

Anthropological Proof of Eternal Life—The Internal Changes Accompanying Salvation **Kirk R. MacGregor**

One prevailing theme of the Pauline (both Proto- and Deutero-) and Johannine Epistles comprises the absolute certitude that followers of Jesus may repose in their salvation, a certitude which comes from looking within at the fundamental inclination of the soul. Ephesians 1:13–14 stands as the *locus classicus* of this theme: “In Christ you yourselves also, having heard the message of the truth—the good news of your salvation—when you believed in him (πιστεύσαντες . . . ἐν αὐτῷ), you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance into/until (ἐἰς) the redemption of his possession, to the praise of his glory” (cf. 2 Cor 5:5). Three features of this passage deserve emphasis. First, the phrase πιστεύσαντες . . . ἐν αὐτῷ connotes far more than *assensus* or simple subscription to various doctrines about Christ. (As James 2:19 and the Synoptic Gospels indicate, even the demons hold to a correct view of Christ, yet they tremble with fear awaiting imminent destruction.) Rather, it refers to *fiducia* or personal commitment to Christ, depicted in the New Testament and foreshadowed throughout the Hebrew Bible as a spiritual marriage between Christ and each believer. In this marriage, believers pledge their lives and love to Jesus; reciprocally, among the infinitude of benefits Jesus pledges to believers are guidance and companionship throughout the earthly life and entitlement to the beatific vision in the hereafter (Paradise followed by the new heaven-earth). Second, such an inheritance is qualified with the preposition ἐἰς, carrying the dual meaning that believers constitute Jesus’ possession and, by virtue of their ownership by this perfect Savior, will necessarily receive full redemption of soul plus body at the general resurrection. Third, all who enter into spiritual marriage and await Christ’s final deliverance presently and internally possess a guarantee of their justified status before God: the Holy Spirit, who permanently seals and lives within their souls. Once this passage is exegetically deciphered, a number of questions emerge which belong properly not to the realm of biblical but to the realm of philosophical theology. Such issues include: What exactly does the Spirit’s sealing entail? In particular, what transformative effects does it produce in each believer’s soul? Moreover, how do those effects manifest themselves in the course of daily living? Accordingly, the framing of biblically faithful and philosophically coherent answers to these queries will occupy the course of this chapter.

[A]The Spirit’s Sealing and Presence in Light of New Testament Anthropology

To understand the nature of conversion wrought by the Holy Spirit, we must delineate the doctrine of human nature, or anthropology, held by the New Testament authors, especially as it pertains to the creaturely condition when alienated from, and reconciled to, God. According to the Apostle Paul, each individual estranged from God is a *yucikōs* *ἡρώπως* (“soul-ish human,” normally rendered “natural / carnal / fleshly human”), while each individual in right relationship with God is a *pneumatikōs* *ἡρώπως* (“spiritual human”). Paul discloses the meaning of these terms in 1 Corinthians 2:14–15: “A *yucikōs* *ἡρώπως* does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him or her . . . but the *pneumatikōs* discerns all things.” Here we find that *yucikōs* and *pneumatikōs* represent opposite dominating principles towards which a person can be fundamentally oriented—either the person’s own *yuchē* (“soul”) or the *pneuma* (“Spirit”) of God. These terms have nothing to do with substance or what someone is made out of—clearly a *yucikōs* *ἡρώπως* is not a person made out of soul—but

