

The Human Being in Eschatology according to 1 Thess 5:23

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ABSTRACT: In his earliest letter, 1 Thessalonians, Paul addresses the issue of eschatology, leaving us a surprising anthropological description of the human being as “spirit, soul, and body.” Paul uses terms that are familiar to his readers. However, the first term in this threefold division of a human being, “spirit,” is the most emphasised, since the human being is no longer made up exclusively of “body and soul.” In this brief contribution, I will attempt to examine this term, “spirit,” as illuminated by its immediate narrative context and by other Pauline pneumatological texts and by its first reception. In this way, the reader will better understand the Pauline vision of the human being in the eschatology, in his ultimate destiny.

KEYWORDS: Pauline anthropology, Pauline pneumatology, Pauline eschatology, Spirit, 1 Thess, history of reception

In this brief contribution, I will explore the subject of Pauline anthropology in the eschatology, that is to say, how Paul understands the human being in the end times.¹ This will involve an in-depth examination of the text of 1 Thess 5:23 (Αὐτὸς δὲ ὁ θεὸς τῆς εἰρήνης ἀγιασάσαι ὑμᾶς ὁλοτελεῖς, καὶ ὁλόκληρον ὑμῶν τὸ πνεῦμα καὶ ἡ ψυχὴ καὶ τὸ σῶμα ἀμέμπτως ἐν τῇ παρουσίᾳ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τηρηθείη), supplemented, at times, with other Pauline texts that deal with eschatology. Throughout the research, I will make use of the early interpretation of some Fathers of the Church, the reception history, as a *Wirkungsgeschichte* example. Ultimately, the questions guiding my investigation are: What is proper to the human being in eschatology? Is there any sort of relationship or progress among people from protology to eschatology? What does the resurrection of the Man Jesus Christ contribute to Paul’s anthropological conception?

Paul has neither a systematic nor a consistent anthropology, but rather adapts to his argumentative necessities and changes his nomenclature as he wishes. In 1 Thess 5:23, Paul’s surprising anthropological description, “spirit (πνεῦμα), soul (ψυχή), and body (σῶμα),” uses the vocabulary of the time,² but referring to the whole person, with the unitary vision

1 With regard to the anthropology of the eschatological culmination and, therefore, the goal of humanity, see X. Pikaza, «Antropología paulina», *Diccionario de san Pablo* (ed. F. Fernández Ramos) (Burgos: Monte Carmelo 1999) 87–91.

2 With respect to the philosophical background of Paul’s tripartite expression, Van Kooten claims that Paul adopts a Platonic vision of the person, similar to that of Philo. In Van Kooten, «The Anthropological Trichotomy», 87–119, he argues that both Philo and Paul make a transition from νοῦς to πνεῦμα. However,

typical of the Jewish tradition.³ Paul does not intend here, or anywhere else in his writing, to offer a complete reflection on Christian anthropology.

For example, this text does not include other essential components of Pauline anthropology, such as the heart (*καρδία*)⁴ and the mind (*νοῦς*),⁵ which are present in Matt 22:37, following Deut 6:5. However, since in his first writing, 1 Thess, Paul positions himself in eschatology (1 Thess 1:9–10; 4:13–18; 5:1–11; 5:23–24), Paul addresses anthropology in eschatology (without using those terms) with this anthropological presentation, dealing with the human being in the end times.⁶

The tripartite division of the human being that appears in 1 Thess 5:23 has drawn the attention of commentators and theologians throughout the ages, and therefore its reception history is not brief.⁷ What does Paul mean when he defines the person as “spirit, soul, and body”?⁸

Engberg-Pedersen, *Cosmology and Self in the Apostle Paul*, 8–38, states that Paul adopts a Stoic vision of the person, understanding *πνεῦμα* as a physical substance, characteristic of celestial bodies. John Barclay («Stoic Physics and the Christ-Event: A Review of Troels Engberg-Pedersen, *Cosmology and Self in the Apostle Paul: The Material Spirit* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010]», *JSNT* 33 [2011] 406–414), on the other hand, strongly disagrees with both; for him, the philosophical background of the anthropological expressions is much debated, meaning that clear conclusions cannot be drawn. I agree with Barclay that Paul’s language is not drawn from a philosophical context, but from an event, the novelty of which stems from the appearance of God in Christ (*ibidem*, 412).

- 3 This totality is explicitly expressed with the words *ὅλα τελεῖς, καὶ ὀλόκληρον*. Tertullian emphasised this interpretation of the entirety of the person when he quoted 1 Thess 5:23, commenting that “Here you have the entire substance of man destined to salvation” (Tertullian, *De Resurrectione Mortuorum*, 47).
- 4 Jewett, *Paul’s Anthropological Terms. A Study of their Use in Conflict Settings* (AGSU 10; Leiden: Brill 1971) 447–448, states that Paul follows the traditional Jewish usage of “heart,” or *καρδία*, in which it represents the centre of the person, the source of their will, emotions, thoughts, and affections.
- 5 Van Kooten, «The Anthropological Trichotomy», 88, demonstrates that in Greek, and, especially, Platonic philosophy, *νοῦς* was a characteristic part of *ψυχή*, a quality of the soul. John Dillon («Plutarch and the Separable Intellect», *Estudios sobre Plutarco. Misticismo y Religiones Místicas en la Obra de Plutarco* [eds. A. Pérez Jiménez – F. Casadésus] [Madrid – Málaga: Clásicas 2001] 36–37) argues that Aristotle formulated incipient anthropological trichotomy, clearly distinguishing between the mind (*νοῦς*) and the soul (*ψυχή*), which were joined to the body (*σῶμα*). This is likely an antecedent to Paul’s tripartite division of *πνεῦμα*, *ψυχή*, and *σῶμα*.
- 6 See Fadini, «Temporalità escatologica. San Paolo nella lettura di Heidegger», *StPatr* 50 (2003) 357–375.
- 7 Anthony Thiselton (*1 & 2 Thessalonians Through the Centuries* [Blackwell Bible Commentaries; Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell 2011] 161ff) in compiling a reception history of this tripartite expression, shows that it has been frequently misinterpreted and, therefore, much debated since the time of the Church Fathers. Various theories regarding Pauline anthropology, dichotomous or trichotomous, can be found in B. Rigaux, *Saint Paul. Les Épîtres aux Thessaloniciens* (Paris – Gembloux: Gabalda – Duculot 1956) 596ff.
- 8 With regard to this tripartite expression, see César A. Franco Martínez, «El hombre cristiano – “espíritu, alma y cuerpo” – en 1 Tes 5,23», *Concepto cristiano de hombre. 50º Aniversario de ordenación sacerdotal del Emm. Cardenal Primado* (Semana de Teología Espiritual 17; Toledo: Centro de Estudios de Teología 1992) 45–74, which I follow at times.

1. Pauline Anthropology in the Light of Christology and Pneumatology

We often try to fit Paul's thinking into an earlier system of thought.⁹ However, I believe that Paul's terminology is more closely related to his personal Christian experience, and therefore I will limit myself almost exclusively to the Pauline corpus, leaving various proposed influences on Pauline terms for the footnotes. I maintain that the hypothetical origin of Paul's expressions does not really illuminate them, but that what is decisive is what was later referred to as the Christian doctrinal context. For Paul, the event of the risen Christ is the centre of the revelation and of the gospel that he received, not from human beings, but from God Himself (Gal 1:11–17). I believe that Pauline Christology and pneumatology are principally based on Paul's experience, and this experience leads him to understand himself, and humanity, in a new way. Thus, it is possible to come to know the Pauline vision of the person in eschatology, in their¹⁰ final destiny. It is considered that, according to Paul, the person in eschatology is determined, is completed or perfected, by the gift of the Spirit.

