



Research article

A COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PNEUMATOLOGY AND CHRISTOLOGY

Dr. Rebecca Wason

Algoma University

rswason@gmail.com

Doi: <https://doi.org/10.54513/BSJ.2023.5305>

ARTICLE INFO



Article history:

Received 20-07-2023

Accepted : 29-08-2023

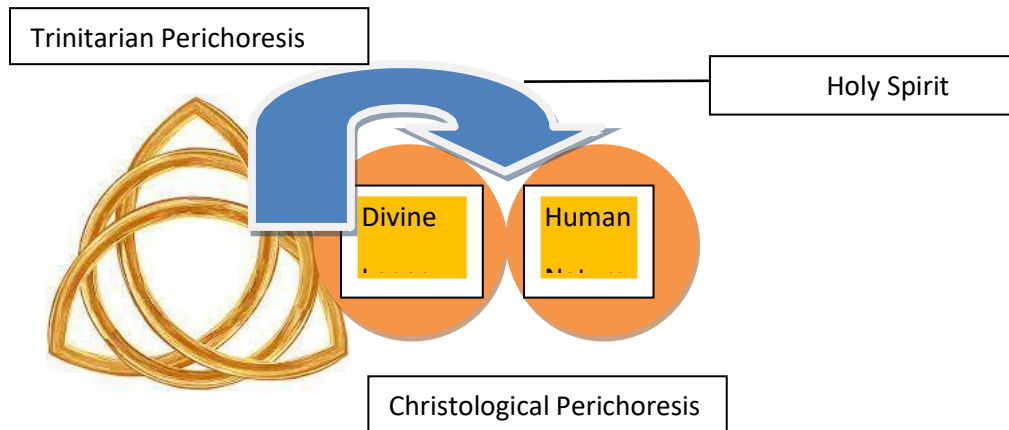
Available online:30-09 -
2023

ABSTRACT

The idea for this paper come from the writings of St. Irenaeus on the Holy Spirit and His relationship with Jesus of Nazareth to empower Him in His ministry and final sacrifice. While Irenaeus wrote of the descent of the Spirit on Jesus during the baptism, this paper discusses the idea that the Spirit was upon Him from the moment of the incarnation by the perichoresis or circumincession between the human and divine natures of Christ. While the author agrees with the Chalcedonian definition that the two natures exist in unity due to being instantiated in one hypostasis, this paper attempts to demonstrate that the unity of the two natures was also maintained by the Holy Spirit who has always rested on the divine Logos by Trinitarian perichoresis from eternity and on the incarnated human nature of Jesus from the moment of the incarnation. To summarize, the Holy Spirit (Spirit of God/Christ) who has always rested eternally on the Word also came to dwell upon His human incarnation at the time of the conception to maintain the two natures in unity resulting in the reciprocal interchange of attributes and the oneness of their wills. This occurred due to a combination of Trinitarian and Christological perichoresis.

Keywords:

*St.Irenaeus, Holy Spirit,
Ministry, Sacrifice,
Baptism, Perichoresis*



The Spirit and the Eternal Logos

Weinandy objects to the traditional sequence of the procession of the Spirit from the Father and the Son¹. He writes that, the persons can only be ontologically equal, and equally eternal, if each so defines the others that the very concept of any one of them is incomplete without resorting to the concept of the other two. “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.”²

So, the author speaks of a simultaneous begetting of the Son and the procession of the Spirit but also says that the Son is begotten in the Spirit. His theory seems to be that the Spirit mediates the begetting while also proceeding at the same time from the Father. As the three persons are co- eternal and traditionally the three were believed to have existed in eternal perichoresis, Weinandy’s objection to the sequential order and the Spirit proceeding from the Father and Son makes sense.

¹ Thomas G. Weinandy, *The Father’s Spirit of Sonship: Reconceiving the Trinity* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2010[1995]), 74.

² Ibid p.17



Whether the Son was begotten in the Spirit as Weinandy theorizes or the Spirit was the personification of the love between the Father and the Son³ as Augustine postulated, some of the verses that support these theories are Romans 8:9, Acts 16:7, Phil 1:19 and 1 Pet. 1:11. While the Scriptures do not explain exactly how the relationship between the Son and the Spirit works, it has been traditionally accepted that the three persons interpenetrate each other as they have the same nature and the doctrine was named circumincession or perichoresis. It is sufficient to say that the Spirit was involved in the begetting of the Son, the sending of the Son (Isaiah 48:16) and the incarnation of the Son (Luke 1:35). On the other hand, the Son sent the Spirit (Jn 14:15-17) and the Spirit glorifies the Son (Jn 16:14). These actions seem contradictory on the surface, for instance, does the Spirit send the Son or is it the other way around? If the Spirit is equal and co-eternal with the Son, why do the verses call Him the Spirit of Christ? These contradictions, however, can be resolved when it is understood that the three persons exist in eternal perichoresis.

