarian tinge. A careful Spirit Christology focuses on the humanity of Christ but not at the expense of his divinity. The benefits of this are manifold as we have enumerated throughout. Not only do we disavow any docetic tendencies in our Christology, but we understand Christ as the paradigm of humanity. True humanity looks like and is fulfilled in Jesus Christ. Against any ‘other-worldly’ theology, we see the salvation of God for the world as the transformation of the created sphere. The created order is restored to God in Christ and brought to perfection by the Spirit. This, however, is worked out in the particularity of everyday lives and real situations, the ‘thisness’ of existence. So not only do we see the material world as the place where theological meaning can be found, but we understand that to become Christlike is the ultimate goal for humanity. It is this goal of existence that will bring healing, wholeness, redemption and restoration to human lives and relationships. This is a life fully and truly alive. Not that we can be perfect as the perfection of humanity will only be realized in the eschaton, but the work of the Spirit in this life is to begin to transform us into the likeness of Christ. Thus, a transformational theology of conversion takes shape.

With our emphasis on the dynamic activity of the Spirit in Christ and the work of the Spirit in humanity, we also have an account of human response and freedom
which allows us to speak of human agency without abrogating the sovereign work of God. This is of particular importance to our model of mission. Human beings are God’s co-workers, Christ’s ambassadors, representatives of God on this earth. The mission of God is God’s mission, but he graciously chooses to include us in this, to such an extent that Paul claims it is as if God is making his appeal through us. We are included in this mission, however, as sons and daughters, as those who not only have God with us, but Christ in us, as Spirit-filled humanity. The work of the Spirit in Christ is as the one who anoints, empowers, sustains, comforts and communicates, and this work continues in the lives of believers. The Protestant tradition has always emphasized the work of God in individuals and this has its merits. This theology, however, coupled with post-Enlightenment individualism has had disastrous consequences in the West for our understanding of the individual’s position vis-à-vis the church. Even those who come to faith can often view the church as an optional extra. In contrast, we wish to stress the essential nature of community and communion to the Christian life. Although we acknowledge the work of Christ and the Spirit as effected by God in individual lives, and see the value of that for a postmodern model of mission, we eschew any individualistic reading of the world. Human being is relentlessly relational and therefore we understand the work of God in human beings as beings in relation. Persons are ‘constituted in their particularity both by their being created such by God and by the network of human and cosmic relatedness in which they find their being.’

In a fragmented society, which ours in the West surely is, the notion of community and communion will need to come to the fore and the question of identity will need to be central. The Spirit’s gift is the knowledge and love of God as Father, and of ourselves as sons and daughters. A Christian identity therefore is forged not primarily through a new lifestyle, but through a new identity in Christ through which we are brought into the family of God, from which the new lifestyle flows. We have, therefore, a robust theology of the individual and of personal identity, but always rooted in community.

Our missiology, therefore, is rooted in all these principles: incarnation and anointing, inbreaking and response, the call of God the Father to humanity. In order, however, for the model of mission to be pertinent to Western society, we have also argued that it has to be thoroughly personal, relational and dialogical in nature.

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Although convincing argument, intelligent words and truthful propositions are not to be belittled, for a cynical and jaded society, these words might only have force if they are authenticated with a person’s whole life and being. Truthful words need to be endorsed by truthful lives. So often, both in history and the present day, mission and evangelism have failed to include one or other of these perspectives. For example, evangelism has frequently been portrayed in individualistic terms, as one person to another, but often at the expense of seeing mission as the pursuit of the local church community, let alone the task of all denominations working together! Some see conversion as solely a work of Christ in a person’s life, or possibly a work of Christ through Scripture, or the task of the preacher. Others see it solely as a work of the Spirit in some disembodied or immediate sense. Still others see it as the task of the institution. Not only this, but our attitudes in the church to those outside the church have often come under criticism. Bosch noted many changes in attitude in recent years, but remained critical of Western missional and evangelistic practice. It is still tainted by the legacy of Enlightenment imperialism, the almost compulsive impulse to ‘remake the world, once again in the image of the West’ with a strong sense of the stronger party giving to the weaker, one giving and the other receiving. But a one-sided view of mission and evangelism remains inadequate, and perhaps more so in the post-Christendom society that those of us in Europe find ourselves in. Church practices and attitudes are under scrutiny from those outside the church, many of whom are highly critical. For the first time in hundreds of years, followers of Jesus Christ have to justify themselves to a sceptical and often suspicious world.

In response to the post-Christendom world there are many who have been advocating that dialogue should be our primary form of mission and others have identified the following categories as essential for mission and evangelism: witness (to the gospel events), invitation, response, the primacy of people over institutions, contextual evangelism and the preaching and practice of justice. Spirit Christology however, gives these practices a particular orientation. First we acknowledge that although dialogue is a thoroughly human pursuit, and that communication and meaning happen on a human level in our embodied existence, we continue to acknowledge the divine element in all our attempts to communicate the gospel. A pneumatological and incarnational model of mission will emphasize the dynamic of

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743 Bosch, D., Transforming Mission, p.326.
744 Bosch, D., Transforming Mission, p.334.
both listening to God and listening to others around us, of being in dialogue with God as well as with human beings. We root mission in the humanness of existence but at the same time, we expect the Spirit to act. He will be the one to lead and will often break into situations in surprising, unpredictable and unexpected ways. This might be in signs and wonders, miracles, prophecies or visions and the like. So we anticipate the inbreaking work of God in the Spirit to be an integral part of mission, but we do not see this as in any way an alternative to our response to God in mission. It is often through the obedience of the church that these works of the Spirit are realized. Secondly, how we understand dialogue and how it functions is crucial. In respect of mission, we see it as seeking the other’s independent self-understanding rather than only his or her compliance. This means that dialogue is not incompatible with preaching and proclamation, as long as in the latter, we maintain the element of profound respect for the other and of reciprocity. Preaching and proclamation are not necessarily redundant or outmoded forms of witness. Their power will be in the attitudes and the circumstances of those who speak.