The first term in the tripartite division of the human being, "spirit," is the most emphasised because of its position,¹¹ indicating that, in eschatology, the human being is no longer composed exclusively of "body and soul," as the philosophical anthropology of the time claimed.¹² I intend to address the novelty of this term, "spirit," as illuminated by its immediate context, and by other Pauline pneumatological texts. The difficulty lies not in determining what the apostle thinks about the soul and the body, but in specifying the content

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- 9 Regarding the relationship of the term "spirit" in Paul and in *Qumran*, see J. Frey, «Paul's View of the Spirit in the Light of Qumran», *The Dead Sea Scrolls and Pauline Literature* (ed. J.-S. Rey) (STDJ 102; Leiden – Boston, MA: Brill 2014) 237–260.
- 10 For the sake of simplicity, I will avoid using inclusive language throughout the body of the paper, with the understanding that the human being should be interpreted as man and woman.
- 11 Of course, Paul's call to holiness in 1 Thess 5:23 also invites his readers to preserve the body blameless given that, in the previous chapter, he described holiness as upholding the body's honour, without allowing oneself to be dominated by concupiscence or fornication (1 Thess 4:3–5). Now, the order of the anthropological terms, i.e. "spirit, soul, and body," suggests that the body is guarded with honour insofar as the spirit directs it, preserving the unity of the blameless human being, body included.
- 12 The best-known expression of ancient philosophical anthropology is the distinction that Plato makes between the body and soul. With regard to this dichotomy of the body and soul in Plato, see T.M. Robinson, «The Defining Features of Mind-Body Dualism in the Writings of Plato», *Psyche and Soma. Physicians and Metaphysicians on the Mind-Body Problem from Antiquity to Enlightenment* (eds. J.P. Wright – P. Potter) (Oxford: Clarendon 2002) 37–55. This division of the person into "body and soul" was the most frequent in classical Greek philosophy in general, as demonstrated in Patrick Miller, «Greek Philosophical Dualism», *Light Against Darkness. Dualism in Ancient Mediterranean Religion and the Contemporary World* (eds. A. Lange et al.) (Journal of Ancient Judaism Supplements; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 2011) 107–144, with implications in the anthropology of Second Temple Judaism, as noted in L.T. Stuckenbruck, «The Interiorization of Dualism», within the Human Being in Second Temple Judaism: the Treatise of the Two Spiritus (1QS III: 13- IV:26) in its Tradition-Historical Context», *Light Against Darkness. Dualism in Ancient Mediterranean Religion and the Contemporary World* (eds. A. Lange et al.) (Journal of Ancient Judaism Supplements; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 2011) 145–168. See also V. Rabens, «Reframing Paul's Anthropology in the Light of the Dichotomies of Pauline Research», *JSNT* 40 (2018) 503–515.

of the concept πνεῦμα. The first task of the entire exegesis is to determine the meaning of words, especially those that are emphasised by their position and by their novelty.

The immediate literary context of 1 Thess 5:23 does shed some light on the meaning of the noun πνεῦμα. In 1 Thess 5:19, the apostle says, “Do not quench the Spirit.” Here he is referring to the divine Spirit that acts in believers, giving rise to all kinds of gifts and charisms in them. The other three instances of the word πνεῦμα in 1 Thess also refer to the Holy Spirit (1:5,6; 4:8). Thus, the context of the word πνεῦμα in 1 Thess 5:23 certainly relates it, in some way, to the divine Spirit.¹³

The analysis of various occurrences of πνεῦμα in Paul’s other letters, in their different anthropological uses, indicates that the word πνεῦμα cannot be interpreted as human spirit only, apart from God. In fact, there is no merely human πνεῦμα in Paul’s texts. This term expresses the possibility of an encounter between the human being and God, a human aptitude for communication with God, because the person has received this ability from Him as grace.¹⁴ The conception of πνεῦμα as a gift from God, communicated to the human being, is typical of Christian anthropology, just as it appears in Paul. As Jean-Pierre Lemonon¹⁵ and Robert Jewett¹⁶ rightly state, in the Pauline corpus, especially in primarily anthropological contexts, πνεῦμα has a theological connotation.

In his *Antropología teológica*, Ladaría correctly affirms:

New Testament anthropology, and in particular that of Paul, always contemplates the human being in the light of God; it is not interested in an idea of the person *in themselves*, perhaps because of the tacit conviction that this person does not exist. In the concrete coordinates, in which Paul and the other New Testament authors move, the mystery of the person is illuminated by the presence of God in them, the only presence capable of allowing them to go beyond sin and to live fully. The idea of the person in Paul is Christologically oriented (1 Cor 15:44–45).¹⁷

Next, we will look at other texts in the Pauline corpus where πνεῦμα appears in relation to the human being in eschatology. This exposition attempts to follow the logical order of events that explain the tripartite division in 1 Thess 5:23, as opposed to a chronological itinerary.¹⁸

13 Rinaldo Fabris (*1–2 Tessalonicesi* [I libri Biblici. Nuovo Testamento 13; Milano: Paoline 2014] 171) states that it refers to the person as a recipient of God’s action by means of His Spirit.

14 As we will see further on, including in 1 Cor 2:11, where parallelism is established between the Spirit of God and the spirit of the person, the meaning of πνεῦμα is not purely anthropological, since it reveals this human capacity to open themselves to the Spirit of God. Rom 8:16, another text that speaks of a human spirit – “our spirit” – shows a direct relation between this spirit and the divine Spirit: αὐτὸ τὸ πνεῦμα συμμαρτυρεῖ τῷ πνεύματι ἡμῶν ὅτι ἐσμὲν τέκνα θεοῦ (both bear joint witness). We will look at both of these texts later, in paragraph 1.3.

15 J.-P. Lemonon, «L’Esprit Sant dans le corpus paulinien», *Dictionnaire de la Bible. Supplément* 60–61 (1986–1987) 309.

16 Jewett, *Paul’s Anthropological Terms*, 195.

17 Ladaría, *Antropología teológica*, 97. Translations of all direct quotations, when not available in English, are my own.

18 I would like to thank Professor Engberg-Pederson for his contribution, pointing out the importance of chronological aspects in Pauline theology. Nevertheless, I prefer to follow a logical, rather than chronological, order, which helps us to understand Paul’s reasoning better based, in any case, on letters indisputably written by Paul.

Firstly, we will examine the risen Christ as the perfect human being – Pauline eschatology in 1 Cor 15:42–49. Then, we will move to the relation between Christ and the Spirit – Pauline pneumatology in 2 Cor 3:17–18. Thirdly, we will study the gift of the Spirit of the risen Christ that perfects the human being – Pauline anthropology in 1 Cor 2:6–16. Finally, we will illuminate these ideas with the Pauline expressions “first instalment” (2 Cor 1:22; 5:5; Eph 1:14) and “firstfruits” (Rom 8:23; 2 Thess 2:13; 1 Cor 15:20,23) of the Spirit.

2. Christ, the Last Adam, a Life-Giving Spirit, according to 1 Cor 15:42–49

The whole chapter of 1 Cor 15 is focused on the resurrection of the dead, i.e. on eschatology, which began with the unique event of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, the foundation of the resurrection of all people (1 Cor 15:12–14). In 1 Cor 15:44–45, Paul again uses the term *πνεῦμα* in relation to *ψυχή* and *σῶμα*, as he did in 1 Thess 5:23; therefore, this can help us to understand the tripartite expression that we are studying Christologically, and to comprehend the human being in eschatology in relation to the perfect realisation of the risen Christ.

In 1 Cor 15:35–50, Paul draws a comparison between Adam and Christ. This is a typological comparison between the first human being, the first Adam, who pointed towards Christ, the second or definitive Adam.¹⁹ In the same way that Adam is considered representative of all humanity, Christ is the origin of all new humanity.²⁰ What it is said of the first Adam, as a representative of all, can also be said of the last Adam. James Dunn affirms: “Adam is humankind, an individual who embodies or represents a whole race of people. But in that case, so also does Christ.”²¹ Just as the first Adam came into existence at the creation, in the same way, the last Adam comes into new existence at the resurrection (1 Cor 15:20–22; Rom 8:29; Col 1:18).

This parallelism between the first and the last Adam, between protology and eschatology, places us at the heart of Paul’s anthropology and spirituality. The risen Christ inaugurates a different order from that of the first Adam. For Paul, the resurrection marks the beginning of the humanity of the last Adam. Christ’s role as new man does not begin with

19 The intuition of the parallelism with Adam is not originally Paul’s, but may have arisen from Hellenistic (W. Schrage, *Der erste Brief an die Korinther*. IV. *1 Kor 15,1–16,24* [EKKNT 7; Zürich – Braunschweig – Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag 2000] 303) or rabbinic Judaism (S. Hultgren, «The Origin of Paul’s Doctrine of the Two Adams in 1 Corinthians 15:45–49», *JSNT* 25 [2003] 343–370). Regarding this underlying Adam-Christ typology, see Felipe de Jesús Legarreta-Castillo, *Adam in Romans 5 and 1 Corinthians 15. The New Creation and Its Ethical and Social Reconfigurations* (Emerging Scholars; Minneapolis, MN: Fortress 2014) 5–32, who develops a *status quaestionis*.

20 Van Kooten («The Anthropological Trichotomy», 89) affirms: “In *1 Cor.* 15, Paul gives us an insight into his anthropological views by distinguishing between ‘the first human being’ (*ὁ πρῶτος ἄνθρωπος*), Adam, and ‘the second human being’ (*ὁ δεύτερος ἄνθρωπος*), Christ.”