The Spirit and the man Jesus

The Spirit empowered Jesus of Nazareth to live a life of holiness demonstrating faith and love and perform acts of power- to heal, cast out demons etc.⁴ While Irenaeus wrote of the Spirit coming upon Jesus during the baptism, Augustine wrote that the baptism was only a demonstration for all to see that Christ was the Son of God as there was no sin in Jesus⁵. This paper argues that due to perichoresis, the Spirit was upon the Son of man from the moment of incarnation as He was the Logos since eternity. Jesus performed the miracle at Cana before His baptism and even as a child He was able to debate with learned scholars at the temple. These events indicate that He was always filled with the Spirit as Isaiah says in chapter 11:1,2 that the shoot that will rise will have the Spirit on Him. These verses do not indicate that there was a time when the man Jesus did not have the Spirit upon Him.

Objections

The usual objection to this idea is that the Spirit came upon Jesus only during His baptism because He started His active ministry only after this point. However, this writer argues that

³ Augustine of Hippo. *De trinitate* 4, 20 (29) (PL 42, 908)

⁴ Ian McFarland. "Spirit and Incarnation: Towards a Pneumatic Chalcedonianism." *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 16, no. 2 [April 2014]: p.155. doi:10.1111/ijst.12047

⁵ Augustine of Hippo. *Handbook on Faith, Hope and Love*, Ch 14:49



his does not mean that He lived without the Holy Spirit for thirty years of His life because if He had not had the Spirit, He would not have been growing in wisdom (Luke 2:52) and empowered to stay sinless (Heb 4:15).

Conclusion

In conclusion, pneumatology is often overlooked or trivialized before Christology. The Spirit of God has always been seen as existing only due to the love of the Father and Son and as someone who glorifies the other two persons while not being too important Himself. These ideas have, unfortunately led to a trivializing of the third person of the Trinity. The Spirit is God and co- eternal with the Father and the Son. In a state of eternal perichoresis, He mediates the love between Father and Son and they would not have that relationship without Him⁶ . Similarly, the Spirit also mediates the reciprocal transmission of attributes between the two natures in the Christological perichoresis. This is the only way the two natures and two wills could have remained in perfect agreement (John 6:38). The Son of Man could not have done the will of the Father faithfully in total agreement with His divine nature if not for the empowering power of the Spirit of the Father. It is important to acknowledge this major role of the Holy Spirit in empowering the man Jesus and this should be taught in churches so that the Spirit is glorified and worshipped along with the Father and the Son as He was always meant to be.

Another important application is the agency of the Spirit to act in different ways with different people in various times and places. Many church traditions tend to box in the Spirit's actions. The verse that is usually quoted is Acts 2:38 and many Christians use this set formula to say that one must repent and be baptized to receive the Holy Spirit. They use the theory that Jesus received the Spirit only after baptism to make their point. However, the Scriptures also say in John 14:16-17 that those who love Jesus will receive the Spirit and the Lord Himself promises this. In Acts 10:44, the Spirit came on those who were listening to Peter and they even began to speak in tongues. They were baptized only after they received the Spirit so baptism is not a condition to receive the Spirit. Thus, the Spirit of power that

⁶ Thomas G. Weinandy, *The Father's Spirit of Sonship: Reconceiving the Trinity* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2010[1995]), 17.



mediates the relationships in the trinity and the nature of Christ is God Himself and He acts in ways that the church may never comprehend to draw to Christ those whom the Father has set apart (1 Cor. 12:3). He cannot be boxed in or limited by sacraments or dispensed only by priests. While the work of Jesus is done with the atonement at Calvary, the work of the Spirit will continue till all of creation is restored and made new. And yet, despite His being one with the Father and the Son, the Spirit in all humility points us only to Jesus and the Father (Jn 16:14-15).

Holy Spirit, guide my vision
Help me see the way You see
Always Jesus, ever Jesus
Christ in all is Christ in me

Bibliography

Armstrong, Dave, *circumincission-50-cent-trinitarian*, 2016,

<https://www.patheos.com/blogs/davearmstrong/2016/08/circumincission-50-cent-trinitarian-word.html>

The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century -The Trinity De Trinitate (SecondEdition).

Translated by Edmund Hill. Edited by John E. Rotelle, O.S.A. (New Press, NY)

McFarland, Ian. "Spirit and Incarnation: Towards a Pneumatic Chalcedonianism." *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 16, no. 2 [April 2014]: p.155.

"Perichoresis, Christological." *New Catholic Encyclopedia* . Encyclopedia.com. (June 17, 2021).

<https://www.encyclopedia.com/religion/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/perichoresis-christological>

Roberts et al., *Against Heresies, Book III, 17. Create Space Independent Publishing, 2012*

Saint Augustine of Hippo. *The Enchiridion of Faith, Hope and Love* (Regnery Publications, D.C)

Weinandy, Thomas. G. *The Father's Spirit of Sonship: Reconceiving the Trinity* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2010 [1995])
