



The 2003 Essay Prize for Doctoral Candidates

God against Us and for Us: Preaching Jesus in the Spirit

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Growing up ignorant in the things of God never stopped me from wearing as many eighteen-karat gold crucifixes as my dear mom every so often brought home to me. Then, after a soccer afternoon in Panama, came that life-changing encounter with a street preacher: *¡Arrepíentete!* (Repent!) *¡Cristo murió por tus pecados!* (Christ died for/because of your sins!)¹ *¡Pero Dios lo ha resucitado!* (But God has raised him from the dead!). Those few straightforward words carried a higher authority than the man speaking them. I was hooked, ready to hear more. For that evangelist, his mission was a matter of death and life—mine! From that moment on, the image on the crucifix became for me the crucified Christ against me and for me; an object around my neck became a convicting and liberating cross in my life.

Christian formation took me on a journey from Pentecostalism to Roman Catholicism to Lutheranism. Yet, in spite of their distinctive theological expressions and ecclesial forms of life, no tradition, I realized, could claim immunity from missing the force of the cross for sinners in the here and now. Some preached the cross as the highest model of Christian discipleship. Go and do likewise! Others portrayed the event as the greatest instance of God's identification with all who suffer. God knows your pain! In a homiletics class, a fellow seminarian eloquently ex-

¹The Spanish preposition "por" points to Christ's death not only *in place of* sinners, but also *because of* sinners.

Classical Logos christology strives to protect Jesus' divine equality with God and the unity of his person; it remains an ideal theology for explanation, but not for proclamation. A Spirit christology that aims at crucifying and raising sinners with Christ will better serve the theologian as preacher.

plained the cross to us in the spirit of Anselm: as God, Jesus can pay the infinite price owed to the Father for our debts; as human, Jesus must take our place as debtors. Still, some were hesitant to ponder the Crucified for too long and moved right on to Christ's lordship. The cross turned into an uneasy step on the path to real victory. Apart from their arguable merits as reflections on aspects of the story of the crucified and risen Christ, none of these theological moves made me face the cross as *my* own death and the way to new life in Christ—like that first time in Panama.

Gerhard Forde called for a much needed rethinking of the function of systematic theology in relation to the task of church proclamation. He argued that theology must move beyond its usual contentment with explaining God's past deeds and move instead to the direct speaking of God's promises to people today. Using the analogy of lovers to speak of God's dealings with humans in word and sacrament, Forde reminds us that talking about love falls short of its goal unless it leads the lover (God) and the beloved (us) to tell each other, "I love you!"² But how do theologians—professional or not—make this transition from explanation to proclamation? It is a lifelong task, entailing an ongoing Spirit-led move from being read (or spoken to) through Jesus' story to being killed and made alive with the crucified and risen Christ of the story, to being self-critical of one's detached readings (or hearings) of the same. The final self-critical stage should in turn lead to proposals for reading Jesus' story that aim at its proclamation (especially in the form of preaching) as a transforming death-and-life event.

“reading the life and work of Jesus as receiver, bearer, and giver of God's Spirit invigorates the preaching of his story as a present event in which hearers are convicted of their sins against him (God against us) and liberated from them (God for us)”

This essay represents in part the fruit of a young theologian's journey to come to grips with the relevance of his studies for the ministry of proclamation in the world.³ I argue that reading the life and work of Jesus as receiver, bearer, and giver of God's Spirit—i.e., a pneumatological or Spirit christology—invigorates the preaching of his story as a present event in which hearers are convicted of their sins against him (God against us) and liberated from them (God for us).⁴ To use the essay's subtitle, I propose that reading the story of “Jesus in the Spirit” (a pneumatological christology) facilitates “preaching in the Spirit” that aims at our being crucified and raised with Christ (a crucial aspect of christological pneumatology). First, I place my thesis in the context of a broader pastoral concern for advocating the function and use of the biblical narrative as a living spoken word from God

²Gerhard O. Forde, *Theology Is for Proclamation* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990) 3.

³More recently, Dr. Joel Okamoto of Concordia Seminary has been a key conversation partner in this journey.

⁴I use the term “liberation” to speak of God's promises of forgiveness of sins and resurrection unto eternal life.

against us and for us in the here and now. Second, I review some basic assumptions of classical Logos christology and two contemporary Spirit christologies to unmask ways in which both approaches to the Christ event can hinder proclamation. Finally, I show that a Spirit christology oriented towards the paschal mystery (i.e., death, resurrection, and Pentecost) fosters the preaching and hearing of Jesus' story as our own death and way to new life in him.

