STR 11.1 (Spring 2020): 79–98

Breathe on Us, O Breath of God: The Pneumatological Grounding of Ecclesial Identity

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While modern theologians have frequently decried the lack of focus on pneumatology in theological inquiry, recent years have witnessed a resurgence of interest in the Spirit's procession and work. Additionally, contemporary theologians have tended to focus on Christological or Trinitarian approaches to theological anthropology, paying considerably less attention to how the Spirit informs our understanding of the human person. Beginning with a discussion of the Spirit's role in constituting the church, this essay explores the Spirit's fundamental role in grounding a coherent account of human identity. In it I argue that the Spirit is the one who grounds our conception of the good life, reorients our perspective of our pasts, situating them within the greater story of God's redemption, and enables our proper worship in the present, forming us rightly as worshippers of God.

Key Words: ecclesiology, Holy Spirit, identity, pneumatology, theological anthropology

While there has been a resurgence of interest in theological anthropology in recent years, especially its Christological or Trinitarian contours, there is still ample room to explore how ecclesiology and pneumatology inform our understanding of the human person. While the question of "who am I" has plagued philosophers and novelists alike, I contend that if we approach this question pneumatologically and ecclesiologically, we will see that the Christian's "identity" is situated within a community on the road to fellowship with God.[1] Consequently, we find ourselves presented with the dogmatic question: *how does the* missio *of the Spirit, the one*

[1] This is certainly not to suggest that a pneumatological or ecclesial approach to theological anthropology is the only or best approach to theological anthropology. Rather, I am suggesting that Christian reflection on the human creature will be enhanced when significant attention is paid to ecclesial and pneumatological considerations. For Trinitarian approaches to theological anthropology see Miroslav Volf, *After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997); Stanley Grenz, *The Social God and the Relational Self: A Trinitarian Theology of the* imago Dei (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001). For Christological approaches to theological anthropology, see Marc Cortez, *ReSourcing Theological Anthropology: A Constructive Account of Humanity in the Light of Christ* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2018); Kathryn Tanner, *Christ the Key*, Current Issues in Theology (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009). And for a pneumatological approach to theological anthropology, see Marc Cortez, "Idols, Images, and a Spirit-ed Anthropology: A Pneumatological Account of the *Imago Dei*," in *Third Article Theology: A Pneumatological Dogmatics*, ed. Myk Habets (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2016), 267–82 .

gathering this community, inform our understanding of human identity? In other words, how does the unifying, sanctifying, and worship-orienting work of the Holy Spirit help us to articulate a coherent account of human identity? This essay will argue that a coherent account of human identity must be robustly constituted through the mission of the Holy Spirit as he grounds our conception of the "good life" and gathers the disparate events of our lives within the greater story of God's redemption.[2] It is the presence of God through the dwelling of the Spirit that makes the Christian community unique and, consequently, grounds human identity.[3] This essay will

[2] Throughout this essay the "good life" will refer to the *telos* that motivates human action. Christian Smith argues that human persons "are able . . . to identify and rank those states, conditions, and experiences they believe will serve their well being or the well being of others they prize" (Christian Smith, *What Is a Person?: Rethinking Humanity, Social Life, and the Moral Good from the Person Up* [Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2010], 46). Human persons then act in order to realize this state or condition of well being. The "good life," then, describes this vision of the future which motivates human action.

[3] While I will return to this in greater detail later, the phrases "human identity" and "personal identity" will be used in this essay to refer to that which distinguishes one person from another. It is comprised of our self-understandings, the "facts of our existence," and is further developed through our actions. On the one hand, as Christian Smith argues, these identities are "self-understandings derived from occupying stable locations in social, behavioral, mental, and moral space that securely define who and what somebody is, for themselves and for others" (*What Is a Person?* 50–51). However, at the same time, identity consists of more than just our self-understandings. As Rowan Williams notes, "what makes a person, and what makes me *this* person rather than another, is not simply a set of facts. . . . [I]t's the enormous fact of my being here rather than elsewhere, being in these relations with those around me, being a child of these parents, a parent of these children, the friend of x, the not-so-intimate friend of y" (*Being Human: Bodies, Minds, Persons* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2018], 31). In other words, there

unfold in three stages. First, I will examine the Holy Spirit's mission as he gives the ecclesial community the gifts of holiness and divine love. Second, I will argue that the covenant community is uniquely identified as the place where God dwells by his Spirit. It is the presence of God in the Spirit that marks the people of God as unique. Finally, I will argue that such a pneumatological emphasis demands a "Spirit-ed" account of human identity as the Spirit reorients and re-narrates our lives, enabling them to find coherence in light of God's redemptive work.

Divine Election and the Mission of the Spirit

While there are many other passages of Scripture that could prove fruitful in understanding the manner in which God's presence reconstitutes the identity of his chosen people, I will root this study on the book of Ephesians. Ephesians is particularly pertinent to our present task. Paul continually adjures his readers to understand themselves in light of God's redemptive work. He begins Ephesians with a description of the Triune God's redemptive work as he has chosen a people for himself.[4] Much has been made of the nature of God's act of election. But regardless of whether God has elected particular people, a group, or all of humanity in Christ, God elects for the purpose of gathering the church into holy fellowship with himself. Simply put, God's people have been elected for a specific end: "to be holy and blameless before him" (1:4). Having already described his audience as "holy ones" (1:1), Paul illustrates how the ecclesial community's identity is predicated upon divine action. "Before the

is an objective component to identity, part of which notably includes our status as creatures before the Creator and image bearers of God. Finally, as Williams goes on to observe, as we speak, act, respond, and change the manner in which we relate to others, we add to the "facts of our existence" and, consequently, continue to develop our identities over time (*Being Human*, 32).