In other words, we understand the Spirit working in the realm of imagination and intuition, and in the crucial aspect of the forging together of meaning, but as our understanding of mission is predicated on the notion of truthful witness, of being an ambassador of Christ, we place a significant emphasis on personal presence. Moreover, we see mission as being most effective when the distance between who we are and who we represent is minimal. One of the marks of the authenticity of our ‘message’ is how closely our lives reflect the life and teachings of Jesus Christ, and whether we are living out what we preach. It becomes impossible to separate self-identity from appointed task. This however, is only understood pneumatologically. The possibility of being Christ-like is not a question of copying Christ, but of participating in his life in the power of the Spirit. We are unable to reflect Christ or to become like him from any inherent capacity or effort, but only through God’s grace and the inner working of his Spirit. The emphasis that we find on humility in contemporary missiology is therefore, absolutely right.

This, in turn, gives us a deeply ethical slant to our model of mission and roots the practice of mission in discipleship, which is as it should be. The who, what, why and how in the practice of evangelism will be inextricably linked. Identity and task, form and performance become inseparable, and it is my contention that this is particularly pressing for the church in our society. Perhaps people are less tolerant of
‘spin’ and inauthenticity. Perhaps it is because we live in a society where private lives can be quickly and easily exposed, and there are now very thin lines between the public and the private. Whatever the reason, for us as individuals within communities, this means that how we communicate in the day-to-day relating to others who are not part of the church, matters. Our model in Jesus Christ is of one who transforms the lives of others through personal encounter. Lives are transformed by his speech, his touch, his presence; as with Jesus, so with his disciples. Our actions will authenticate our message. Physical presence, touch and the ‘multitude of tiny signals’ are as much if not a more powerful demonstration of acceptance, love and forgiveness than are words. Touch, inclusion, hospitality, accepting food at another’s table, are all powerful mediums for conveying the truth of God’s love to others and are in themselves transformative. If dialogue truly entails seeking another’s independent self-understanding and not simply his or her compliance, a giving of oneself, then these are not just practices, but are deeply rooted in attitude and attitudes that are often more transparent than we know. Spirit Christology gives us a trinitarian framework for an understanding of the communication of the gospel which incorporates a more complex portrait of communication than simply the hearing or apprehension of a spoken or written word. Thus, our model of mission will incorporate and allow for both the inbreaking and extra-linguistic work of the Spirit as well as the embodied nature of human being and all that that encompasses: the particular, the material, presence, the non-verbal, touch, attitude, and all that makes communication personal. Our understanding is that the Spirit works in our minds, hearts and bodies, shaping our inner being, perspectives, attitudes and behaviour, so that our own sinful attitudes towards others are able to be transformed not through our own efforts, but through a yielding to the Spirit of God who brings forth the likeness of Christ in us. The Spirit is the one who opens us up one to another, who breaks boundaries, who brings unity and understanding between disparate peoples.

The Spirit brings unity but not uniformity. This unity is not a homogenizing unity, but one in which difference and diversity is sustained and celebrated. Pentecost both affirms unity and diversity at one and the same time. Any contemporary model of mission will need to be able to accommodate and celebrate plurality, particularity and diversity while being able at the same time to give an account of the unifying work of Christ and the unity of the church in him. Spirit Christology allows us to hold together seemingly opposing concepts in creative tension: unity and diversity; the
universal and the particular; immanence and transcendence; certitude and open-endedness. We have a focus, a central point, an orientation around the person of Jesus Christ. But as we are conformed to his likeness, difference and heterogeneity is never extinguished. Furthermore, the work of Christ and the Spirit is both in the universal and the particular, the immanent and the transcendent. The work of the Spirit is not only in the world, but over and above the world, bringing creation to perfection, and this is not an independent work somehow detached or divorced from Christ but always with and through him. Rosato claims that Spirit Christology ‘might well allow Christian theologians to present Jesus Christ in a way more understandable to contemporary secular culture and also more appropriate to the current spiritual and pastoral needs in the Christian community.’

I hope that I have demonstrated that this is the case; that the yields of Spirit Christology are rich and will be fruitful for the contemporary church. There will always be so much more to say, and this thesis has only been able to touch the surface of some of the other issues related to Spirit Christology and to mission: the question of discipleship, catechesis and sanctification, the practice of justice on a local and global level, the process of ‘conversion’ to name a few. Moreover, there are other crucial issues that I have not considered that are worthy of further development: the implications of Spirit Christology for feminism, liberation theologies, ecology, the arts and a whole host of other concerns.

Mission and evangelism in post-Christendom society require the church to negotiate the delicate line between certitude and open-endedness, conviction and humility, speaking and listening, standing firm and giving ground. As well as being born out of lives of Christlikeness and integrity, this process will be one which is spiritually discerned. The Spirit-filled life will not only be centred around Jesus Christ, but will be characterized by an obedience to the leading of the Spirit, wherever that might be. For some this will mean witnessing signs and wonders. For others it will mean lives that look vulnerable, weak and powerless. For all it will mean the daily faithfulness of a life of prayer and worship. One thing will be certain – that the leading of the Spirit in mission will be unpredictable, adventurous, challenging, disturbing and new. Just when we think we have arrived, we will be challenged to move on.

Rosato, P., Spirit Christology, p.203.
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