21 J.D.G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans 1998) 200.

pre-existence, or with incarnation, but with resurrection. The person's ultimate destiny and the key to understanding is not protology, but eschatology. The new humanity comes from the resurrection, which permits the new man to participate in the life-giving Spirit. The mystery of the person is clarified in the light of the perfect man, the risen Jesus Christ.²²

Paul conceives of the first Adam as “psychic human being” (from the Greek *psyche*, soul), in contrast to the new, eschatological Adam, called “spiritual human being.” In fact, 1 Cor 15:45b, using the expression “so it is written” (οὕτως γέγραπται), quotes Gen 2:7, according to the Septuagint, which says “And God formed the man of dust of the earth, and breathed upon his face the breath of life, and the man became a living soul” (καὶ ἐγένετο ὁ ἄνθρωπος εἰς ψυχὴν ζῶσαν).²³ That is to say, 1 Cor 15:45b quotes Gen 2:7 almost literally, adding a reference to Adam, the first human being.²⁴ In this way, it relates the “psychic” or “animal” human being to creation in protology, whereas it relates the new Adam, composed not only of the soul and body, but also of the spirit, *σῶμα πνευματικόν*, to Christ, the last Adam, in eschatology. The “animal human being” is the human being who has been given an *anima*, a soul – that is to say, the human being in their double dimension of the soul and body. Now, this “animal human being” has transformed or become a “spiritual human being.” Dunn affirms: “A theology which reckons seriously with the ἐγένετο of John 1:14 must reckon just as seriously with the ἐγένετο implied in 1 Cor 15:45b.”²⁵ In the same way that the Word became flesh, this resurrected incarnate Word, the new Adam, has become a “life-giving Spirit,” transforming into a vital principle with the power to give life.

22 In view of this Adam-Christ parallelism, we can better understand the well-known text from *Gaudium et spes*, 22: “The truth is that only in the mystery of the incarnate Word does the mystery of man take on light. For Adam, the first man, was a figure of Him Who was to come, namely Christ the Lord. Christ, the last Adam, by the revelation of the mystery of the Father and His love, fully reveals man to man himself and makes his supreme calling clear.”

23 I believe that Paul reads the verse from Genesis in the light of the eschatological event of the risen Christ. Regarding the reading that the *Targumim* give of Gen 2:7, see R. Hayward, «Adam, Dust, and the Breath of Life according to the Targumim of Gen 2:7», *Dust of the Ground and Breath of Life (Gen 2:7). The Problem of a Dualistic Anthropology in Early Judaism and Christianity* (eds. J. van Ruiten – G. H. van Kooten) (Leiden – Boston, MA: Brill 2016) 154–172.

24 With respect to the relationship between Gen 2:7 and 1 Cor 15:45, and Christ's role in creation, see Reinhard Feldmeier, «Christ as Creator: Paul's Eschatological Reading of Gen 2:7 in 1 Cor 15:45», *Dust of the Ground and Breath of Life (Gen 2:7). The Problem of a Dualistic Anthropology in Early Judaism and Christianity* (eds. J. van Ruiten – G.H. van Kooten) (Leiden – Boston, MA: Brill 2016) 127–137, which examines these texts, as well as other Pauline texts, demonstrating the identity that Paul establishes between Christ and the creator God. With regard to how Paul's pneumatology is never independent, but is rather always related to Christology, see R. Del Colle, «Christian Theology: the Spirit», *The Blackwell Companion to Paul* (ed. S. Westerholm) (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell 2011) 561–575. The author claims that, in Paul, the mystery of the Spirit is the mystery of God in Christ, directly connecting the Spirit to Christ, which is most characteristic of the gospel preached by Paul.

25 J.D.G. Dunn, «1 Corinthians – Last Adam, Life-Giving Spirit», *Christ and Spirit in the New Testament. In Honor of Charles Francis Digby Moule* (eds. B. Lindars – S.S. Smalley) (Cambridge: University Press 1973) 139.

According to Dunn, a transformation analogous to that of the incarnation occurs in the resurrection.²⁶ Commenting on this passage, Irenaeus states:

But if the Spirit be wanting to the soul, he who is such is indeed of an animal [psychic] nature, and being left carnal, shall be an imperfect being, possessing indeed the image [of God] in his formation (*in plasmate*), but not receiving the similitude through the Spirit; and thus is this being imperfect. [...] For that flesh which has been moulded is not a perfect man in itself, but the body of a man, and part of a man. Neither is the soul itself, considered apart by itself, the man; but it is the soul of a man, and part of a man. Neither is the spirit a man, for it is called the spirit, and not a man; but the commingling and union of all these constitute the perfect man.²⁷

Therefore, this exalted Jesus possesses a spiritual body (1 Cor 15:44, *σῶμα πνευματικόν*). Paul presents the first Adam as an “animal” or “psychic” body (v. 44, *σῶμα ψυχικόν*), and the last Adam as a spiritual body (v. 44, *σῶμα πνευματικόν*). Just as the “animal” or “psychic” body receives its life from the soul, or *ψυχή* (*ψυχὴν ζώσαν*, v. 45), *σῶμα πνευματικόν* is not a body made of spirit, immaterial, composed of an ethereal substance, but a body enlivened by the Spirit (*πνεῦμα ζωοποιούν*, v. 45).²⁸ Augustine affirms: “And so they will be spiritual, not because they shall cease to be bodies, but because they shall subsist by the quickening spirit.”²⁹ An emphasis is placed on the difference between, on the one hand, the body animated by the principle of natural or “animal” life (*ψυχικόν*), and, on the other hand, the eschatological condition of this body, inasmuch as it is enlivened by the Spirit (*πνευματικόν*). The adjectives contrast existence animated by human, “animal,” criteria and powers with existence animated by the criteria and power of the Spirit of God. The contrast does not regard the composition of the body, but rather the principle that energises it.³⁰

Adam	Christ
First person	Last person
Protology	Eschatology
<i>σῶμα ψυχικόν</i>	<i>σῶμα πνευματικόν</i>
<i>εἰς ψυχὴν ζώσαν</i>	<i>εἰς πνεῦμα ζωοποιούν</i>

26 Perhaps this transformation of the risen Christ is the reason why Mary Magdalene, and many others, do not recognise Him at first, after His resurrection (cf. John 20:14).

27 Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses*, V.6.1. With regard to Irenaeus’ use of Paul, see the recent publication T.D. Still – D.E. Wilhite (eds.), *Irenaeus and Paul* (London: Bloomsbury 2020). In particular, regarding Irenaeus’ anthropology, based on Paul, see D.E. White, «The Personal/Substantial Spirit of Prophecy: Irenaeus’ Use of Paul against the Heresies», *ibidem*, 89–112.

28 A.J.M. Wedderburn («Philo’s “Heavenly Man”», *NT* 15 [1973] 323–326) demonstrates that the transition from earthly-physical to heavenly-pneumatal as distinguished in 1 Cor 15 does not come from proto-Gnosticism. With respect to the bipartite and tripartite conceptions of the person in Nag Hammadi, see L.R. Lanzillotta, «Anthropological Views in Nag Hammadi: The Bipartite and Tripartite Conceptions of Human Being», *Dust of the Ground and Breath of Life (Gen 2:7): The Problem of a Dualistic Anthropology in Early Judaism and Christianity* (eds. J. van Ruiten – G.H. van Kooten) (Leiden – Boston, MA: Brill 2016) 136–153.

29 Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, 13.22.

30 See Á. Pereira Delgado, *Primera carta a los corintios* (Comprender la Palabra 31B; Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos 2017) 462.

Thus, the open opposition of *ψυχή* to *πνεῦμα*, applied to the first and the last Adam, defends the irreducibility of one term to the other, since they are not interchangeable concepts.³¹ The “psychic” human being is thus contrasted with the spiritual human being. The passage from one human being to the other can only be achieved by the last Adam in eschatology, when he has become a life-giving (active) spirit. A person without the enlivening gift of the Spirit of Christ is, at most, no more than a living soul, an earthly human being (passive).