[4] Many other texts of Scripture might warrant consideration when discussing the relationship between the Spirit and the church. Certainly, Rom 8 and John 14–17 have a great deal to say about the mission of the Spirit and how this relates to the reorientation of the individual's identity. Additionally, the book of Acts contains the most references to the Spirit out of any book in the Bible. However, it seems that Ephesians is particularly unique in its *communal* and *existential* emphases. We would also do well to remember that it is not merely the number of references that is important, but the nature of those references and the theological judgements that are being made in and through those references. Consequently, for those reasons and the necessary limitations of space and scope, this essay will focus predominantly on the Spirit's work in the book of Ephesians.

foundation of the world," the Triune God determines to realize holiness in a particular people: the church.[5] Holiness emerges as a key theme throughout the book of the Ephesians, which is understandable given its ecclesiological focus. As Greg Lyons observes, "Ephesians has sixteen occurrences of the Greek word-family (ἁγι-/ἁγν-) translated, holy, holiness, sanctify, sanctification in holiness. The church is defined in terms of holiness."[6] But what does it mean for the church to be holy? And what are the implications for how its identity is constituted? To answer this question, we must turn to investigate the mission of the Spirit.

Paul begins his letter to the Ephesian church with an articulation of the victory God has accomplished through Jesus's death, resurrection, and ascension. Timothy Gombis argues that Eph 1:20–2:22 serves as a depiction of divine warfare where God defeats evil powers, exalts Christ as cosmic Lord and King, and sets apart the church as the gathered temple that manifests and celebrates his victory.[7] He writes, "The basic thrust of

[5] Carey C. Newman is wary of understanding election as a pre-temporal act, arguing that it undermines the historicity of the cross. "Painting election as simply, or even primarily, a pre-temporal (and therefore decidedly *un*historical) decree devalues or ignores a *real* incarnation, a *real* Gethsemane, a *real* cross, and a *real* resurrection" ("Election and Predestination in Ephesians 1:4–6a: An Exegetical-Theological Study of the Historical, Christological Realization of God's Purpose," *Review & Expositor* 93.2 [1996]: 239). While Newman is right to be wary of any proclivities to ignore the historicity of the resurrection and the negation of God's historical-salvific acts, Otfried Hoifus helpfully observes that the notion of a pre-temporal, pre-creational selection of a people was present in Jewish thought. Drawing from Jub. 2.16–19, Midrasch Tehilim's commentary on Ps 74:2, and *Joseph and Aseneth,* he observes that all three contain references to a pre-temporal election of Israel. He helpfully concludes, "In Eph 1:4 the words πρὸ καταβολῆς κόσμου are given a wholly different, indeed a completely new emphasis: solely and only God's free and sovereign grace, which radically excludes any performance and worthiness, is the basis of the election constituting the church" ("Erwählt vor Grundlegung der Welt [Eph 1:4]," *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche* 62.1–2 [1971]: 128). Divine election can then serve as a bridge from the processions of the Triune God to the missions of individual persons of the Trinity as they are played out in history. God's actions *ad extra* reveal their origin in divine life *ad intra*.

[6] Greg Lyons, "Church and Holiness in Ephesians," in *Holiness and Ecclesiology in the New Testament*, ed. Kent E. Brower and Andy Johnson (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 242.

[7] Timothy G. Gombis, *The Drama of Ephesians: Participating in the Triumph of God* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2010), 90.

Paul's story is that God has defeated the fallen powers and authorities in Christ Jesus and has installed Christ Jesus as cosmic ruler over all of reality. God is manifesting his victory by creating the church, in which he is overcoming the effects of evil powers on his world."[8] For Paul, Christ is Lord over creation and is the one to whom all things will be subjugated. In Eph 1:10, Paul states that all of creation has been "brought under the headship of" (ἀνακεφαλαιόω) Christ. Arnold suggests that this term signifies that Christ stands as the agent of bringing all of creation under God's sovereignty.[9] Since creation was thrown into a state of disharmony because of the fall, ἀνακεφαλαιόω also communicates the re-integration of creation through the rule of Christ.[10] The church, as the body of Christ, relates to Christ's rule in a unique way: it is the community that is shaped by his rule and to whom he communicates the blessings of redemption.[11] The church's status as a monument of Christ's victory differentiates it from the surrounding world and its communities.[12] However, as Christine Gerber notes, we must remember that Christology and soteriology play a

[8] Gombis, *The Drama of Ephesians*, 86. Frank Thielman also sees this narrative arc of God's triumph in Christ over the enemies of God's people, particularly in Paul's quotation of Ps 68:18 in Eph 4:7–8. He writes, "Paul's interest in Ps. 68:18, therefore, lay not only in the 'gifts' that the psalm mentions and that . . . were given to people, but also in the psalm's expression of God's triumph over his enemies" ("Ephesians," in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old*, ed. G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007], 823–25).

[9] Clinton E. Arnold, *Ephesians*, ZECNT (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 89.

[10] Harold W. Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), 221. Thielman argues that this reading overlaps with how the verb ἀνακεφαλαιόω and noun ἀνακεφαλαίωσις were used in antiquity, citing the Roman rhetorical theorist Quintilian. He writes, "If Paul used the term in Eph. 1:10 with this common oratorical and literary meaning, then he is metaphorically describing God's plan to sum up the disparate creation in Christ. Just as an orator or writer draws together the elements of an argument and shows how they demonstrate the chief point of the speech or composition, so Christ will bring order to the universe" (Frank Thielman, *Ephesians*, BECNT [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010], 67).

[11] The language of the church as the body of Christ appears frequently in Ephesians (1:23; 2:16; 3:6; 4:4, 12, 16; 5:29–30). Gerber argues that the "head-body metaphor" is used by Paul to communicate the unique, hierarchical relationship between Christ and his church ("Die alte Braut und Christi Leib: Zum ekklesiologischen Entwurf des Epheserbriefs," *NTS* 59.2 [2013]: 207–8).