with orientation. Thus a *yuciko~ aḥqrwpo~* signifies a human primarily inclined toward the selfish desires of his or her own soul on an individual level and his or her own group, be it family, race, or nation, on a communal level. Conversely, a *pneumatiko~ aḥqrwpo~* refers to a human primarily inclined towards the desires of the Holy Spirit and is therefore God-centered rather than self-centered.¹ Transposing the most optimistic reading of New Testament anthropology into philosophical terms, every person, from the time they start freely sinning, damages their soul in such a way that only the Holy Spirit can repair and so becomes, in dominical metaphor, a “bad tree” (Matt 7:17–18) and a “slave to sin” (John 8:34).² In other words, each person is born with libertarian free will, having the ability to do anything on the spectrum between the two poles of (1) living ultimately for self and (2) living ultimately for God. At the outset, poles (1) and (2) are equal in desirability. But when one starts sinning, one strengthens (1) to such a degree that, even though it is possible to perform (2)-type actions, (1) becomes tremendously more desirable for the person and constitutes one’s *modus operandi*. This strengthened (1) is what Paul terms *sarx* (the “flesh” or “sinful nature”). For a person in this condition, the vast majority (say 90%) of one’s actions are ultimately rooted in self-centeredness, even those which on the surface appear spiritual, and those actions which are genuinely God-centered (say 10%) amount to the exception proving the fleshly rule. Hence the immaterial mind or soul is faced with the libertarian free, but unequally motivated, choice to follow (1) or (2), where the former enjoys a disproportionately strong appeal to that of the latter. Accordingly a person following *sarx* – of which any such choice is Paul’s definition of *amartia* (sin) – is designated as unregenerate (Rom 14:23). Although logically possible for an unregenerate person to always choose the impulses of the spirit and resist those of the flesh, God knows in his prescience that no one will actually so choose. Such persons, Jesus taught, are “once-born” and cannot enter the Kingdom of God (John 3:3). Since humans cannot perform “surgery” on their own souls, so to speak, no one can save themselves from this condition. As Bernard of Clairvaux poignantly illustrated, humans living apart from God have dug for themselves a naturally inescapable pit and then have willingly fallen into it.³

The only way for someone to enter the Kingdom of God is for the person to make a free decision to, through the power of God, trust in Jesus and follow his Kingdom of God message, at which point the Holy Spirit accomplishes something miraculous in the person’s soul—namely, *kainḥ ktisi~*, the “new birth” or the “new reality” (2 Cor 5:17). Here the Holy Spirit gives the person a “soul operation” in which their spiritual condition is diametrically reversed. This operation strips (1) of its power and greatly empowers (2), so that living to carry out the desires of God becomes tremendously more desirable for the person and constitutes his or her new *modus operandi*. Reconnected to the divinely powered impulse for which it was created, this strengthened (2) is what Paul as well as Jesus termed *pneuma* (the “spirit,” lowercase “s”; Rom 8:16; 1 Cor 14:2, 14–15; 2 Cor 4:13; Gal 5:16–24; Mark 14:38; John 3:6; 4:24), and the Holy Spirit’s soteriological operation in its totality is what Paul / the Pauline amanuensis, the Apostle Peter, James, and the Elder John dubbed “regeneration” (*paliggenesia* or *ajagennaw*; Titus 3:5; 1 Pet 1:3; 1:23; Jas 1:18) or being *gennḥqh/ aḥwqen* (“born again / from above”; John 3:3,

¹ Kirk R. MacGregor, “1 Corinthians 15:3b–6a, 7 and the Bodily Resurrection of Jesus,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 49.2 (2006): 232–33.

² Perceiving this interpretation as a drastic understatement, exponents of the late-Augustinian tradition, including Thomists, Lutherans, and Calvinists, would locate our spiritual damage at the moment of conception (*i.e.* original sin).

³ Bernard de Clairvaux, *De gratia et libero arbitrio*, in *Sämtliche Werke lateinisch/deutsch I* (Innsbruck: Tyrolia-Verlag, 1990), 208.

7). The double entendre is instructive: not only must one receive birth for a second time, now spiritual rather than physical, to enter God's Kingdom, but such birth can only be accomplished by God himself via the Third Trinitarian Person—no one can will oneself to regeneration or be good enough to regenerate oneself. Further, regeneration is how God adopts humans into his family, such that all who have received the Spirit's revivifying nourishment are adopted sons and daughters of God:

For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received a spirit of adoption, by which we cry, 'Abba, Father.' The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirits that we are children of God, and if children, also heirs—on the one hand, heirs of God; on the other hand, co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with him that we may also be glorified with him (Rom 8:15–17; *cf.* John 1:13).