BEING READ BY THE STORY OF JESUS: GOD ADDRESSES AND SHAPES US THROUGH THE BIBLICAL NARRATIVE

With the arrival of modernity, Scripture increasingly became a tool to uncover the past and unveil universal truths rather than a living word through which God addresses humans in their current situations to change their lives. Hans Frei's turn to the world-creating function of the biblical stories in their own right for their readers or hearers stands as a classic corrective to the modern fascination with looking behind the text solely for its historical and religious references.⁵ Reading Scripture as the record or word *about* God's past deeds and eternal truths and letting Scripture read us (or speak to us) as the authoritative word *from* God today are two different ways of understanding the function and use of Scripture.

The written word informs about the past; the spoken word transforms in the present. Yet this insight seems difficult enough to get through the mind of an educated middle-class Westerner. I myself did not get it until that Sunday I invited a group of elderly Cuban immigrants to open their Bibles and join me in a study—often a synonym for an explanation—of the Gospel for the day. Not one of them opened their Bible. For various reasons, few of them could read. But in their eagerness to *listen* to God's word in Jesus' story, they taught me a valuable lesson. Above all, God had brought them to church to hear the word proclaimed to them in their present situation. For Luther, both the written and spoken forms of the word are ultimately authoritative because through them the Spirit points to Jesus Christ, the enfleshed Word; but the Reformer also teaches that the written word exists for the sake of the spoken one.⁶ How difficult it is for the children of modernity to recall the words of Paul: "So faith comes from what is heard" (Rom 10:17).

Behind the turn to the narrative lies the assumption that the Spirit addresses humans in every age through the biblical texts by appropriating what their authors said in the past with the goal of creating in the present a new community of people whose identity is shaped after Jesus' story.⁷ How then are preachers in the church

⁵Hans W. Frei, *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative: A Study in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Hermeneutics* (New Haven: Yale University, 1974).

⁶David W. Lotz, "Sola Scriptura: Luther on Biblical Authority," *Interpretation* 35/3 (1981) esp. 262-264; on the Holy Spirit's work as preacher of Christ, see Martin Luther, *The Large Catechism*, Creed 37-38, in *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, ed. Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000) 435-436 (hereafter *BC*).

⁷Stanley J. Grenz, "The Spirit and the Word: The World-Creating Function of the Text," *Theology Today* 57/3 (2000) esp. 362-369.

formed or shaped by their hearing of the spoken word that points to Jesus? This is a question of *being* a particular kind of theologian or hearer of the story.

“How are preachers in the church formed or shaped by their hearing of the spoken word that points to Jesus?”

How we see ourselves influences how we read or hear God’s story of Jesus spoken to us in the Spirit. Following Luther, Forde distinguishes theologians by the two stories that define their lives: the glory story and the cross story.⁸ At any point in time, we are likely to see ourselves in the light of either story. While theologians of glory see themselves as sinners who have fallen to some degree from God’s scale of perfection, theologians of the cross see themselves as sinners who in rebellion against their Creator want to reach upwards and take God’s place.⁹ Since the former tend to focus on their partially lost goodness and innate freedom to receive God’s favor, they will not hear Jesus’ story if that implies their complicity in his death and their irreversible rejection of God’s mercy through him. To avoid the death of the old Adam and Eve in them, theologians of glory design strategies (theologies, readings of Jesus’ story) that will make them immune to their need for repentance and forgiveness. Forde calls this self-preserving move “a defense mechanism against the cross.”¹⁰ At the passion play, they are most likely to lament and protest the fact that Jews and Romans killed their Lord. From a safe distance, they judge others without becoming a part of the story themselves. How many of us have fallen into this trap?

Theologians of the cross first hear the gospels as God’s judgment upon them for rejecting his Son as the way of salvation, but finally as God’s word of forgiveness and resurrection hope in Christ for all who repent of their sins against him. The language of “killing” and “making alive” expresses this convicting and liberating Spirit-orchestrated plunging of the theologian into Jesus’ story.¹¹ Prior to looking for ways to foster proclamation, theologians of the cross recognize that they—along with their best works and attempts at self-preservation¹²—must first die with the Crucified One in the story to be made alive with the Risen One of the story. At the passion play, they see that sinners like them killed their Lord and ask God to forgive them for oppressing his Son.