[12] Daniel K. Darko, *No Longer Living as the Gentiles: Differentiation and Shared Ethical Values in Ephesians 4.17–6.9*, LNTS 375 (London: T&T Clark, 2008), 32.

prominent role in Ephesians. She argues that these two loci set the foundation for the letter's ecclesiology in that the disparate individuals of the church are gathered together into one body of reconciled members united under their one Head.[13] While Christ is the Lord of all creation, the church is that community that rightly recognizes the world as belonging to God.

But how does this recognition and reformation according to the rule of Christ actually occur? The answer lies, at least partly, in the mission of the Spirit. As Balthasar rightly observes, the Spirit of God "is that by which God discloses himself as God, to what is not God."[14] Sent from the Father and Son, the Spirit has a mission to serve as the self-communication and self-revelation of the love of the Living God to his people (cf. 1:17; 4:20). As the revealer of the love of God, the Holy Spirit unites the lost to the one who rules over all, communicating the self-revelation of God to his people both cognitively and covenantally. In so doing, the Spirit makes the ecclesial community holy, that is, he sets them apart as the people to whom God has revealed himself and called to right living (cf. 5:14). Additionally, this love and call is effectual: the Spirit stirs their hearts in loving adoration of their Creator and Redeemer, enabling this holiness to be concretized in specific action in the present. The Spirit, as the Love of God poured into our hearts (cf. Rom 5:5), sanctifies and proleptically conforms the ecclesial community in the present, progressively realizing its eschatological nature. He cultivates a love for God that leads to right living in the present. Christopher Holmes writes, "The Spirit's mission of fostering love for the Son is commensurate with the Spirit's procession as the love of the Father for the Son and the Son for the Father. The creature's joy is to share in the love that is proper to the Holy Trinity."[15] Therefore, the Spirit makes the church holy and blameless, both positionally (vis-à-vis union with Christ) and proleptically (vis-à-vis the concretization of God's redemptive plan in the present).

However, there also seems to be a priestly or cultic aspect to the church's holiness.[16] The church is identified as the place where God

[13] Gerber, "Die alte Braut und Christi Leib," 218.

[14] Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Spirit of Truth*, vol. III of *Theo-Logic*, trans. Adrian Walker (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2005), 63.

[15] Christopher R. J. Holmes, *The Holy Spirit*, ed. Michael Allen and Scott R. Swain, New Studies in Dogmatics (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015), 75.

[16] Markus Barth argues that the language of ἁγίους καὶ ἀμώμους κατενώπιον αὐτοῦ conveys strong thematic parallels to the Old Covenant sacrificial systems. "The adjective 'holy' has a strong priestly element. . . . The attributed 'blameless' alludes to the indispensable quality of sacrificial animals (Exod 29:1, 38; Levi

dwells and where people offer him the kind of worship he seeks, worship grounded in Spirit and in truth (cf. John 4:23). Put differently, the church is a community that has been gathered and washed in the Son before the Father, offering worship empowered by and grounded in the Spirit as a proleptic realization of their eschatological end. Additionally, it appears that Paul's letter, particularly in Eph 2–4, intentionally builds upon temple imagery to illustrate how the new covenant community's identity is grounded in the presence of God. In so doing, Paul seems to develop concepts from the function of the temple in Israel's history.

The Temple and the Presence of God

In 1 Kgs 8, after finishing the construction of the temple, Solomon gathers the people of Israel to watch as the Ark of the Covenant is brought into it. After the priests carry the ark into the most holy place, "a cloud filled the house of the Lord, so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud, for the glory of the Lord filled the house of the Lord" (vv. 10–11 ESV). The description of God's descent upon the temple in 1 Kgs 8 invokes images of God's descent at Sinai and the tabernacle. As Lissa Beal notes, "YHWH's glory chases the priests from the temple. The miracle of the exodus tabernacle is repeated (Exod 40:34–35) in the astounding proof of YHWH's presence in his people's midst."[17] In all three places, YHWH manifests his presence in the form of a cloud (*anan*).[18] This pattern establishes continuity between the exodus from Egypt, the Sinai event, and the conquest of Canaan.[19] In other words, the

22:19–26); perhaps also to the exclusion of cripples from priestly office (Lev 21:17–23; cf. II Sam 5:8)" (*Ephesians*, The Anchor Bible Commentary [Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1974], 1:113; cf. Thielman, *Ephesians*, 49). If that is indeed the case, then Paul is building a theme which he will continue to elucidate throughout the letter, namely, the relationship between the church as the new temple and the proper worship of God.

[17] Lissa M. Wray Beal, *1 & 2 Kings*, Apollos Old Testament Commentary (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2014), 135.

[18] John Gray, *I & II Kings: A Commentary*, 2nd rev. ed., The Old Testament Library (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1970), 210; Volkmar Fritz, *1 & 2 Kings: A Continental Commentary*, trans. Anselm Hagedorn (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003), 89.

[19] This connection is enhanced further when 1 Kgs 8 is read in light of Exod 33:1–6, 15–16. Following the people's failure at Sinai, God threatens to leave them lest their sin lead to their destruction (v. 3). Moses responds by imploring the Lord to accompany them since it is his presence that marks them as distinct

same God who delivered them from enslavement is present with them now. Block argues that YHWH's movement "from the holy of holies in the tabernacle to the holy of holies in the temple" establishes the temple "as YHWH's dwelling place and [marks] it out for sacred space."[20] The temple becomes the new tabernacle: the place where God's presence is manifested and where right worship is offered. The spectacular nature of this event does not go unnoticed by onlookers as evidenced in Solomon's prayer. Not only does he rejoice in the uniqueness of experiencing God's *hesed* (1 Kgs 8:22–26), but he celebrates the gift of God's presence (vv. 27–30). In other words, Solomon recognizes that Israel is unique insofar as they are the people with whom God has chosen to dwell.