Notice that the end result for the believer is even better than how the person started out prior to sinning—then (1) and (2) were equal, but now (2) is tremendously more powerful such that the person is utterly changed, genuinely desiring to live for God and consistently doing so. Now this is not to say that the “born again” person never sins, but simply that sinful or (1)-type actions occur much less frequently (say 10%) and now comprise the exception that proves the rule of (2)-type or God-centered actions (say 90%) which dominate the believer's life. Since these spiritual actions are ultimately incited by the Holy Spirit, Paul calls their totality “the fruit of the Spirit” (Gal 5:22). For these reasons, the regenerate's new Spirit-empowered life is “freedom” (Gal 5:1) and “marriage to Jesus,” for whom the law's condemnation has been put to death by Jesus' atoning work on the cross and the previous marriage to that condemnation consequently annulled.⁴ As Jesus explained, “So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed” (John 8:36). In the following quotation Paul draws together all the threads of this section into a salvific narrative, where the first person represents the collective experience of the redeemed:

Do you not know, sisters and brothers—for I am speaking to people who know the law—that the law has authority over a person only as long as she or he lives? For example, by law a married woman is bound to her husband as long as he is alive, but if her husband dies, she is released from the law of marriage. So then, if she marries another man while her husband is still alive, she is called an adulteress. But if her husband dies, she is released from that law and is not an adulteress, even though she marries another man. So, my sisters and brothers, you also died to the law through the body of Christ, so that you might belong in marriage to another, to him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit to God. . . . Once I was alive apart from law; but when the commandment came, sin sprang to life and I died. I found that the very commandment that was intended to bring life actually brought death. . . . Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death (Rom 7:1–4, 9–10, 8:1–2).

When facing salvific doubts, every believer is exhorted to simply perceive whether this freeing change has occurred in their lives. If they are fundamentally inclined to do the will of God, regardless of lingering sin or temptation, believers know beyond doubt that they possess the gift of eternal life, which shall never be taken away from them (John 6:37–40; 10:28–29).

⁴ Kirk R. MacGregor, *A Molinist-Anabaptist Systematic Theology* (Lanham, MD: UPA, 2007), 35–36.

Describing the grace of regeneration, the prophet Ezekiel adds that the Holy Spirit not only repairs the believer's soul but also forever takes up residence there: "I will give you a new heart, and I will put within you a new spirit; and I will remove from your flesh the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, such that you will walk in my statutes and be careful to observe my ordinances" (36:26–27). The Spirit's abiding presence in all followers of God received foreshadowing by Moses, who longed that the Israelites of his day would experience this anointing despite the threatening prospect of divinely directed people to others: "The Spirit also rested upon...two men, whose names were Eldad and Medad . . . and they prophesied in the camp. . . . Joshua son of Nun, who had served as Moses' aide since youth, said, 'Moses, my lord, stop them!' But Moses rejoined, 'Are you jealous for my sake? I wish that all Yahweh's people were prophets and that Yahweh would put his Spirit on them'" (Num 11:26–29). Such disquietude on the part of unbelievers (and even, as seen with Joshua, some fellow believers) stems from the fact that Spirit-directed persons are ultimately answerable to no authority but God; so the apostles told the Sanhedrin, "We must obey God rather than human beings" (Acts 5:29). Jesus explained this situation to Nicodemus, "The wind blows where it wishes and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit" (John 3:8). Genuine followers of Jesus are in the Spirit, and the Spirit is in them, for no true believer lacks the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit.⁵ The indwelling of the Spirit begins at the moment of personal commitment to Christ (Gal 3:1–5), when God sends forth "the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying out, 'Abba, Father'" (Gal 4:6). Consequently, James D. G. Dunn points out that, according to the New Testament, people are legitimate Christians only if they have received the Holy Spirit:

[EXT]The one thing which makes a [person] a Christian is the gift of the Spirit. [Persons] can have been for a long time in Jesus' company, can have made profession of faith and been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus, can be wholly 'clean' and acceptable to God, can even be 'disciples,' and yet not be Christians, because they lack and until they receive the Holy Spirit....This has an important consequence, for it means that the thing which determines whether a [person] is a Christian is not his profession of faith in Christ but the presence of the Spirit.⁶[/EXT]

The unconditional and exceptionless fact that the Holy Spirit will permanently live in the souls of believers is guaranteed by the Father's affirmative response to Jesus' prayer: "And I will pray the Father, and he will give you another Counselor (αἰὼν παρὰ κλητόν),⁷ in order that *he may abide with you forever*" (John 14:16; emphasis mine).