In this new manner of existence, the exalted Jesus possesses a representative capacity that He can transmit, as evidenced by the use of *πνεῦμα ζωοποιούν* (v. 45), and not merely *πνεῦμα ζών*. The risen Jesus is not characterised simply as *πνευματικός*, but as *πνεῦμα*; not as *ζών*, but as *ζωοποιούν*. Whereas the first Adam received life passively, the last Adam gives it actively, as shown by the present active participle of the verb *ζωοποιέω*.³² Moreover, in this early Christian literature, *πνεῦμα* cannot denote a theological dogma, but a spiritual experience, an experience of being caught by a mysterious power that vitalises, startles, inspires and directs through a supernatural force; an experience of a new life.³³ What is distinctive here is that Paul identifies the risen Christ with this life-giving Spirit. Jesus, in His person, is the source of such experience of the Spirit. The spiritual experience that the believer has of this life-giving Spirit is the evidence of the resurrection of Christ.

The Spirit did not enliven *σῶμα ψυχικόν*, which was given to us in eschatology. But when is this change from *σῶμα ψυχικόν* to *σῶμα πνευματικόν* made? According to vv. 44–45, it is the risen Jesus, the new Adam, who became *σῶμα πνευματικόν*, *πνεῦμα ζωοποιούν*. In this way, Paul wants to convince his audience that the risen Christ possesses a new existence, which He can communicate, since He is a *πνεῦμα ζωοποιούν*, i.e. a Spirit which gives life to people – and not merely human life, but divine life as well, enlivened by the Spirit of God.³⁴ That is, eschatology begins with the resurrection of Jesus Christ, whose body is already completely inundated by the Spirit, and, for this reason, can communicate this life-giving Spirit. Ladaria says:

Jesus Himself, in His resurrection, becomes a life-giving Spirit, that is, He becomes the source of the Spirit which, as His gift, all people receive; only because He has gone on to exist in this new

31 In addition to Paul’s letters, see Heb 4:12, which says, “For the word of God is living, and active, and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit.”

32 In the expression *πνεῦμα ζωοποιούν*, the present active participle, in neuter accusative singular, agreeing with *πνεῦμα*, is striking. Paul thus emphasises that the last Adam, Jesus Christ, has become a Spirit capable of giving life, by conferring His own Spirit.

33 As noted in Dunn, «1 Corinthians 15:45», 132, this experience of *πνεῦμα* at the beginning of Christianity was characterised by an ecstatic phenomenon (Acts 2:4,33; 8:18; 10:46; 19:6; 1 Cor 1:5,7; Gal 3:5; Heb 2:4), by a strong emotional content (Rom 5:5; 1 Thess 1:6; Rom 8:15; Gal 4:6), by an experience of liberation (Rom 8:2; 2 Cor 3:17; Gal 5:18), and at other times, by intellectual enlightenment (2 Cor 3:16ff; Eph 1:17ff; Heb 6:4).

34 A similar statement, expressed with different words, can be found in Rom 1:1–4. It reads that Jesus Christ was “established as Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness through resurrection from the dead.” Thus, this other Pauline text also positions the resurrection from the dead as the moment in which Jesus Christ was fully vested with power by the Spirit. For more on this passage, see X. Pikaza, «Espíritu Santo», *Diccionario de san Pablo* (ed. F. Fernández Ramos) (Burgos: Monte Carmelo 1999) 471–476.

dimension of full union and intimacy with God the Father can He communicate to believers the gift that He possesses in fullness.³⁵

The definition of the risen Christ as a “life-giving Spirit” reveals that a different order, distinct from that of the first Adam, has begun with eschatology. This is what Dunn argues, affirming that “the exalted Jesus has a representative capacity in this mode of existence.”³⁶ The last Adam possesses a rank of life that is superior with respect to the state of the Adamic human being; the divine life that the Spirit of God grants is superior to a mere human life. It is, moreover, a life that has the capacity to give.

3. The Lord, the Risen Jesus Christ, is the Spirit according to 2 Cor 3:17–18

We find an expression similar to a “life-giving Spirit” in 2 Cor, where the risen Jesus, the Lord, is identified with the Spirit: “the Lord is the Spirit” (2 Cor 3:17a, ὁ δὲ κύριος τὸ πνεῦμά ἐστιν). Paul uses the verb “to be” in a broad sense with a relative frequency, meaning simply “to signify, to be manifested, to act” as, for example, in 1 Cor 10:4 and Gal 4:24–26. Moreover, other texts (1 Cor 6:17, 12:3; 2 Thess 2:8) show that all of Jesus’ activity after His resurrection is carried out through His Spirit. Therefore, as I have demonstrated elsewhere,³⁷ we can conclude that the identity of 2 Cor 3:17a is functional and not substantial – it is a dynamic equivalency. It does not affirm that the Lord and the Spirit are the same substantially, but rather that whoever experiences the Spirit of Christ also experiences Christ Himself, who, after His resurrection, acts through His Spirit, which permits an intimate and authentic communion with Him. In the experience of the believer, there is no distinction between Christ and the Spirit. Furthermore, according to Dunn, Paul’s understanding of the risen Christ emerges from his experience of the Spirit, and not the other way around.³⁸

In fact, in Rom 8:1–11, there is a very striking alternation. Paul’s language is surprising, because Christ and the Spirit seem to be equivalent in their relationship with the Christian. There is a parallelism between the expressions “in Christ” and “in the Spirit.” Paul affirms

³⁵ Ladaria, *Antropología teológica*, 382.

³⁶ Dunn, «1 Corinthians 15:45», 131. See also J.D.G. Dunn, «“The Lord, the Giver of Life”: The Gift of the Spirit as Both Life-giving and Empowering», *The Spirit and Christ in the New Testament and Christian Theology. Essays In Honor of Max Turner* (eds. I.H. Marshall – V. Rabens – C. Bennema) (Grand Rapids, MI – Cambridge, UK: Eerdmans 2012) 1–17, though it has a broader perspective, since it encompasses texts from the entire New Testament. John Levinson (*Filled with the Spirit* [Grand Rapids, MI – Cambridge: Eerdmans 2009] 253–316) stresses the importance of the expression “filled with the Spirit” both in Jewish and in early Christian literature, dedicating a chapter to the analysis of this expression in the Pauline corpus.

³⁷ For the Christological use of the title “Lord” to refer to the risen Christ and, above all, the functional identification of the Lord with the Spirit, see A. García Serrano, «The Pauline Sense of the Expression “Now the Lord is the Spirit” (2 Cor. 3:17a)», *ExpTim* 127 (2016) 479–487.

³⁸ See Dunn, «1 Corinthians 15:45», 140.

not only that the Christian is as much “in Christ” (vv. 1–2) as “in the Spirit” (v. 9a), but also that Christ “is in the Christian” (v. 10a) as the Spirit “is in the Christian” (vv. 9b,11).³⁹ There is no distinction between these expressions. Everything acquires meaning with the important Pauline designation in Rom 8:9: “the Spirit of Christ.”⁴⁰ Schweizer states “πνεῦμα is defined as the manner of existence of the κύριος.”⁴¹

Now, what is striking about this second passage is that, unlike the first one of paragraph 1.1, in which Paul spoke in the singular, referring exclusively to the risen Christ (1 Cor 15:45), here he speaks in the plural: “And we all, with unveiled faces reflecting (κατοπτριζόμενοι) the glory of the Lord, are being transformed (μεταμορφούμεθα) into the same image from one degree of glory to another, which is from the Lord, who is the Spirit (ἀπὸ κυρίου πνεύματος)”⁴² (2 Cor 3:18). Speaking in the first-person plural, Paul refers to all Christians, himself included. Christians are progressively transformed into this glorious image, which is the face of Christ, according to what is said in 2 Cor 4:4–6: “the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God [...] has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.” This indicates that the transformation of the Christian always has to be Christification⁴³ given that Christ is the image of God who reflects all of His glory.

It is interesting to note that this transformation is presented in passive voice, μεταμορφούμεθα, meaning that Christians are transformed. The agent of this transformation comes later, through the expression ἀπὸ κυρίου πνεύματος. This is a prepositional construction that governs a double genitive, and that can be translated as follows: “by the Lord, who is the Spirit.” The preposition ἀπό expresses the principal cause of a particular action. Therefore, the agent is expressed with a double genitive that depends on the preposition ἀπό. Murray Harris argues that if a preposition is followed by two nouns, the preposition governs and qualifies the first noun.⁴⁴ That is why the entire prepositional construction, interpreting the second genitive as exegetical, can be translated as “by the Lord, who is the Spirit.”⁴⁵

39 Rom 8:27b speaks of the Spirit who intercedes for us, and Rom 8:34 speaks of Christ who intercedes for us. The risen Christ intercedes for us and in our favour in the Spirit, with whose power He was raised. In Rom 15:14–22, Paul emphasises that it is Christ Himself who accomplishes the action of the apostles by means of the Spirit: “by the power of signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit (of God)” (v. 19).