Based on 1 Kgs 8, the temple serves as the progression of the Sinai event and the culmination of Israel's liturgical life. It is there that the presence of God is manifested in a qualitatively unique manner, differentiating Israel from the nations.[21] In fact, it is God's presence that establishes the temple *qua* temple. As Walter Brueggemann notes, "the cult, in its many forms and expressions, mediates Yahweh's 'real presence.' In worship, Israel is dealing with the person, character, will, purpose, and presence of Yahweh."[22] Moreover, because God is present, that is, because the transcendent God has covenanted to imminently dwell with his people in a unique way, he must be worshipped properly. However, the commission to worship God rightly moves beyond cultic actions and into a life of witness. Beale notes that the tabernacle is repeatedly described as a "witness" against or for Israel, signifying Israel's vocation "to accept God's 'testimony' and then bear witness to God's saving presence with her."[23] The story of Israel, in many ways, becomes the story of the presence of

from the other nations (vv. 15–16). Here, Moses ties the identity of the people of Israel with the presence of God. Christopher J. H. Wright notes, Moses "knows that without the presence of the Lord God, Israel would be no different from the rest of the nations. And *only by Israel being distinct from the nations was there any purpose in being Israel at all*" (*The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative* [Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2006], 335, emphasis original).

[20] Daniel Block, *For the Glory of God: Recovering a Biblical Theology of Worship* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2014), 205.

[21] Wright, *The Mission of God*, 334–35.

[22] Walter Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament: Testimony, Dispute, Advocacy* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997), 650.

[23] G. K. Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God*, NSBT 17 (Downers Grove, IL InterVarsity Press, 2004), 118.

God with a particular people in a particular place and how God's presence reorients their life and their worship.

This theology of temple is appropriated and developed throughout the New Testament where a greater emphasis is placed on God's presence with his people by virtue of the Spirit. Joseph Greene observes, "The temple was the place of God's presence. Cloud, glory, and eventually Spirit were all terms used to depict God's presence in the temple. . . . The Spirit represented God's working presence among his people and, by implication, was related to his manifest presence in the temple."[24] He notes a transition in Second Temple literature wherein the Spirit increasingly becomes the preferred term to refer to God's presence among his people, particularly noting its eschatological dimensions. Greene contends that in both the Qumran community and the book of Jubilees, the pouring out of the Spirit marked the inauguration of God's new creation.[25] Beale argues that Exod 40 and 1 Kgs 8 are alluded to in Luke's account of the Spirit's descent at Pentecost, which is particularly insightful given that passage's relationship to the emergence of the church.[26] In Eph 2:18–22, Paul explicitly invokes temple imagery, describing the church as the place where Gentiles and Jews together "have access in one Spirit to the Father" as both groups enjoy the status of "fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God" as they grow "into a holy temple in the Lord" (Eph 2:18, 19). As Beale notes, "If Jews and Gentiles are reconciled to God because they are in the one Christ, then they are also reconciled to and have peace with one another because their identity as 'one new man' in Christ surpasses any nationalistic identities."[27] And since the Spirit is now the means by which God manifests his presence on the earth,

[24] Joseph R. Greene, "The Spirit in the Temple: Bridging the Gap between Old Testament Absence and New Testament Assumption," *JETS* 55.4 (2012): 739.

[25] Greene, "The Spirit in the Temple," 737–38. One might also argue that the absence of God's presence amongst the people of Israel gives rise to a sense of existential crisis during the time of the exile as they are forced to wrestle with their identity in light of his absence. Here, the promise of God's return serves as a ballast in the midst of turmoil. God promises that once more, they will be his people and he will be their God (cf. Ezek 36:28).

[26] Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission*, 211.

[27] Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission*, 260.

it is also the Spirit's presence that distinguishes the Christian community.[28] This is similar to how the glory cloud signified God's unique presence among the people of Israel. In other words, just as God's presence amongst the people of Israel in the glory-cloud signified their unique identity as God's covenant people, now the presence of the Holy Spirit in the church sets her apart as the new covenant community and directs her toward eschatological fellowship with God. In many ways, then, the church is elected as that community with whom God has chosen to dwell by his Spirit.

As the new temple, the new covenant community of the Spirit is the place where the omnipresent God exists in a qualitatively distinct and unique manner.[29] And it is God's presence in the midst of his people that grounds their identity as the people of God. But so far we have only argued that the presence of God in the person of the Holy Spirit constitutes the church as unique community. We have not yet explored how he does so for her individual members. What does the Holy Spirit's presence accomplish and how does it inform the identity of the particular members of the ecclesial community? Furthermore, what does this illustrate about the nature of human identity as a whole?

A Spirit-ed Account of Identity

In virtue of the Spirit's presence within the church, constituting it as the place where God uniquely dwells among his people, the Spirit re-identifies the individual members of that community. The Spirit grounds our conception of the "good life" in the presence of God and gives our identities coherence and stability. Furthermore, he enables us to *in*-form one another so that together we might attain the holiness to which we have been called.

Identity and Story

From a narrative account of human identity, humans are acting crea-

[28] Gordon D. Fee, *God's Empowering Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Letters of Paul* (Grand Rapid: Baker, 2009), 681–82, 689.