This furnishes believers with a second unmistakable evidence of their eternal security, since they can immediately apprehend the Holy Spirit's habitation in their souls, which indwelling guarantees them access to the beatific vision. Denominated the *sensus divinitatis* since Medieval Scholasticism, apprehension of the Spirit's presence is Scripturally characterized

⁵ Robert G. Gromacki, "The Indwelling and Filling of the Holy Spirit," in *Understanding Christian Theology*, gen. eds. Charles R. Swindoll and Roy B. Zuck (Nashville: Nelson, 2003), 498.

⁶ James D. G. Dunn, *Baptism in the Holy Spirit* (London: SCM, 1970), 93, 149; emphasis his.

⁷ It should be emphasized, contra Jehovah's Witnesses and other groups which maintain that the Holy Spirit is God's impersonal active force rather than a divine Person, that John explicitly guarantees the personality of the Spirit by using the adjective αἰὼν rather than εἕτερον for "another." This is because αἰὼν means "another of the same kind or species," whereas εἕτερον means "another of a different kind or species." Thus Jesus affirmed that the Father would send another Counselor of the same kind or species as himself, namely, a personal one.

by the noun *plēroia* (“full assurance, absolute certainty, complete confidence”; 1 Thess 1:5; Col 2:2; 4:12; Rom 4:21; 14:5), thereby defining the believer’s knowledge that the Spirit lives within as, in philosophical terms, properly basic. Properly basic beliefs are beliefs which arise appropriately from our experience, but which are impossible to logically prove by that experience. In the absence of any defeaters (compelling disproofs), humans are rational to hold such beliefs. To illustrate, other properly basic beliefs include belief in the external world, belief in the existence of other minds, and belief in the reality of the past, all of which are completely unprovable (*i.e.* one could be a brain in a vat stimulated with electrodes by a mad scientist to believe in the external world), but which, *sans* defeaters, persons are rational to hold. Hence followers of Jesus may know, with the same certainty as they know the external world exists, that the Spirit occupies their souls and, derivatively, that they will forever be among the redeemed: “By this we know that we abide in God and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit” (1 John 4:13).

[A]Necessary Lifestyle Results of Regeneration

Jesus revealed that the Holy Spirit’s “soul operation” called regeneration automatically causes the believer’s soul to function much differently than the unbeliever’s soul. It is not as though new believers must try to make their souls act differently than before; rather, without any effort of their own, their souls will naturally incline toward attitudes and behaviors glorifying to God. However, individuals outside the pale of spiritual marriage to Christ, including those who pretend to be believers but are not, will over any significant period of time necessarily lack such attitudes and behaviors, which simply cannot be habitually produced by the unregenerate soul. Thus Jesus summarized in the Sermon on the Mount:

[EXT]Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but within are ravenous wolves. By their fruits you will know them. Surely grapes are not gathered from thorns or figs from thistles? So every good tree produces good fruits, but the rotten tree produces bad fruit. A good tree is not able *to habitually produce* (the participle *poiein* is continual aspect) bad fruit, nor is a rotten tree able *to habitually produce* (*poiein*) good fruit. Every tree *not habitually producing* (*mh; poiouh*) good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Therefore, by their fruits you will know them (Matt 7:15–20; emphasis mine).**[/EXT]**

Previously intimated by the 90/10 percentiles, the continual aspect of all New Testament verbs and verbal nouns describing personal behavior stands as both a comfort for believers and a warning for unbelievers. Since Jesus employed the continual aspect “a good tree is not able to habitually produce bad fruit” instead of the finite aspect “a good tree is not able to produce bad fruit,” believers need never fear that they have lost their salvation following sin. By contrast, Jesus’ utilization of the continual aspect “nor is a rotten tree able to habitually produce good fruit” rather than the finite aspect “nor is a rotten tree able to produce good fruit” prevents unbelievers from thinking they possess or have earned salvation when they occasionally perform God-honoring actions, for it is precisely their occasional nature which invalidate them from earmarking salvation. Denoting the Pauline “spirit” as “God’s seed,” the Elder John draws together these doctrinal threads with the following statement: “Everyone having been born of