40 Equivalent expressions can be found in Gal 4:6 (“the Spirit of his Son”) and Phil 1:19 (“the Spirit of Jesus Christ”).

41 E. Schweizer, «πνεῦμα, πνευματικός», *TDNT* VI, 419.

42 Regarding this translation and interpretation, see García Serrano, «Now the Lord is the Spirit», 484–486.

43 The images of “clothing oneself with Christ” in Gal 3:27 or 1 Cor 15:53–54 are in the same vein.

44 M.J. Harris, *Prepositions and Theology in the Greek New Testament. An Essential Reference Resource for Exegesis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan 2012) 44. Other examples of the same phenomenon can be found in Rom 3:20 and Gal 2:16, 3:2, 5:10.

45 In this regard, see, for example, Charles Moule, «2 Cor. iii. 18b, καθάπερ ἀπὸ κυρίου πνεύματος», *Essays in New Testament Interpretation* (ed. C.F.D. Moule) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1982) 227–234, who defends and justifies the translation, “Such is the influence of the Lord, who, as we have already said, is Spirit.”

If this interpretation is correct, then 2 Cor 3:18 affirms that the transformation of Christians is brought about by the Lord, Jesus Christ, who, after His resurrection, acts through the Spirit. In fact, this transformation comes about through contemplating Jesus Christ, the glory of the Lord, as in a mirror. This contemplation tends to reflect Him, because the participle *κατοπτριζόμενοι* is a *hapax* in the New Testament, which some interpreters translate as “contemplate” and others as “reflect.”⁴⁶ It may serve as ambivalence that Paul consciously accepted to imply that, to the extent to which one contemplates Him, so also will one reflect Him. This interior Christification is brought about by the Spirit of the Lord. This means that it is the Spirit that brings about the interior transformation in us in order to liken us to that which we contemplate. In this way, we reflect the risen Christ as in a mirror. Christ without the Spirit would not be able to transform internally, and the Spirit without Christ would not have anyone to configure. George van Kooten affirms:

By participating in Christ’s death and resurrection in baptism (Rom 6:3–11), the human identity starts to fuse with that of Christ, the second Adam, the second human being who, in contrast to the first human being, is from heaven. Whereas humankind still bears the image of the first, earthly Adam (1 Cor 15:49), Christians increasingly bear the image of the heavenly human being and are increasingly transformed into his likeness (2 Cor 3:18). In this way their *pneuma* is restored and they turn again into trichotomous human beings, the *pneumatikoi*.⁴⁷

It is the Spirit, which the risen Christ gave us upon becoming a “life-giving Spirit,” that transforms us and likens us to Christ, the image of God. Firstly, Jesus possessed the Spirit during His life; then, He possessed it in fullness in His resurrection; and finally, He gave it to human beings. The life that Christ offers us, the way in which He enlivens us, is by giving us His Spirit,⁴⁸ which dwells in us in order to liken us to Him. In eschatology, the Christian receives the Spirit who conforms the believer internally to Christ, the Lord. Christ is the means par excellence of this new humanity that opens up in eschatology. This eschatological transformation of believers, who receive the Spirit of the Lord, goes far beyond the beginning, beyond Adam and Eve, since it internally likens us to the image of God, to His eternal glory incarnate in Jesus Christ, to the perfect human being.

⁴⁶ See I. Nayak, «The Meaning of *κατοπτριζόμενοι* in 2 Cor. 3:18», *Euntes Docete* 55 (2010) 33–44.

⁴⁷ Van Kooten, «The Anthropological Trichotomy», 118.

⁴⁸ A similar affirmation can be found in Rom 5:15: “But the gift is not like the transgression. For if by that one person’s transgression the many died, how much more did the grace of God and the gracious gift of the one person Jesus Christ overflow for the many.” The grace and the gift of God is the Spirit (Rom 5:5). In the glorious Jesus Christ, this gift overflows, and therefore, He can give it to us. Outside of the Pauline corpus, in the corpus of his disciple Luke, the following can be found: “Exalted at the right hand of God, he received the promise of the Holy Spirit from the Father and poured it forth, as you (both) see and hear” (Acts 2:33). Scripture again affirms that Jesus Christ, once exalted, received the Spirit fully and, therefore, was able to pour it forth perfectly.

4. Those Who Are “spiritual/perfect” in 1 Cor 2:6–16

In 1 Cor 2:6, Paul speaks of a “wisdom among the perfect,” but who are these perfect people? He begins to clarify it in the same verse, specifying that the wisdom is “not a wisdom of this age, nor of the rulers of this age,” and he explains further shortly thereafter: it is a wisdom that “God has revealed to us through the Spirit” (v. 10), “God’s wisdom, mysterious, hidden” (v. 7). This means that the perfect are those who have received the Spirit of God, which reveals a hidden wisdom to them, the wisdom of God.⁴⁹ It is thus connected to the texts that analysed before, both 2 Cor 3:1–4,18 and 1 Cor 15:42–47.⁵⁰ The Christian has received the Spirit of God, which the risen Jesus Christ, as a life-giving Spirit, has given them as a gift from on high, thus perfecting their nature; therefore, such Christian can be called “perfect.” According to Dunn, “that reception of the Spirit was the decisive and determinative element [in the eschatological times and] in the crucial transition of conversion.”⁵¹

Christians in eschatology are defined as “perfect” (1 Cor 2:6; Phil 3:15),⁵² and, synonymously, as “spiritual” (1 Cor 2:13,15; 3:1; 15:44; Gal 6:1). In these texts, the adjectives *τέλειος* or *πνευματικός* are used in place of the noun, defining Christians who, enlivened by the Spirit, become “spiritual” or “perfect,” mature human beings, called to the perfection of their nature.⁵³ The apostle suggests that the “perfect person” becomes such when such person has received the Spirit (1 Cor 2:6), thus completing them as “spirit, soul, and body” (1 Thess 5:23). The “perfect person” is the person (soul and body) endowed with the Spirit, which, according to 1 Cor 2:6–8, is not of this age, but of God.⁵⁴

It is worth noting that Paul addresses the Corinthians in the present tense: “*we speak* (*λαλοῦμεν*) wisdom among the perfect” (v. 6). This “perfect person” already exists, insofar as such person is perfected with the gift of the Spirit. It follows that the “perfect person” is not a concept that belongs exclusively to the *Parousia*, only attainable in the future, at the final consummation, but it is already present in eschatology, in the end times inaugurated by the resurrection of Jesus Christ and the gift of the Spirit. The hope of future perfection is

49 See Pereira Delgado, *Primera carta a los corintios*, 48–61.

50 Regarding the interrelation of the different anthropological texts, also in relation to neuroscience, see A. Gignac, «La mise en discours de l’humain chez saint Paul et ses interprétations anthropologiques en christianisme. Relecture de 1Co 6,12–20; 1Co 2,10–3,4 et 1Co 15,35–53», *Théologiques* 12 (2004) 95–124. The author states that each part of the human being – spirit, soul, body, flesh, etc. – indicates the totality of the person, but seen from a concrete aspect. For example, the spirit denotes the person with regard to his relationship with God.

51 Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle*, 425.

52 In Deutero-Pauline literature, this also appears in Eph 4:13 and Col 1:28, 4:12.

53 See L. Cerfaux, *La Théologie de l’Église suivant Saint Paul* (Unam Sanctam 54; Paris: Cerf 1965) 191.

54 Of course, Paul’s use of the nominalised adjective *τέλειος*, “perfect” could be ironic, employed as a kind of criticism of the Corinthians, who continue to behave like children, with jealousy and rivalry, as befits fleshly behaviour (1 Cor 3:1–3). However, this ironic usage does not undermine the fact that Paul reminds the Corinthians that, as spiritual (*πνευματικοί*), they have been perfected with the gift of the Spirit, which opposes all fleshly behaviour (*σαρκικοί*).

fulfilled in the *Parousia*, when the Lord will return and raise the dead; then, having borne the image of the earthly person, the human being will bear the image of the heavenly person (1 Cor 15:49), bringing this process that is already underway to fulfilment.

It is striking that Paul once again (as in 1 Cor 15:47) contrasts the “perfect/spiritual person” with the “carnal/psychic person.” Moreover, in this contrast, Paul yet again uses the same terms as in 1 Thess 5:23.