How then do theologian-preachers, shaped by the cross, use Scripture to ad-

⁸Gerhard O. Forde, *On Being a Theologian of the Cross: Reflections on Luther’s Heidelberg Disputation, 1518* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997) 4-19.

⁹Forde speaks of an “upward fall”; see *Theology Is for Proclamation*, 48-49.

¹⁰Forde, *On Being a Theologian*, 12.

¹¹See the *Apology of the Augsburg Confession* 12:53, in *BC*, 195; compare the *Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration* 5:11, in *BC*, 583, and *Large Catechism*, Creed 58, in *BC*, 438; in *Ap* 13:4-5 (*BC*, 219), we see that the Holy Spirit’s continuous plunging occurs through the spoken word and the sacraments (the visible word).

¹²A theology of the cross attacks the best—not the worst—we have to offer; see Forde, *On Being a Theologian*, esp. 1-4, 23ff.

vance the telling of Jesus' story as a death-and-life event *for others*? This is a question of *doing* theology. Gunton argues that a Spirit-mediated "logical space" exists between the biblical text and our present times, one in which "are to be found both the obedience of true Christian theology to the authoritative word and the freedom which is the form of that obedience."¹³ Theologians of the church are read or used by Scripture in a way that their Spirit-given freedom to articulate God's truth in a particular context is guided by criteria, norms, or boundaries placed on them by the scriptural content itself.¹⁴ The Spirit is the mediation that allows for the ongoing and dynamic movement from God to us through the word that points to Jesus and from us to God in response for such a gift through its faithful, articulate, and timely appropriation for our congregations.

Although the church's confession of the scriptural witness to Jesus as true God and true man remains an authoritative norm for Christian theology, the expression of this truth in the language of *homoousios* (of one substance) is a free conceptual response for a particular time and place.¹⁵ The Spirit guides the faithful reception of this norm, but also its fresh appropriation for each generation in which the church seeks to crucify and raise sinners with Christ. In every new age, theologians have to face Jesus' question, "But who do you say that I am?" (Matt 16:15). The classical answer has been the incarnate word. I propose a complementary one that points to the incarnate Son as receiver, bearer, and giver of God's Spirit. Will any of these affirmations lead to proclamation?

BEING SELF-CRITICAL: LOGOS AND SPIRIT CHRISTOLOGIES AS HINDRANCES TO PROCLAMATION

If the written and spoken forms of the word ultimately point to the enfleshed word, then we must at once identify this Word (Logos) with Jesus of Nazareth. But how? Assuming that the theologian confesses Jesus Christ as true God and true man, he or she may proceed to answer Jesus' question "from above" or "from below." As an approach "from above," classical christology proceeds from the Logos's eternal preexistence to his assumption of a human nature at a point in time (hypostatic or personal union). What matters most in this methodology is explaining the *how* of Jesus Christ's individual inner constitution as the God-man. In Cantalamesa's words, "the problem of the foundation of salvation (that is, how the Savior is *made*) becomes more important than the problem of the unfolding of salvation (that is, what the Savior *does*)."¹⁶

In classical christology, events in Jesus' life and work are interpreted through the lens of the hypostatic union and within the framework of the exchange of di-

¹³Colin Gunton, "Using and Being Used: Scripture and Systematic Theology," *Theology Today* 47/3 (1990) 253.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, 255, 258-259.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, 253-254.

¹⁶Raniero Cantalamesa, *The Holy Spirit in the Life of Jesus: The Mystery of Christ's Baptism*, trans. Alan Neame (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1994) 8.

vine and human attributes in the one person of Christ. The cross and the resurrection do not play the central role. For instance, the crucifixion may be explained as a logical necessity to satisfy God's justice—Anselm's highest-ranked divine attribute—and on the basis of the personal union: “[Since] none but God can make and none but man ought to make [satisfaction], it is necessary for the God-man to make it.”¹⁷ Logos christology can speak of Jesus' glorification as a reality established at the incarnation; consequently, his glorification at and after the resurrection only seems to confirm for others something that he already fully possesses in his humanity through the hypostatic union.¹⁸ Questions on Christ's death and resurrection are referred back to the moment of his ontological make-up as God-man. The language of divine preexistence and incarnation frames the issues.