God is not continually practicing sin, because God's seed remains in him, and he is not able to continually sin, because he has been born of God" (1 John 3:9).⁸

The first epistle of the Elder John coupled with Paul's letter to the Galatians proceed to list several traits, whose sum total comprise the "fruit of the Spirit" (Gal 5:22), characteristic of all possessing a revived human spirit. When people are asked to characterize a believer's life, the adjective that comes to mind should not be "hypocrite" or "sinner," but rather something like "carrying out the Kingdom of God," where the Kingdom of God designates the philosophy of life where God is the king over all earthly affairs (e.g. social, political, economic, religious, and so forth) and where God rules as an other-centered servant leader instead of as a self-centered domineering tyrant. Consequently, one specific result in life is *agaphē* the unconditional, suffering love uniquely emanating from God which makes up the gasoline for the engine of God's Kingdom:

[EXT]Beloved (ʼAgaphtoi), let us love (agapwmen) one another, because love (agaph) is of God, and everyone who continually loves (agapwñ) has been born of God and knows God. The one not continually loving (mh; agapwñ) does not know God, because God is love (agaph)...We love (agapwmen) because he first loved (hgaphsen) us. If anyone says, "I love (ʼAgapw) God," and hates one's sisters or brothers, that person is a liar, for the one not continually loving (mh; agapwñ) one's sister or brother, whom one has seen, is not able to love (agapañ) God, whom one has not seen. And this command we have from him, that the one loving (agapwñ) God must also love (agapa) his sister or brother (1 John 4:7–8, 19–21).[EXT]

Here note the exclusivity of the term *agaphē* and its variants to designate the "love" marking the believer's behavior. For *agaphē* the highest grade of love, is distinct from lower grades of love, such as *filia* (friendship love) and *erōs* (sexual love), supplementary loves which only possess validity when conjoined with the primary love *agaphē*. In other words, believers should have *filia* for their friends and *erōs* for their spouses in addition to, not instead of, *agaphē* for such persons, as the latter supplies the foundation for the former. Empowered by *agaphē* another effect of regeneration is overcoming "the world," where the world alludes to the anti-Kingdom-of-God Kingdom philosophy of life marked by personal selfishness and "top-down" social domination and oppression according to which the world typically operates:⁹ "And his commands are not burdensome, because all who have been born of God overcome the world" (1 John 5:3–4). Here the Elder John explains that the "spiritual human" possesses the innate ability to overcome the pressures and temptations of the world that may otherwise keep one from following God's paths and obeying his commands. Moreover, the "spiritual human" will actualize that innate potentiality and so overcome these pressures, rendering it joyful, not burdensome, to obey God's commands.¹⁰ The Elder John goes on to observe that "this is the victory that overcomes the world—our faith (*pisti*)" (1 John 5:4), because biblical faith, or

⁸ Wayne Grudem furnishes helpful commentary on John's intended meaning: "Here John explains that a person who is born again has that spiritual 'seed' (that life-generating and growing power) within him, and that this keeps the person living a life free of continual sin. This does not of course mean that the person will have a perfect life, but only that the pattern of life will not be one of continuing indulgence in sin" (*Systematic Theology* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994], 704).

⁹ MacGregor, *Systematic Theology*, 2, 270.

¹⁰ Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 705.

personal commitment to God, is the appropriate response when confronted by *gratia praeveniens*, a response to which the Spirit reciprocates via regeneration of that individual.