[29] Paul S. Minear writes, "The temple was a heavenly-earthly reality through which human community received its ultimate context in the glorification of God and God's glorification of men" (*Images of the Church in the New Testament*, The New Testament Library [Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004], 98).

tures who "have their being in time," existing in communities that significantly shape their self-understandings.[30] Personal identity, consequently, consists of at least three components. First, an individual's personal identity is understood by virtue of the individuals own story. This story consists of their actions, beginning with their birth and ending with their death, actions they are responsible and accountable for.[31] The identity of the individual is tethered to their past actions. Second, the individual's personal identity is constituted by the manner in which they relate to other persons. MacIntyre avers that each individual story is part of a larger story which precedes its existence: "We enter upon a stage which we did not design and find ourselves part of an action that was not of our own making."[32] Upon this "stage" are other persons and other creatures with whom we relate in various and sundry ways.[33] As Robert Spaemann notes, "a person . . . can only be thought of in relation to other persons."[34] We exist in communities and these communities have their own "history of actions." Thrust upon this stage, an individual member's conception of how to "relate properly" is partly established by the other members of this community. Additionally, these communities are teleological, encouraging their inhabitants to orient themselves in different ways and act toward a particular desired end, that is, a future conception of the "good life."[35] Our identities are then constituted by present and past actions that seek to realize this "good life" in the immediate future. This series of actions comprises a "story" or "narrative" that we interpret in order to give our lives coherence. Third, the individual's identity is constituted by how

[30] Colin Gunton, "The Church as a School of Virtue? Human Formation in Trinitarian Framework," in *Faithfulness and Fortitude: In Conversation with the Theological Ethics of Stanley Hauerwas*, ed. Mark Nation and Samuel Wells (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000), 211.

[31] Alasdair C MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*, 3rd ed. (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007), 217.

[32] MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 213.

[33] Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Remythologizing Theology: Divine Action, Passion, and Authorship*, Cambridge Studies in Christian Doctrine (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 144.

[34] Robert Spaemann, *Persons: The Difference between "Someone" and "Something"* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 27.

[35] James K. A. Smith provides a helpful description here. He writes, "we are *teleological* creatures. . . . In other words, what we love is a specific vision of the good life, an implicit picture of what we think human flourishing looks like" (*Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation*, Cultural Liturgies 1 [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009], 52). This vision includes a vast swath of ideas ranging from recreational activities to social relationships which we seek to realize through our actions.

that individual subjectively interprets how they relate to other persons and their own story. It is not enough to simply relate in various ways. As reasoning creatures, the manner in which we interpret our actions as well as how we relate plays a significant role in shaping who we are. Consequently, personal identity is constituted by how an individual objectively relates to other persons as well as how that individual subjectively understands their personal histories (e.g., how we have related) and the ends they seek (i.e., what we aspire to attain in relating).

How, then, are we to understand ourselves? What "good life" should we seek? And how might the disparate events of our lives find coherence in one, particular identity? It is precisely the Spirit's work within the church that provides a stable conception of the "good life," re-narrates the individual's story, and reconstitutes them within a community of true worshippers of God. In other words, in virtue of his presence we become a new people homeward bound.

The Holy Spirit as *arrabon* of the "Good Life"

First, the Spirit's role as *arrabon* tethers and unites the Christian community to a single conception of the "good life": fellowship with God. On the one hand, the term *arrabon* signifies a destination. Olga Sigurdson notes that this *telos* and orientation is one of the primary distinctives of the Christian community.[36] Paul describes the Holy Spirit's work in Eph 1:13–14 as the one who seals us and the one who serves as our *arrabon* for our future inheritance.[37] Since one can only seal that which they own, the Spirit's presence marks the church as the people who belong to God.[38] He is, in a sense, their unique identifying marker. But sealing also includes the hope and promise of protection.[39] Since this particular people belongs

[36] Ola Sigurdson, *Heavenly Bodies: Incarnation, the Gaze, and Embodiment in Christian Theology*, trans. Carl Olsen (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016), 596.

[37] The use of τῷ πνεύματι . . . τῷ ἁγίῳ in the dative case illustrates that the Spirit is the means through which the believing community is sealed by God (cf. Arnold, *Ephesians*, 92; Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 239; Ernest Best, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Ephesians*, ICC [Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998], 151).

[38] Arnold writes, "A seal was indeed a mark of ownership in the ancient world. . . . All of a person's significant possessions were marked with impression of the seal" (*Ephesians*, 92; cf. Fee, *God's Empowering Presence*, 669).

[39] Relying on early Christian sources, Talbert notes that the notion of sealing may also have carried the notion of protection as seals sometimes served as amulets in Asia Minor, protecting the wearer from magical influence and demonic oppression (Charles H. Talbert, *Ephesians and Colossians*, Paideia Commentaries

to God, the church can trust that he will safely bring them to his presence. On the other hand, as Janet Soskice avers, this "good life" also involves personal transformation as we become the kind of people capable of dwelling with God.[40] Kilner notes that the members of the ecclesial community stand in need of the renewal and, while it has begun in the present, its full realization is eschatological.[41] The Spirit progressively draws the individual members of the church to realize the holiness to which they have been destined. This is further communicated by the Spirit's function as a down payment, the first installment paid by God.[42] As a deposit, the Spirit directs the ecclesial community to look forward to the day of redemption when God will "complete the transaction." The Spirit serves as an eschatological marker of the ecclesial community's future inheritance and is the means through which it is realized.[43] Indeed, the "future" of the ecclesial community is eternal fellowship with God on the day of redemption, the day in which their identity as a holy and blameless people will be fully realized. While Christians may disagree about what precisely

on the New Testament [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007], 49).

[40] Janet Soskice, *The Kindness of God: Metaphor, Gender, and Religious Language* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 181.

[41] John F. Kilner, *Dignity and Destiny: Humanity in the Image of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015), 299.

[42] Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 241; Peter Arzt-Grabner, "Gott als verlässlicher Käufer: einige papyrologische Anmerkungen und bibeltheologische Schlussfolgerungen zum Gottesbild der Paulusbriefe," *NTS* 57.3 (2011): 412.