In the history of dogma, Logos christology stands mainly as an apologetic approach to Jesus' question, driven by a legitimate concern to protect his divine equality with God and the unity of his person against heresies. Yet it remains an ideal theology for explanation, not proclamation. By placing the weight of discourse on prior conditions that define the Word's individual identity prior to a discussion of his successive works for us leading to his death and resurrection, Logos christology can give theologians of glory an excuse to avoid the cross.¹⁹ Even such an honorable theology can become a hindrance to the old sinner in us being killed and made alive with Christ.

“liberal Spirit christology argues for Jesus' divinity in terms of his unique possession of Spirit”

A Spirit christology that begins “from below” with the man Jesus and attempts to arrive at his divinity through a consideration of the Spirit's indwelling in him cannot claim immunity from falling into comfortable explanation. As in early Ebionite christologies, Jesus could be reduced to our greatest example of piety “in order to enhance the sanctification of man himself.”²⁰

Against notions of the Holy Spirit as a personal agent equal to and distinct from God or as a divine hypostasis, liberal (post-Chalcedonian) Spirit christology

¹⁷Anselm, *Cur Deus Homo?* 2:6, in *St. Anselm: Basic Writings*, 2d ed., trans. S. N. Deane (Chicago: Open Court, 1962) 259. On the priority of God's justice over his sole compassion, see 1:12-13.

¹⁸See *FC*, *SD* 8:12-13, 23, in *BC*, 618, 620 (but see *FC*, *SD* 8:51, in *BC*, 625, for a possible qualification of this analysis).

¹⁹In this section, I have applied Forde's critique of christologies in which “continuity is established by going back to a Jesus either prior to or at least relatively untouched by the cross”; see *Theology Is for Proclamation*, 69. Luther believed that knowing Christ's eternal deity apart from knowing the Son as the Father's revelation for us would not bother the devil; see Paul Althaus, *The Theology of Martin Luther*, trans. Robert C. Schultz (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1966) 190.

²⁰Philip J. Rosato, “Spirit Christology: Ambiguity and Promise,” *Theological Studies* 38/3 (1977) 435. Luther also believed that an imitation of Jesus' human piety detached from faith in him as the Father's revelation for us would not bother the devil; Althaus, *The Theology of Martin Luther*, 190.

defines Spirit as at once God's other-worldly (transcendent) and worldly (immanent) presence in all creatures. This approach argues for Jesus' divinity in terms of his unique possession of Spirit. Since Jesus is the fullest expression of the cooperative interaction between God's Spirit and the spirit in humans, he has "such a unity of will and operation with God" that he can be called God himself in an adverbial sense, namely, in "that in all his actions the human Jesus acted divinely."²¹ Jesus' being and acting as one possessed by Spirit makes him significantly distinct from other saints, but only in degree.

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A conservative Spirit christology defines the Spirit as one person of the Triune God distinct from creation but open to reaching out to creatures in freedom and love. The conservative (neo-Chalcedonian) approach distinguishes between the Logos's and the Spirit's presence in Jesus but seeks to relate them in some way. Walter Kasper suggests a synthesis: "By wholly filling Jesus' humanity, the Spirit endows it with the openness by which it can freely and wholly constitute a mould for God's self-communication."²² The Holy Spirit's sanctification of Jesus in his life of incarnate obedience to God and service for us stands as the historical presupposition or condition for affirming this openness and the fact that he is not simply a mere man but God the Logos.²³

Kasper rightly sees the incarnation as the whole history of Christ (not just a past event), but he assumes Rahner's view of the hypostatic union. Assuming the openness of the human spirit to God on the basis of God's own immanent presence with his creatures, Rahner sees the Word's incarnation as the highest and definitive expression of human (created) potentiality for reaching out to God and for receiving God's own (uncreated) grace or self-communication.²⁴ Despite their differences, Lampe and Kasper share a common anthropology. Jesus' openness in the Spirit to God's presence in him (as seen in his life and mission) serves as the paradigm for our openness to God in that we (like Jesus) have an innate, grace-given role (self-transcendence)—even if a little one—to play in making God's gracious presence in us possible.

If a Spirit christology will lead to proclamation, a few correctives are needed.

²¹G. W. H. Lampe, "The Holy Spirit and the Person of Christ," in *Christ, Faith, and History: Cambridge Studies in Christology*, ed. S. W. Sykes and J. P. Clayton (London: Cambridge, 1972) 124.