The person	The new person
Protology	Eschatology
ψυχικός δὲ ἄνθρωπος (1 Cor 2:14)	ὁ δὲ πνευματικός (1 Cor 2:13,15; 3:1; 15:44; Gal 6:1)
ψυχικός δὲ ἄνθρωπος (1 Cor 2:14)	τέλειος (1 Cor 2:6; Phil 3:15; Eph 4:13; Col 1:28, 4:12)

We should take a look at the texts. The “psychic” person (1 Cor 2:14, ψυχικός δὲ ἄνθρωπος) does not perceive the things of the Spirit of God, but the spiritual person (1 Cor 2:15, ὁ δὲ πνευματικός)⁵⁵ does, and therefore can judge everything. The “psychic” person is animated by the natural vital principle in the present order of creation, the body and soul, whereas the spiritual person is enlivened by the divine Spirit;⁵⁶ such person already possesses the Spirit of God, which unites itself to the person’s body and soul. This contrast highlights, once again, the essential difference between ψυχή and πνεῦμα analysed in the aforementioned texts, especially in 1 Cor 15:45. The terms πνεῦμα and ψυχή are not interchangeable in the Pauline corpus; even if Paul employs other anthropological terms ambiguously, in this case, at least, he draws a careful distinction between πνεῦμα and ψυχή.⁵⁷ The “psychic” person cannot understand spiritual things, because such person can draw only upon their natural abilities, whereas the spiritual person can discern everything, because such person has received the Spirit of God.

The person is “perfected” by participating in the Spirit of God and preserving the Spirit of God in themselves, as their own spirit, through persistent communion with

55 The expression πνευματικός ἄνθρωπος does not appear, but the “spiritual person” is understood from the context of 1 Cor 2:6–13, and especially in v. 15 (ὁ δὲ πνευματικός ἀνακρίνει τὰ πάντα, αὐτὸς δὲ ὑπὸ οὐδενὸς ἀνακρίνεται), which speaks of the judgement of the spiritual person.

56 See J.M.G. Barclay, «Πνευματικός in the Social Dialect of Pauline Christianity», *Pauline Churches and Diaspora Jews* (ed. J.M.G. Barclay) (WUNT 275; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2011) 205–215, who states that the use of πνευματικός comes from neither the Greek nor the Jewish milieu, but belongs to Paul. For the meaning of the adjective πνευματικός, see G.D. Fee, *God’s Empowering Presence. The Holy Spirit in the Letters of Paul* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson 1994) 28–31.

57 With respect to the difference between πνεῦμα and ψυχή in 1 Cor 2:1–16 and its possible relation to the Gnostics, including the interpretation of the early Church Fathers, see M.M., Mitchell, «Anthropological Hermeneutics: Between Rhetoric and Philosophy», *Paul, the Corinthians and the Birth of Christian Hermeneutics* (ed. M.M. Mitchell) (Cambridge – New York: Cambridge University Press 2010) 38–57.

Him (Rom 8:16). This perfect person is saved by faithfully maintaining the Spirit of God within themselves, and by keeping their soul and body irreproachable. The constant presence of the Holy Spirit in the body and the soul is accomplished insofar as persistent communion with Him increases through the person's docility to the Spirit.

St Irenaeus comments:

For this reason does the apostle declare (1 Cor 2:6): *We speak wisdom among them that are perfect*, terming those persons perfect who have received the Spirit of God [...] whom also the apostle terms *spiritual* (cf. 1 Cor 2:15; 3:1...), they being spiritual because they partake of the Spirit, and not because their *flesh* has been stripped off and taken away, and because they have become purely spiritual. [...] But when the spirit here blended with the *soul* is united to [God's] handiwork, the man is rendered spiritual and perfect because of the outpouring of the Spirit, and this is he who was *made in the image and likeness of God* (cf. Gen 1:26). [...] Those, then, are the perfect who have had the Spirit of God remaining in them, and have preserved their souls and bodies blameless [...].⁵⁸

The person made in the image and likeness of God is called to be spiritual, i.e. to perfect their nature in order to enter into that of God. This perfection is tied to the possession of the Spirit; the one who is perfect possesses, in addition to the soul and body, the Spirit of God as third element. This "spiritual/perfect" person participates qualitatively in the Spirit. Only by taking into account the "spiritual/perfect person" can we understand the tripartite Pauline anthropology of 1 Thess 5:23. Moreover, this perfection comes about when the order given by Paul in 1 Thess 5:23 is maintained: "spirit, soul, and body." Those who are "perfect," to whom the apostle refers, can be distinguished because the spirit guides and governs the soul, which, in turn, guides and governs the body. In this way, the spiritual person is fitted for actions with a double aspect, human and divine, actions guided by the Spirit of God, but carried out by the human being. The Spirit perfects the person, bringing them to take actions that are divine and, at the same time, human – done at the impulse of the Spirit of God, and carried out in the body and soul, or humanly.

It is surprising that 1 Cor 2:11 also speaks of the "spirit of the person," τὸ πνεῦμα τοῦ ἀνθρώπου (v. 11a), which seems opposed to τὸ πνεῦμα τοῦ θεοῦ (v. 11b).⁵⁹ However, v. 12 affirms that "We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit that is from God," ἡμεῖς δὲ οὐ τὸ πνεῦμα τοῦ κόσμου ἐλάβομεν ἀλλὰ τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ. This means that the spirit of the person has received God's Spirit from God Himself. Moreover, v. 16 returns

58 Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses*, V.6.1. For a better understanding of Irenaeus' anthropology, see A. Orbe, «El hombre ideal en la teología de San Ireneo», *Greg* 43 (1962) 449–491.

59 See Desta Heliso, «Divine Spirit and Human Spirit in Paul in the Light of Stoic and Biblical-Jewish Perspectives», *The Spirit and Christ in the New Testament and Christian Theology. Essays in Honor of Max Turner* (eds. I.H. Marshall – V. Rabens – C. Bennema) (Grand Rapids, MI – Cambridge, UK: Eerdmans 2012) 156–176, who examines the relationship between the two. After analysing the Stoic background, texts from the Old Testament (like Gen 2:7), and texts from Second Temple Jewish literature, on the basis of 1 Cor 2:11 and Rom 8:16, Heliso concludes that these expressions are merely linguistic distinctions, and are ultimately the same reality, the same metaphysical entity: the divine Spirit, the Spirit of Jesus Christ. However, as we will see, I disagree with this thesis.

to this first-person plural and affirms that Christians have νοῦς Χριστοῦ, suggesting that, in eschatology, the Christian possesses the “mind of Christ,” an expression similar to the “Spirit of Christ,”⁶⁰ and that the Christian therefore understands everything and can judge all of it. Now, in 1 Cor 2:11, Paul affirms that the person already had the human spirit when they received the divine Spirit: “who knows what pertains to a person except the spirit of the person that is within?,” meaning that the human being was not created as an incomplete being, but naturally possesses a spirit, a capacity for God, and this spirit becomes reality, active, in eschatology when he receives the Spirit of God.

The Letter to the Romans contains a text that helps us to understand this better: αὐτὸ τὸ πνεῦμα συμμαρτυρεῖ τῷ πνεύματι ἡμῶν ὅτι ἐσμὲν τέκνα θεοῦ (Rom 8:16). It is a complex affirmation, since the noun πνεῦμα appears twice, and, as we have seen, it is a very polysemic term. In fact, it seems to refer to two different πνεύματα, since only two distinct subjects can bear concurring witness. The initial τὸ πνεῦμα is linked to the Spirit that Christians have received, i.e. the Spirit of the previous verse, to which the anaphoric determinant τό refers: “For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you received a Spirit of adoption” (Rom 8:15). Thus, the initial τὸ πνεῦμα refers to the Spirit of the Son, the Spirit of Christ (Rom 8:9), which is what allows one to cry “Father!” (Rom 8:15). The exegetical problem lies in the interpretation of the second πνεῦμα, which is determined not by the anaphoric τό, but by the possessive ἡμῶν. In this case, Paul clearly returns to speaking of a “spirit of ours,” i.e. a human spirit, which bears witness on its own – concurring witness, but independent of the divine Spirit.

1 Cor 2:11	τὸ πνεῦμα τοῦ ἀνθρώπου	τὸ πνεῦμα τοῦ θεοῦ	ἐλάβομεν
Rom 8:16	τῷ πνεύματι ἡμῶν	αὐτὸ τὸ πνεῦμα	συμμαρτυρεῖ

Irenaeus interprets τῷ πνεύματι ἡμῶν in the sense of “a gift given by God to the person, not like a thing that belongs to him.”⁶¹ Thus, it would have to do with our most intimate depths, the inner person, inasmuch as it has already been transformed by the Holy Spirit. In this sense, the “spirit of the person” would be the capacity that the person has to receive the divine Spirit, shared and given to human beings.⁶² The divine Spirit would dwell in “our spirit,” received in the person’s most intimate depths, in the “spirit of the person.”⁶³ The “Spirit of God” can dwell in our most intimate depths, in our spirit, to the point of inwardly guiding our existence, as confirmed in Rom 8:14 (and 8:4). The spirit of the person is

60 Van Kooten («The Anthropological Trichotomy», 118–119) uses the philosophical background of the term νοῦς to state that Christians possess the νοῦς of Christ because they possess the πνεῦμα of Christ.