[43] Arzt-Grabner argues, "Paul does not mention a term of payment for the balance. However, the examples from antique business life suggest that the entire business is expected to close soon" (Arzt-Grabner, "Gott als verlässlicher Käufer," 413). Consequently, for Arzt-Grabner, the term ἀρραβών itself does not carry an eschatological dimension. However, it is important to note that the term does not appear by itself, but within a particular context in which it is linked not only to the eschatological inheritance of the Christian, but also to the future day of redemption, the day when God will realize the Christian hope and consummate his Kingdom. It seems, then, that Paul is reworking the concept of *arrabon* to fit the context of this particular passage. Consequently, as Beale notes, "the Spirit himself is viewed as the very beginning of this inheritance and not just a guarantee of the promise of its coming. The Spirit . . . has entered in part into believers, so that they have begun to obtain the inheritance of the new earth" (G. K. Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology: The Unfolding of the Old Testament in the New* [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011], 763). Furthermore, Beale notes that since the Spirit is the agent of the resurrection, his presence inaugurates a participation in this eschatological resurrection existence.

this fellowship entails, Christians together look forward to the resurrection of the dead and life in the world to come. In fact, it is the Spirit himself who reveals to us that our "good life" is a life with God. As Hans Schwarz avers that the Christian community can now "rest assured that human beings are not lonesome wanderers at the fringe of the universe staring into eternal nothingness, but children of the heavenly Father who has provided for them an eternal destiny of joy and fulfillment."[44]

The Spirit is the ecclesial community's *arrabon* and thus his presence communicates their robustly eschatological nature thereby setting their narrative arc. More specifically, his presence tethers the church to the *eschaton* and fellowship with the triune God upon the appearing of Christ (cf. 1:13; 4:30).[45] Paul seems to intend that this language, when viewed in conjunction with the promised inheritance and the future day of redemption, serves as an anchor for the identity of the ecclesial community. Their future is not merely subjectively wished by individual members but is objectively promised by God. It is absolute and certain.[46] The church as a whole hears and believes in this promise of God as the Spirit directs them eschatologically.[47] The Spirit continually and progressively enlightens us, reminding us of our hope in this eschatological future (cf. 1:14). The ecclesial person knows the end of their story, that is, they know the *telos* to which they are intended and the common hope they share with other Christians (cf. 4:4).

The Holy Spirit as Re-Interpreter of the Personal Story

Second, the Holy Spirit serves as the re-interpreter of our stories. Through the Spirit's illumination, the Christian confesses that their his-

[44] Hans Schwarz, *The Human Being: A Theological Anthropology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013), 382.

[45] Thielman writes, "If we allow Paul's other use of the sealing metaphor in Ephesians to guide us to the proper meaning, then it seems to have a stronger orientation toward the future" (*Ephesians*, 80–81).

[46] O'Donovan describes the absolute future as that future which has an ontic status of a promise, one given by God which is only "partially accessible to knowledge as the promise is heard and believed" (Oliver O'Donovan, *Self, World, and Time*, Ethics as Theology 1 [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013], 16). Consequently, the individual looks to God to fulfill this promise while lacking the fundamental ability to bring it about.

[47] Smith writes, "when we describe the human person or consciousness as *intentional*, we mean that it is always 'aimed at' something: it *intends* something as an object" (*Desiring the Kingdom*, 48). For our purposes, the Spirit is the one who orients us properly and aims us toward life with God.

tory, a life of sin and rebellion, was a result of their estrangement, alienation, and rebellion against God (cf. Eph 2:1–4, 11–13; 5:8). But now, believers are those who are being washed, whose blemishes are being removed, and who possess the hope that they will one day be resurrected to eternal life with God (cf. Eph 1:16–18). The re-interpreting work of the Spirit is illustrated in Paul's own transformed self-perception. In retrospect, Paul describes his personal history as wrongly persecuting Christ's church and sinning against God (cf. 1 Tim 1:13–15). Furthermore, he sees the vanity of this pursuit in comparison to the worth of Christ (cf. Phil 3:7–8). Yet after his conversion Paul rightly understands not only his past but also his present. He accurately perceives himself as a servant of God and God's church. This stands in contrast to how Paul interpreted these same actions prior to his conversion (cf. Acts 22:3–5; 24:14–15). In a sense, the Spirit provides corrective lenses that enable us to see ourselves rightly.

Furthermore, not only is the Christian's individual story rightly interpreted in light of the Spirit's work, but Christians find their own "stories" within the larger, overarching redemptive work of God. Christians are no longer required to reinterpret their pasts and re-tell their histories. Instead, the Christian's identity emerges in light of the redemptive work of Christ and is grounded in its promised consummation. Or, put differently, their "story" finds its place in the greater story of God's redemptive work.[48] He shows us our place within the greater story of God's redemption, namely, our contingency. The church only exists because God wills it. However, while all of creation is dependent upon the sustaining and providential power of the Creator, the church is a community that corporately recognizes its dependence. As members of a new man, new creation, and new temple, Christians confess that the God they worship and glorify precedes their own existence.[49] Consequently, the church is a contingent community or, rather, it is the community of those who have been awakened to their contingency (cf. 5:13–14).[50] The Spirit's presence reaffirms this truth as he gathers living stones into the "household of God" and sets them

[48] James William McClendon, "Story, Sainthood, and Truth: 'Biography as Theology' Revisited," in *The Collected Works of James Wm. McClendon, Jr.*, ed. Ryan Anderson Newson and Andrew C. Wright (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2014), 216.

[49] Robert Sherman, *Covenant, Community, and the Spirit: A Trinitarian Theology of Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2015), 61.