²²Walter Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, trans. V. Green (New York: Paulist, 1976) 251. This thesis in itself is susceptible to the charge that it conceives of a logical existence of a humanity endowed with the Spirit prior to and for union with the Logos.

²³Ibid. I see no problem if this argument refers to our knowledge of Christ's lordship and deity (*ordo cognoscendi*).

²⁴See Karl Rahner, "Current Problems in Christology," in *Theological Investigations*, vol. 1, trans. Cornelius Ernst (Baltimore: Helicon, 1961) 163-165; cf. Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, 266-267.

Although Jesus is like one of us, we cannot forget that he is also “without sin” (Heb 4:15). The Holy Spirit makes the child in Mary’s womb “holy” and the incarnate “Son of God” from conception (Luke 1:35). This unrepeatable indwelling of the Spirit in Jesus surpasses God’s presence in humans not merely in degree but in nature. The Son’s incarnation by the Spirit of God is the historical side of the eternal Son’s unique hypostatic or personal openness to the Father in the Spirit. It is not simply the culmination in history of the Spirit’s general work in creation whereby all human creatures are given a partial disposition towards God.²⁵ Theologians of the cross know that, since Eden, they have lost all inclination to live in the Spirit and thus according to God’s will. Jesus’ reception of the Spirit from conception allows for the fulfillment of God’s original plan for his creatures, frustrated by their rebellion, for it serves as the unparalleled condition for the Holy Spirit’s gracious indwelling of the saints as gift from the Father through his anointed, crucified, and risen Son. Placing the weight of discourse on our potential for receiving God’s Spirit, liberal and conservative Spirit christologies can give theologians of glory an excuse to dodge the cross.

BEING CRUCIFIED AND RAISED WITH CHRIST: SPIRIT CHRISTOLOGY AS A GROUND FOR CONVICTING AND LIBERATING PROCLAMATION

Due to its strong interest in the problem of Christ’s once-for-all inner constitution as the God-man, Logos christology sees the incarnation as a static event in the past and defines the person of Christ in terms of his individual subsistence (especially against modalism). A Spirit christology seeks to complement this approach with a dynamic view of the incarnation inclusive of the successive mysteries of Jesus’ life (especially baptism, death, and resurrection) and an ecstatic understanding of his person that looks at him in his relations to the Father and for us in the Spirit. If the Son is most deeply himself in his relating to others freely and out of love, then the shift from Christ’s being-in-himself to his being-for-us in the power of God’s Spirit can already foster the preaching and hearing of the gospels as the unfolding soteriological drama of God’s deeds for us in Jesus.

Admittedly, Jesus’ exorcisms, healings, and preaching are all events in which the Spirit plays a defining role. As theologians of glory, we could focus only on one of these awesome facets of Jesus’ ministry and forget the tragic result of these very deeds and sayings in the Spirit, namely, his innocent death at the hands of sinners like us. For this reason, a Spirit christology that aims at the crucifying and raising of sinners with Christ must first lead hearers of the story to Jesus’ suffering and death on the cross, but then also to his being raised from the dead and his giving of the Spirit to us. Is calling for the centrality of the paschal mystery an imposition on the gospels? Or does the story of Jesus in the Spirit at once point the hearer to Lent,

²⁵“The cry, ‘Abba! Father!’ is not a universal cry, but that created in us by the Spirit of Jesus Christ.” Olaf Hansen, “Spirit Christology: A Way out of Our Dilemma?” in *The Holy Spirit in the Life of the Church: From Biblical Times to the Present*, ed. Paul D. Opsahl (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1978) 200.

Easter, and Pentecost? The latter is the case. The gospels (especially Luke and John) have an inner dynamic that flows from Jesus' receiving and bearing of the Spirit of God to his dispensing of the same unto others.²⁶

However, the key to place hearers into the paschal mystery begins with their incorporation into Jesus' anointing or baptism at the Jordan—not into his incarnation as such. Unlike Jesus' non-transferable possession of the Spirit from the moment of his conception (incarnation), the Spirit's new descent on and presence in him at the Jordan can be communicated to us: "He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain is the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit" (John 1:33; cf. Luke 3:16 and parallels). Jesus' reception of the Spirit of the Father at the Jordan is the presupposition of the church's reception of the same Spirit through the crucified and risen Christ from Pentecost onwards (Luke 24:46-49; Acts 1:3-5). Logos christology can point hearers to Christ's divinity as the ground for the possibility of their forgiveness and to his exalted humanity (already from the time of the personal union) as the ground for their divinization or glorification. Such a move tends to be more explanatory than kerygmatic. I propose that the language of anointing and baptism—in contrast to preexistence and incarnation—is more conducive to grasping and advancing the Spirit-initiated plunging of sinners into a present-day reenactment of Jesus' anointing with the Father's Spirit. When the pastor says to us, "I baptize you...", such a Spirit-led reenactment occurs for us and we are thereby initiated into the mysteries of Jesus' life.