The most famous summary of practical life-defining traits engendered by the Spirit's power comes from Paul: "Now the fruit of the Spirit is love (*agaphē*), joy (*cara*), peace (*eirēnē*), longsuffering (*makroqumia*), kindness (*chrēstotē*), goodness (*agathōsunē*), faith (*πίστις* - one's personal commitment to Jesus must continue throughout life; one must never seek a "spiritual divorce"), gentleness (*praūthē*), and self-control (*egkratēia*); there is no law against such things. Persons who belong to Christ Jesus crucified (*ἐστῆς αὐρῶσαν*) the flesh (*τῆς σαρκῆς*) with its passions and desires" (Gal 5:22–24).¹¹ Seven of these nine attributes have yet to receive attention in our study. *Cara*; alludes to deep and abiding happiness independent of this-worldly circumstances; such joy is especially complete when what was spiritually lost or immature is respectively found or grows to maturity (Luke 15:6–7, 9–10, 32; Phil 2:2). Joy is possible precisely because of *eirēnē*, peace of mind regardless of situation springing from the well of peace with God (Rom 5:1). A corollary to the atonement, this peace is a gift from Jesus himself: "Peace (*Eirēnē*) I leave with you; my peace (*eirēnē*) I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid. . . . I have said this to you, that in me you may have peace (*eirēnē*). In the world you have tribulation; but because of good cheer, I have overcome the world" (John 14:27; 16:33). Such peace affords believers the supernatural ability, when anxieties enter their minds, to choose not to worry, namely, not to pay attention to those anxieties but to trust God for their resolution: "Worry about nothing, but in everything by prayer and petition with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace (*eirēnē*) of God, surpassing all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus" (Phil 4:6–7). Further, *eirēnē* manifests itself in a very practical peace between all those who know God. James Montgomery Boyce spells out the various relationships which, through the Holy Spirit, should function as disclosures of *eirēnē*:

This latter peace should be seen...in the home (1 Cor 7:12–16), between Jew and Gentile (Eph 2:14–17), within the church (Eph 4:3; Col 3:15), and indeed in the relationships of the believer with all [persons] (Heb 12:14). Moreover, Christians are to strive for it (1 Peter 3:11). The importance of this word is evident from its frequent and extensive occurrence in the NT—eighty times and in every book.¹²

This essential virtue facilitates *makroqumia*, the quality of tolerating or putting up with others, even (and especially) when one is severely tested. The importance of longsuffering is underscored by its being most often used in Scripture concerning the nature of God, as in Joel's words of assurance: "Return to Yahweh your God, for he is gracious and merciful, longsuffering, and abounding in steadfast love, and relents from sending calamity" (2:13).

The divine kindness out of which God acts toward humanity, *chrēstotē* is what the Bible posits of God in its repeated affirmations that "God is good." Even transcending the Golden Rule, "Do unto others *as you would have them do unto you*" (Matt 7:12; emphasis mine),

¹¹ Expectedly, Paul contrasts the fruit of the Spirit with the works of the flesh, whose habitual presence spells eternal destruction: "But the works of the flesh (*sarkō*) are manifestly obvious, which are fornication, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, anger, selfishness, divisions, factions, envy, drunkenness, carousing and things like this. Just as I said beforehand, so now I say again, the ones habitually practicing (*πραῖσσοντες*, continual aspect verb) such things will not inherit the Kingdom of God" (Gal 5:19–21).

¹² James Montgomery Boyce, "Galatians," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, 12 vols., gen. ed. Frank E. Gæbelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976), 10:498.