[50] Stanley Hauerwas, *Hannah's Child: A Theologian's Memoir* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 157.

"on the foundation of apostles and prophets" (cf. 2:19–20).

Finally, the Spirit reorients our stories doxologically.[51] The Spirit's presence calls us to look outward and upward to the Creator as we acknowledge our place as his creatures. We begin to see ourselves as those who relate to him rightly, adopting a humble posture of worship. Our "good life" is not merely fellowship with God, but also eternal worship of God. The Spirit, as the Love of God, enables us to comprehend the depth of Christ's love leading the church to glorify God as we direct this love back to him in praise. Both of Paul's two prayers in Ephesians beseech the Lord to enable the believing community to better understand the depth of God's work in Christ through the Spirit (cf. 1:15–21; 4:14–21). In Eph 1:15–21, Paul's prayer is that the Spirit would grant the believing community insight into God himself.[52] Focusing on God's historical-redemptive work in Christ, Paul prays that the Spirit would lead the church to contemplate and delight in the life of the Triune God. Paul extends this thought in his second prayer (cf. 3:14–21). Again, the emphasis is on the Spirit's mission of uniting the Christian community in union to Christ (vv. 17, 18–19) and to have their lives grounded in the love of God. Not coincidentally, Paul's final prayer leads him to doxology.[53] As Fred Sanders notes, "Trinitarian praise points back to that triune source. This is the matrix of Trinitarian theology: wonder, love, and praise that God has done for us and our salvation something that manifests and enacts what he is in himself."[54] The same holds true for pneumatology. The Spirit points the church to the person and work of Christ. And in leading us to behold and marvel at our Savior, he is leading us in worship.

The Holy Spirit as One Who Empowers and In-Forms

Finally, the Spirit rightly orients our actions in the present toward the maturation and formation of the body of Christ. If personal identity is dependent upon how we relate to other persons, we now begin to relate rightly within the ecclesial community. In other words, the Spirit works

[51] The phrase "to the praise of His [God's] glory" occurs three times in the first chapter of Ephesians (1:6, 12, 14). Thielman argues that this illustrates how God's salvific work is intended to result in praise and gratitude from those he has redeemed (*Ephesians*, 53). Yet even this appears to be the Spirit's work (cf. 5:18).

[52] Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 259.

[53] Arnold, *Ephesians*, 10:219; Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 492.

[54] Fred Sanders, *The Triune God*, ed. Michael Allen and Scott R. Swain, New Studies in Dogmatics (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016), 27.

to cultivate an ethical life.[55] As the Spirit reveals to us our place within the drama of redemption, he teaches us to make the best use of the immediate future and to act in a way consistent with the story he tells (Eph 5:15–16).[56] Christian action is distinctive in that it is done under the ministry and guidance of the Spirit in response to the gift of God's grace for the purpose of the formation in holiness. In Eph 4:11–16, it is only in virtue of Christ's gift that the members of the community are able to act in a way that leads to maturation and Christlikeness. In this passage, Paul describes how particular Christian vocations relate to Christian formation, vocations that are "Spirit-ed" vocations. Said differently, it is the Spirit's work in granting wisdom and enlightenment that enables any member of the Christian community to serve and minster rightly (cf. Eph 1:17). Since the Spirit enables human responses to divine grace and serves as the pedagogical guide for the human subject, his work ensures that members of the Christian community are rightly formed through Christian practice. As the Love of God, he enables us to love one another with the love of God (Eph 5:1–2) and to serve one another with the gifts he gives (Eph 4:11–16). The Spirit directs the Christian community in "other-oriented" action and mutual edification, equipping the believing community to communally "form" one another in accordance with the image of Christ.[57]

The Son ascends, sending the Spirit who equips the members of the church to serve and strengthen one another (Eph 4:13).[58] The Spirit reveals the person and work of Christ, calling the Christian community to

[55] Fee, *God's Empowering Presence*, 879.

[56] Paul describes the task of walking wisely immediately after he gives a call to awaken. Phrases such as "the days are evil" and the call to walk in wisdom reminds us that this knowledge is derived from the Spirit's revelatory work in our lives. If the wise recognize their need for divine grace as well as the gift that God has given to them in self-revelation, they seek to order their lives accordingly. In a sense, these two concepts are inseparable. "Because the days are evil, Paul says, his readers should not be foolish but understand the Lord's will" (Thielman, *Ephesians*, 357).

[57] This is not to imply that Christian action is always immediately positive. As David Kelsey reminds us, finite human creatures inevitably damage one another simply in virtue of their finitude (David Kelsey, *Eccentric Existence: A Theological Anthropology* [Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2009], 208–9).

[58] Gerber argues that the interdependence between members of the body is built into the very nature of the "body" metaphor in Ephesians, a metaphor which links soteriology and Christology. "As in the homologumena, the idea of the multiplicity of limbs is united with the 'metaphor of the body'. The body

awaken and walk in holiness.[59] Yet the Spirit's work is not privatized or subject to the individual. We are "thrown into" this existing community, yet somehow this community is affected by our presence. The Spirit directs the Christian toward the other as we are gathered together in one building as one people, striving together toward maturity and holiness. Through their Spirit-ed gifts, the members of the church participate in the mission of the Spirit as they rebuke, exhort, correct, encourage, and serve on another in love. This too is an "other-oriented" aspect of the Spirit's mission as he orients us "other-ward." The Spirit equips us to love one another with the love of God, conforming the community to Christ, the one from whom he proceeds and to whom he testifies (cf. Eph 5:1–2).[60] In other words, he enables our lives, by virtue of his presence, to attain the holiness and blamelessness to which we have been elected.