Jesus' baptism in water takes him on a mission that leads to his baptism in blood at Golgotha. Upon his anointing, Jesus enters this mission "to fulfill all righteousness" for us as obedient Son and servant (Matt 3:13-15; 8:16-17, quoting Isa 53:4; Luke 3:22 and parallels, quoting Isa 42:1; Luke 4:18-19 and Acts 10:38). He is led or driven by the same Spirit into the desert, where Satan puts his faithfulness as Son to the test: "If you are the Son of God..." (Luke 4:1-13 and parallels). Jesus' deeds in obedience to God lead to his death on the cross (cf. Phil 2:8). The term baptism no longer applies only to Jesus' anointing for mission at the Jordan, but serves also as a metaphor for the end of his mission at Golgotha—his highest act of service as a ransom for many (Luke 12:50; Mark 10:38, 45).

Significantly, in John's Gospel, Jesus' giving of the Spirit—"rivers of living water"—to those who believe in him must await his glorification (7:38-39), which does not come until the end of the gospel narrative. It is as the risen Lord that Jesus breathes the Holy Spirit on his disciples, bestowing on them the power to forgive the sins of the penitent and bind those of the impenitent (20:22-23). Since the Son's obedience unto death already points to his glorification (cf. 13:31-32; 17:1-5), Jesus' handing over of his *pneuma* (literally, his life) on the cross (19:30)

²⁶For the link between Spirit and sonship in Luke-Acts, see James D. G. Dunn, "Spirit and Holy Spirit in the New Testament," in *The Christ & the Spirit*, vol. 2, *Pneumatology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998) 8-9; for John, see Felix Porsch, *El Espíritu Santo, defensor de los creyentes: La actividad del Espíritu según el evangelio de san Juan*, trans. Severiano Talavero Tovar (Salamanca, Spain: Secretariado Trinitario, 1983) esp. 27-34.

can point at a symbolic level to his imminent giving of the Spirit as risen Lord.²⁷ The blood and the water flowing from Jesus' pierced side (19:34) may also point to this indissoluble link between Jesus' death and his dispensing of the Spirit to the church.²⁸ In 1 John 5:6-8, the Spirit of truth not only testifies to the baptism and death of Jesus "who came by water and blood," but also makes possible the church's participation in such mysteries through the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper.²⁹ When the pastor says to us, "I give you to eat and drink the body and blood of Christ..." the Spirit incorporates us into Jesus' own death (cf. 1 Cor 10:16; 11:26).

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Being raised from the dead "according to the Spirit of holiness" (Rom 1:4; cf. 1 Tim 3:16, and 1 Pet 3:18), Jesus enters his final stage of sonship in the history of salvation as Lord (Acts 13:33). Seated at God's right hand, he is the end-time giver of the promised Spirit whom he receives from the Father to pour out for the forgiveness of sins on all who call on the Lord's name with a contrite and trusting heart (Acts 2:17-21, quoting Joel 2:28-32; Acts 2:33, 38-39). As last Adam and life-giving Spirit, Jesus becomes the first fruits of our final adoption as God's children in the coming resurrection through his Spirit (1 Cor 15:20-23, 45; Rom 8:11, 22-23). Of course, in our case, sharing in Jesus' death and resurrection happens already and at once when we share in his anointing through Christian baptism for the forgiveness of our sins and the hope of our resurrection unto eternal life with him (Rom 6:3-11).

A Spirit christology shows that Jesus' giving of the Spirit to the church since Pentecost in word and sacrament depends on his prior reception and bearing of the Spirit in his mission as faithful Son and suffering servant. I have linked our participation in Jesus' mysteries to the sacraments (visible word), but the same must be done for preaching. From Rom 6:4, Luther gathers that baptism is not only a past event but a way of life characterized by the daily drowning of the old sinner in us "through daily contrition and repentance" and his or her daily being raised anew "to live before God in righteousness and purity forever."³⁰ Preaching actualizes this life in us.