believers are to show kindness by treating others *as God has treated them*. Similarly, ἀγαθωσύνη designates generosity that flows from kindness and which is often directed toward persons not meriting the action. Appealing to the Judaized version of the Greek philosophical categories under which he was trained by Gamaliel, Paul stipulates that followers of Jesus must exhibit πραύτης, defined by Aristotle as classifying “the person who is so much in control of himself that he is always angry at the right time and never angry at the wrong time.”¹³ Philo remarked that Moses, praised in Torah as the gentlest or meekest among his contemporaries (Num 12:3), exemplified this virtue, whose possession is necessary for learning, dispensing discipline, receiving discipline, meeting opposition, and giving a godly witness.¹⁴ Finally, ἐγκράτεια is the attribute that supplies victory over fleshly desires and which is thereby inextricably intertwined to chastity in both mind and conduct.¹⁵ Against the aforementioned nine virtues there is no law, for the moral law functions to restrain evil, and these qualities do not need to be restrained. In addition, Paul suggests that it is logically impossible for the moral law to stand against such as live in this manner since, by virtue of being so led, they in principle fulfill all that the moral law requires. However, believers must never return to their pre-Christian ways of life. In a carefully nuanced Greek verse which, in itself, permits no ambiguity but which, due to translation into conceptually looser languages like Latin and English, has frequently suffered misinterpretation down through history, Paul asserts that individuals belonging to Jesus “crucified” (ἐσταύρωσαν, aorist or simple past tense), not “have crucified” (εἰσταύρωσαν, perfect tense), the flesh. Paul uses the simple past rather than perfect tense to convey the clear meaning that, metaphorically speaking, the flesh of believers has been nailed to the cross but is not yet dead, struggling for life until the moment of physical mortality. Much damage has been levied against Christians struggling with sin by well-meaning friends and church leaders when the latter insist that Christ has annihilated the flesh of all true believers, thereby indirectly calling the regeneration of the former into question (*i.e.* “if person *P* deals with a fleshly temptation, *P* must not be a real Christian, since Jesus has destroyed the flesh of all the redeemed). Rather, the flesh is currently condemned to an agonizing death, suffered in slow and lingering fashion, thus in the process always desperately pressuring the believer to take it down from the cross and revivify it. But the believer is not to remove, or even seek to remove, from the cross what has once been nailed there.

[A]Concluding Insights: Appropriating the Spirit’s Internal Sustenance

How can individuals truly know they are children of God? By examining their own spiritual state, believers can discern in a properly basic way both that the dominating principle in their lives comprises the observance of God’s will and that the Holy Spirit lives within (the *sensus divinitatis*). These two answers find encapsulation in Paul: “The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God” (Rom 8:16). Accordingly, Scripture exhorts followers of Jesus to appropriate the Spirit’s internal sustenance through purity, worship, and service, in the process experiencing daily spiritual growth. Concerning purity, the believer’s body is literally a temple of the indwelling Spirit (1 Cor 6:18–20). Therefore, believers should treat their bodies and the bodies of others “in sanctification and honor” (1 Thess 4:4), rather than attempting to justify ethically dubious behavior with such rationalizations as “we are consenting

¹³ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 4.5.1.

¹⁴ Philo, *De vita Mosis*, 2.50.279.

¹⁵ Boyce, “Galatians,” 499.

adults,” “no one gets hurt,” “we love each other,” and so forth. Robert G. Gromacki rightly avers that the believer “must reject this kind of nonbiblical logic for one basic reason: The Holy Spirit is hurt when a Christian violates the proper sexual usage of his body.”¹⁶ Grounded “in spirit and in truth” (John 4:24), true worship of God is relational, personal, and directed by the Holy Spirit. As a result, saved Jews and saved Gentiles, fused together as “one new humanity” in Jesus, now “both have access by one Spirit to the Father” (Eph 2:15, 18). The biblical relationship between the Spirit and the church is a symbiotic one: as the Spirit unifies the fellowship or communion of believers, simultaneously the church must vigilantly “pray in the Holy Spirit” (Jude 20)—consequently the church develops into “the dwelling place of God in the Spirit” (Eph 2:22). Emerging from the nature of the “spiritual human,” believers should serve God “in the newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter” (Rom 7:6); in other words, true service is marked by *agaphē* rather than legalistic conformity to tradition or social expectations. The hallmark of genuine service is its benevolent edification, construed here broadly to include all forms of “building up,” of both believers and non-believers, for this is how Jesus himself served. All followers of Jesus must build on this foundation, cognizant that it is the only basis whereupon they may render account of their accomplishments before the judgment seat of Christ (1 Cor 3:11–15). By cultivating the triplicate pillars of purity, worship, and service, believers grow from spiritual infancy to adulthood (2 Pet 3:18), fostering increasing awareness of their spiritual inheritance “that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God” (1 Cor 2:12). As long as believers refuse to substitute human effort, or conformity to human-made standards, for reliance on the divine power of the Spirit, the church *in toto et personam* will mediate reconciling spiritual encounter to a lost and dying world, so reinfusing the world with foretastes of restorative power which God will consummate at the general resurrection.

¹⁶ Gromacki, “Indwelling and Filling,” 500.