If this is indeed the case, what benefit does it have for those outside of the church? If the Spirit rightly reinterprets our stories and stabilizes our conception of the "good life" as eschatological fellowship with God, he is essential for a coherent identity. Apart from his work, our perceived eschatological *telos* is transitory and unstable.[61] And if the only thing which provides an account for the individual's actions is the pursuit of perceived goods which lead to personal fulfillment, it seems that the individual's identity is only as stable as their commitment to a particular good. In other words, if a specific action (*x*) must be interpreted in a way that is consistent with story (*y*) in order to cohere with a particular idea of the good-life (*z*), what happens when this ideal changes (e.g., from *z* to *a*)? All of the previous actions (*x*) must then be reinterpreted in light of this new conception of the good-life (*a*). But, with such a fragile and constantly shifting self-understanding, in what sense can we say any of these stories

must grow as the individual members mature and remain united in love" (Christine Gerber, "Die alte Braut und Christi Leib: zum ekklesiologischen Entwurf des Epheserbriefs," *NTS* 59.2 [2013]: 218).

[59] Turner writes, "it is the Spirit's gifts of wisdom and revelation that enlighten the 'heart' with understanding of the dramatic scope of the Christ-event and its consequences, and so enable the believers to walk in new-humanity ways" (Max Turner, "Spiritual Gifts and Spiritual Formation in 1 Corinthians and Ephesians," *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 22.2 [2013]: 204).

[60] As Holmes observes, "The Spirit makes us like Christ to whom the Spirit belongs and from whom the Spirit proceeds. The shape of the Spirit's working indicates the shape of the Spirit's own procession in God. The Spirit as the 'Love of God' conforms us to Christ; this is what the Spirit does" (*The Holy Spirit*, 89).

[61] This is not to say that a non-Christian perceives rightly the end to which they are headed, but merely states that they do have an end in mind. It is a "perceived" *telos*, not their actual *telos*.

or descriptions of action are true? If this is the case, apart from the Spirit's anchoring work, we cannot fully understand "who" we are as our self-perceptions are too unstable.

Perhaps more importantly, even in the event that a human creature's perceived *telos* does not change, it still does not correspond to their actual *telos* unless they are recipients of the Spirit's illuminating work. The individual subjectively believes that they are pursuing specific ends, but in actuality they are striving in a different direction altogether. In so doing, the individual's identity fragments. For example, Manasseh engages in "despicable practices" such as institutionalizing idolatry in the temple, consulting mediums and necromancers, and shedding innocent blood (2 Kgs 21:2–6). Yet presumably such actions were directed toward a specific end: perhaps to secure the nation's deliverance from enemy forces or even procure divine favor for agricultural success. Similarly, Saul offers sacrifices in pursuit of God's favor and aid as his troops' morale plummets in the face of an impending battle (cf. 1 Sam 13:7–8, 11). Although Saul proclaims that his actions were intended to unify his troops and seek the favor of the Lord (1 Sam 13:12), the prophet Samuel rebukes the king, revealing that his actions are instead the very embodiment of folly and rebellion (1 Sam 13:13–14). Furthermore, Saul's and Manasseh's engagement in despicable worship practices leads to deformation. Saul eventually becomes a king who seeks to destroy God's chosen ruler and suffers a string of humiliating military defeats (cf. 1 Sam 19:11; 31:6–7). Manasseh offers his own heirs as sacrifices and is forcibly removed from his kingdom, becoming the personification of Judah's wickedness (cf. 2 Chr 33:6, 11). Manasseh and Saul are helpful illustrations as they both engage in liturgical practices that seem to deform them in fundamental ways. Consequently, they fail to fulfill their designated vocation as king, pursuing a perceived *telos* in perverted ways. Their actions, actions intended to achieve this perceived *telos*, are personally and socially destructive. In a sense, then, apart from the Spirit's work we are being pulled in two directions, leading to a fragmentation and deformation.

If what we have argued above is correct, the Spirit's mission is essential for a coherent account of human identity. He reconstitutes and stabilizes our conception of the "good life," reorients our actions and worship, and tells the story of God's gracious redemptive work in Christ. Additionally, our past and present are reinterpreted in light of his presence. The Spirit grounds our identities in the presence of God, reshaping our stories so that they find their culmination in fellowship with God. Still, there are questions that remain. While I have argued that the Spirit does indeed play a constitutive role in a coherent account of human identity, Jennings and Radner have rightly questioned the efficacy of the church's liturgical

life given the historical atrocities it has committed.[62] Perhaps greater attention must be given to philosophies and theologies of action, particularly as it pertains to the liturgical life of the church and the Spirit's supervening purposes. However, space does not permit us to attend to such matters here.

Conclusion

It is the Spirit who makes the church unique. This is not over against the church's Christological foundation as indeed Christ Jesus is the cornerstone, head, and redeemer of his body. However, it is the Spirit's presence which constitutes the ecclesial community as a new temple, concretizing their identity as the holy people of God. An ecclesiology grounded in pneumatology highlights the pneumatological aspect of a coherent account of human identity. Consequently, we argued that the members of the ecclesial community possess a "Spirit-ed Identity" wherein their past is reinterpreted, their present actions are reoriented, and their future is tethered to the *eschaton* as holy people on the road to fellowship with God.

[62] Jennings argues that, in part, the Christian teaching developed a distorted account of creation devoid of Christology, compromising itself in the face of colonial powers and adopting destructive discursive practices (Willie James Jennings, *The Christian Imagination: Theology and the Origins of Race* [New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010], 106–8, 248). Radner, in contrast, places a greater point of emphasis on how the church in Rwanda is not merely compromised by extrinsic powers, but directly responsible for and an active participant in oppression, violence, and genocide (Ephraim Radner, *A Brutal Unity: The Spiritual Politics of the Christian Church* [Baylor, TX: Baylor University Press, 2012], 19–37).