²⁷Porsch, *El Espíritu Santo*, 103-104; for John, the Son's giving of the Spirit to those who believe in him presupposes his receiving and bearing of the Spirit from God "without measure" (3:34).

²⁸Ibid., 104-106; on a *pneumatologia crucis* (pneumatology of the cross), in which the Spirit's coming depends on Christ's passion, see Jürgen Moltmann, *The Spirit of Life: A Universal Affirmation*, trans. Margaret Kohl (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992) 60-71.

²⁹Miguel Ángel Tábet, "El Testimonio 'del Espíritu, y del agua y la sangre' (1 Jn 5,8)," in *El Espíritu Santo y la Iglesia: XIX Simposio Internacional de Teología de la Universidad de Navarra*, ed. Pedro Rodríguez et al. (Pamplona, Spain: Universidad de Navarra, 1999) 71-90.

³⁰Martin Luther, "The Small Catechism," Baptism 11-14, in *BC*, 360.

If Jesus' story has an orientation that guides hearers into his paschal mystery, then preachers must face and act on what precedes and follows from that center. What does this mean? First, preachers must draw hearers into the story by pointing out that everything Jesus claims to do and does *in the Spirit* and, therefore, in obedience to his Father and for the sake of the neighbor, gets him in trouble and leads to his suffering and death at the hands of sinners like us.³¹ If preachers are to convict their hearers of their complicity in Jesus' death, they will want to address them something like this: "Jesus is God's anointed Son, the one who delivers you from the oppression of sin, death, and the devil. But you will not have God's mercy. You are like the ones who want to throw him off a cliff" (Luke 4:14-30). Another example: "The kingdom of God comes upon you every time Jesus drives out Satan from your lives. But you reject God's Son. You are like the ones who make him out to be Satan" (Luke 11:14-23; cf. Matt 12:22-30). Preachers of the cross convict hearers by showing them that they are oppressors of the Son. If hearers see themselves as such oppressors, then they have been crucified with Christ. Yet conviction is not yet proclamation in the ultimate sense unless it also leads to liberation.

"God is against us in order to be for us"

If our complicity in Jesus' eventual death precedes the paschal mystery, what follows from this center? Simply stated, the church's preaching of Jesus' story. Peter seeks to bring sinners to face their guilt in Jesus' death (Acts 2:23, 36), and I have applied this insight to the stories that precede the paschal mystery. Yet the goal of this killing word is to announce forgiveness and resurrection hope to all who repent of their rejection of God's mercy in Jesus (Acts 2:37-39). God is against us in order to be for us. Going back to Luke 4 and 11 once again, preachers may finally address hearers as follows: "You are the poor to whom God's anointed Son brings good news, the captives whom he sets free, the blind whom he heals, the oppressed whom he liberates." In Jesus' name and in his stead, preachers are given the Spirit to proclaim release from the evil one: "I release you from the bondage of sin, death, and Satan. I forgive your sins and give you life."

Ever since Pentecost, each time we are convicted of and liberated from our sins against God's anointed Son and servant through word and sacrament, we undergo a Spirit-led reenactment or actualization of Jesus' baptism, death, and resurrection in our lives. We are read by (or spoken to) by the living word of God that points to Jesus, and in turn we are shaped into theologians of the cross who are cru-

³¹A recognition of our oppression and killing of God's Son complements the dimension of the atonement that sees Jesus himself as freely going to the cross to reconcile us with the Father (e.g., John 10:18; Heb 9:14) and that sees in the cross the fulfillment of God's foreknown purposes (e.g., 1 Pet 1:20; Rev 13:8). But if proclamation is to occur, these aspects cannot minimize our own guilt in Jesus' death (esp. Acts 2:23). See Forde, *Theology Is for Proclamation*, 121-127.

cified and raised with him each day until our resurrection from the dead unto everlasting life. The church's participation in Jesus' mysteries also involves her sharing in his mission of obedience to God and service to the neighbor who is Christ in her midst. I have yet to explore the missiological and ethical aspects of what it means for the church to live in the Spirit of Jesus Christ today. For now, I shall be content if my proposal for reading the Christ event from a pneumatological angle paves the way for theologian-preachers to make the transition from their reflections on Jesus' story to its proclamation as a death-and-life event for others. ⊕

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