61 Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses*, III.22.1, says “But everyone will allow that we are [composed of] a body taken from the earth, and a soul receiving spirit from God.”

62 See Schweizer, «πνεῦμα, πνευματικός», 434.

63 In fact, when Paul speaks of “our spirit,” he applies the definite article τῷ in order to relate it directly to what precedes it, which is the Spirit of God (αὐτὸ τὸ πνεῦμα).

a disposition, an interior capacity, that does not come from ourselves, but from outside of us, since 1 Cor 2:12 states “we have received,” ἐλάβετε. The person does not have in themselves what they need for their own fulfilment – they receive it as a gift from God instead.

According to Saint Irenaeus, this gift from God inside the person, in their spirit, is dormant from the person’s creation and is “awakened” with the gift of baptism; the Spirit of God, which is received in baptism, awakens the “spirit of the person,” so to speak.⁶⁴ This spirit of the person is distinct from the Spirit of God, since both bear joint witness (Rom 8:16). However, the spirit of the person is necessary to be able to receive the quality that God gives to it, His Holy Spirit.

Manuel Aróztegui Esnaola analyses the ἀτονία of πνεῦμα, defended by Gnosticism, i.e. in the spiritual person, there was something divine, πνεῦμα, but it was imprisoned by σὰρξ and ψυχή, and thus remained inactive.⁶⁵ Aróztegui states that the thinkers of that time believed there was πνεῦμα in all people, though in sinners it was weak and lacking vigour. Orthodox believers and Valentinians were in agreement on this issue. However, before original sin, the breath that dwelled in Adam and Eve retained its vigour. According to Irenaeus’ anthropology, the flesh cannot be fashioned by God if not anointed by πνεῦμα. The reception of this divine πνεῦμα vitalises the lethargy of the human spirit, through the τόνος of the anointing, which prevents all torpidity or lethargy – ἄτονα. Subsequently, if the person obeys the counsel of the Spirit (*consilia Spiritus*), then their τόνος grows in intensity.⁶⁶ However, if the person disregards the *consilia*, then τόνος wanes to lethargy. It follows that the counsel of the Spirit acts as human acceptance. Thus, the preternatural person was given the gift of the spirit (*capax Dei*), gratuitously, but it was lethargic. When the divine Spirit is received, this human spirit is awakened.⁶⁷

In this regard, without taking Saint Irenaeus’ exegesis into account, Van Kooten affirms:

Although theoretically the first human being had a tripartite structure, effectively humankind failed to keep its *pneuma*, so that it needs to be restored. [...] In the generalising passage of 1 Cor 2:11, Paul reveals his view about the standard composition of humankind in general, a constitution which also encompasses *pneuma*. Naturally, in Paul’s view, whereas, technically speaking, every human being has *pneuma*, only the Christians can have their *pneuma* really and effectively restored. [...] although originally humankind was created with a trichotomous identity of πνεῦμα, ψυχή and σῶμα, effectively, after the degeneration and fall of humankind, human beings had no πνεῦμα till it was restored to them by means of their unification with Christ, the second human being from heaven. It is in this perspective of restoration that Paul quotes Gen 2:7 in 1 Cor 15:45. Paul does not mean that humankind was originally created as a dichotomic being, consisting only of ψυχή and σῶμα, but rather that, though humankind was created as a trichotomic being, made up of πνεῦμα, ψυχή and σῶμα, it is only Christ who restores the πνεῦμα which had effectively become lost. This gift of πνεῦμα is a fruit of

64 See Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses*, I.4–6.

65 Cf. M. Aróztegui Esnaola, *La amistad del Verbo con Abraham según san Ireneo de Lyon* (AnGr 294; Roma: Pontificia Università Gregoriana 2005) 35–40.

66 Cf. Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses*, IV.37.1.

67 Cf. Aróztegui Esnaola, *La amistad del Verbo*, 94–96.

realised eschatology. The restoration of humankind's *πνεῦμα* is a result of the eschatological gift of the Spirit which is already operative.⁶⁸

ἄτονα	τόνος
Lethargic	Awakened
Unkempt	Restored
Potential	Active

Based on the above, we can conclude that the risen Christ gives His Spirit within the person, who receives this Spirit in what is normally called their spirit. However, as Lemonon states “the divine *pneuma* is not added to a human *pneuma*, which would have consistency in itself,”⁶⁹ it is rather the gift of the divine Spirit that actualises the capacity that the person has, awakening the human spirit, which was lethargic. Along the same lines, Gordon Fee, after his thorough analysis of 1 Thess 5:23, argues that “Those who see this usage as denoting that part of human existence that serves as the place of intersection between the human and the divine by means of the Holy Spirit are most likely moving in the right direction.”⁷⁰

5. The “first instalment” or “firstfruits” of the Spirit

As can be seen in the previous section, the human spirit is awakened or restored by receiving the tone of the Spirit. Moreover, in the measure in which the person's freedom accepts the counsel of the Spirit (*consilia Spiritus*), its tone increases in intensity. This fact is supported by another expression that Paul frequently uses in connection with the Spirit: the “first instalment” or “firstfruits” of the Spirit. In this case, Paul clarifies how Christians can possess the Spirit of God, and to what extent It dwells in their spirit. Rom 8:11 affirms that “his Spirit [...] dwells in you,” referring to a reality that the Christian already possesses. As already seen, in Rom 8:16, Paul states that “the Spirit itself bears witness with our spirit,” thus showing this presence of the Spirit in our spirit. The believer's possession of the Spirit is further qualified in Rom 8:16, where, as in 1 Thess 5:23, “our spirit” forms part of the structure of the person saved by Christ, of the person in eschatology.⁷¹

⁶⁸ G.H. van Kooten, «The Anthropological Trichotomy of Spirit, Soul and Body in Philo of Alexandria and Paul of Tarsus», *Anthropology in the New Testament and Its Ancient Context* (CBET 54; Leuven: Peeters 2010) 116–117, who claims that the same conception is also found in Plutarch, in his work *On the Sign of Socrates*, 591D, where he employs the noun *νοῦς* instead of the noun *πνεῦμα*. Van Kooten states that Plutarch presents the same ambiguity because for him – although, strictly speaking, all souls possess *νοῦς* – some do not in practice.

⁶⁹ Lemonon, «L'Esprit Sant dans le corpus paulinien», 309.

⁷⁰ Fee, *God's Empowering Presence*, 66.

⁷¹ Marie Joseph Lagrange (*Saint Paul. Épître aux Romains* [EBib; Paris: Gabalda 1931] 202) commenting on this same passage, claims that the spirit is a second nature in the person, a spiritual nature, because it has been poured out into the person by the Spirit.

However, this possession cannot be understood in the absolute sense. That is why Christians should keep “blameless their spirit for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Thess 5:23). As a divine reality, the Spirit cannot be fully possessed by a human being. In fact, Paul defines this possession of the Spirit, which has already begun in this pilgrim life, using two expressions that are, in a certain sense, equivalent and complementary: “first-fruits” (Rom 8:23; 2 Thess 2:13; 1 Cor 15:20,23) and “first instalment” (2 Cor 1:22; 5:5; Eph 1:14).

The image of the firstfruits, ἀπαρχή, is taken from a rural context and represents the first fruit of the harvest, a foretaste of all the fruits that will come afterwards. Moreover, the word ἀπαρχή is a technical term in sacrificial language. It refers to the first fruits harvested, which are offered to God. In addition to the noun ἀπαρχή, Paul also uses the noun ἀρραβών, “first instalment,” to refer to the ἔσχατον of the Spirit. This term indicates a sum of money paid in advance, which is part of the total sum that must ultimately be paid. The sum that is advanced makes the stipulated contract valid, because through it the buyer commits themselves to paying subsequent compensation to the seller.

Both of these images underline the fact that there is already a kind of possession, even if the present possession points to the full possession in the future. With regard to πνεῦμα, the use of these metaphors indicates the present reality of the Spirit in the person in the form of an advance/promise of the full reality that is to come. The genitive τοῦ πνεύματος is variously a genitive of apposition or exegetical: the firstfruits or the first instalment, i.e. the Spirit, who offers Himself to us incipiently in eschatology as the first instalment or firstfruits. Thus, Paul can describe πνεῦμα as the ἀπαρχή of the awaited redemption of the body (Rom 8:23), or as the ἀρραβών of the new dwelling that awaits us (2 Cor 1:22; 5:5; Eph 1:14) – in short, as a foretaste of the fulfilment of our humanity, which will be gained once the gift of the Spirit at the coming of the Lord, Jesus Christ is fulfilled.

The passage from one order to the other – from natural life to spiritual life – begins in this life through the gift of the Spirit in the person, firstfruits or the first instalment of eternal life, which will only reach its fulfilment in the final resurrection. By grace, the Christian receives possession of the Spirit, which permits the believer to aspire – in the soul and body – to glorification beyond death, to full possession, to full humanity in the resurrection of the flesh, in the “spiritual body” (1 Cor 15:44). However, this aspiration is laden with reasons to be confident in full possession, because the person already participates in the actual foretaste of such firstfruits. The gift of the Spirit gives rise to a glorious hope, the waiting of the heirs who yearn confidently for the fulfilment of the possession of the celestial perfection of their humanity. This is a further implication of the well-known eschatological *adage* “yes, but not yet,” “yes, but even more.”

Why do we receive the Spirit as the first instalment in eschatology only to receive it in fullness in the *Parousia*? Is there, perhaps, an imperfection in God’s gift? The Lord always gives Himself completely, but the Christian receives Him as they can and will. This means that the limit does not lie in the giver, but in the recipient of the gift. Since the person is temporal, God could not give them the Spirit all at once, completely, because they could

not receive it like this. The evolution of species is also present in the human being, who needs time to progress towards their fulfilment. The person needed time to become slowly accustomed to being guided and governed by the Spirit. The person's fulfilment depends on this relationship, which is always gradual, and in which such person is educated to be moved by the Spirit. Irenaeus affirms:

But we do now receive a certain portion of His Spirit, tending towards perfection, and preparing us for incorruption, being little by little accustomed to receive and bear God; which also the apostle terms an *earnest* [instalment], that is, a part of the honour which has been promised us by God [...]. For if the earnest, gathering man into itself, does even now cause him to cry, *Abba, Father*, what shall the complete grace of the Spirit effect, which shall be given to men by God? It will render us like Him, and accomplish the will of the Father; for it shall make man after the image and likeness of God (cf. Gen 1:26).⁷²

As Saint Basil aptly comments, the person receives the gift of God according to human nature rather than according to divine power:

In essence simple, in powers various, wholly present in each and being wholly everywhere; impassively divided, shared without loss of ceasing to be entire, after the likeness of the sunbeam, whose kindly light falls on him who enjoys it as though it shone for him alone, yet illumines land and sea and mingles with the air. So, too, is the Spirit to everyone who receives it, as though given to him alone, and yet it sends forth grace sufficient and full for all mankind, and is enjoyed by all who share it, according to the capacity, not of its power, but of their nature.⁷³

Because of this temporal character of the human being, the person receives the Spirit in eschatology as firstfruits; and through the poor exercise of their freedom, such human being can discard or tarnish the Spirit. If we had received Him in fullness, then we could not reject Him; if we had not received Him at all, then neither could we reject Him.

It must be said that the expression from 1 Thess 5:23 does not refer to the Holy Spirit, but to the human spirit, in which the Spirit dwells. Moreover, the Spirit has given Himself to us as the first instalment and, therefore, since the possession is not full, but gradual, the person can accept Him and allow Him to govern themselves to varying degrees. It can be blemished precisely because Christians possess the Spirit in the first instalment. The situation of the Christian, who is saved in expectation through the first instalment, helps us to interpret 1 Thess 5:23b-24 correctly. It is the human spirit, the capacity that

⁷² Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses*, V.8.1. The analogy of human eyes, which are born blind, but begin to perceive and to see slowly and gradually in order to prepare, little by little, to contemplate the sun (Novacian, *De Trinitate*, 18, § 101–102), together with the image of the infant who is brought up on milk until they can take in solid food, help us to understand this gradual progression. In fact, in 1 Cor 3:1–4, Paul compares fleshly people, who must be fed simply with milk, to spiritual people, who already receive solid food, because they can tolerate it. Another comparison is that of the embrace that is not consummated to the point of unity. It is an embrace that draws towards itself, without reaching complete possession inside and outside. The initiative always belongs to the Spirit, which, like the groom, draws the bride to himself and embraces her, without reaching the definitive consummation. There is still a distance between the initial embrace and the fleshly union.

⁷³ Basil, *De Spiritu Sancto*, 9.22–23.

the person has, with their freedom, to accept the Spirit of God to varying degrees that must be preserved blameless so that neither their soul nor their body is tarnished. The believer is not the master of the Spirit, nor do they possess it as an irrevocable guarantee; rather, they can reduce the lordship of the Spirit in their life by exercising their freedom poorly.⁷⁴

There is a similar text in the Pauline corpus, which can help us to understand this matter. In Gal 6:1, Paul speaks of people who are “spiritual,” i.e. who possess the Spirit. However, even though they are spiritual, they can fall, they can be culpable. The apostle warns them “Brothers, even if a person is caught in some transgression, you [plural] who are spiritual should correct that one in a gentle spirit, looking to yourself [singular], so that you also may not be tempted” (Gal 6:1; cf. 1 Cor 10:12). The abrupt change from the plural “Brothers, [...] you who are spiritual should correct that one” to the singular “looking to yourself, so that you also may not be tempted” (σκοπῶν σεαυτὸν μὴ καὶ σὺ πειρασθῆς) is remarkable. The apostle does not rule out the possibility that a spiritual person could succumb to the forces of evil. Paul warns the Galatians of the same danger that lurks for the Thessalonians – not preserving blameless the entirety of one’s being for the Lord’s coming. The Christian who does not take care of themselves could cease to be a spiritual person; between eschatology and the *Parousia*, this danger remains.

With that said, Paul does not rule out the possibility that a spiritual person could succumb to the forces of evil since even though this person is enlivened by the Spirit, they still remain subject to the forces opposed to the Spirit. Those who are sure of themselves, and consider themselves invulnerable to evil, must be especially vigilant. While their condition as pilgrims lasts, they must work with fear and trembling for their sanctification – or, in the words of 1 Thess 5:23, they must preserve themselves blameless in the Spirit until the day of the Lord. There is no contradiction between the fact that the person already possesses the Spirit of God in their spirit, and the possibility that such person might not arrive at the encounter with Christ with all of their being, including the spirit. On this pilgrimage, the relationship with *πνεῦμα* is gradual, and can even be lost. The person can participate in the Spirit to varying degrees, can suffer the weakness of the flesh and set aside the Spirit, or can accept it, allowing it to act.

Conclusion

Having studied the complex and relatively unknown verses of 1 Thess 5:23 and other Pauline texts, it can be concluded that Paul’s anthropology depends directly on his Christology, which, in turn, is closely related to his pneumatology. His conception of the human being in eschatology is illuminated by the manifestation of the perfect human being in the risen Jesus Christ. Moreover, the risen Lord is characterised by the Spirit, which He can share with us. According to the proposed interpretation of 1 Thess 5:23, Paul understands

74 See Footnote 67 regarding indolence to the counsel of the Spirit (*consilia Spiritus*).

the human being, in the image of the risen Christ, according to a tripartite conception. In eschatology, the human being, after the gift of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, is not composed only of the soul and body, but also of the spirit, where the divine Spirit can dwell. Furthermore, when the divine Spirit dwells in the person, it actualises or awakens their spirit. The order of this tripartition, and the novel character of its first part, the spirit, shows us the primacy of the Spirit in Paul's doctrine. The human being is fulfilled insofar as they receive the Spirit in their spirit and it governs the soul, which, in turn, governs the body. The gift of the Spirit allows the person to actualise their spirit with the presence of the Spirit in them, making the Christian a new being, who participates in the life of the new Adam, Jesus Christ. The maturity and the progress of the Christian life consists in this spiritualisation. Thanks to the greater participation of the divine Spirit in the spirit of the person, the Christian is perfected, fulfilling, with their freedom, their original vocation to be transformed into the image and likeness of God, fully manifested in Jesus Christ. Then, Christians who have already received the firstfruits of the Spirit will receive it at the peak and their humanity will reach its fulfilment.

As is rightly affirmed in the recent Pontifical Biblical Commission's document entitled *What is Man?: A Journey through Biblical Anthropology*, "the human being is a mystery. In him is hidden God's admirable design, which each of us is personally called to scrutinize, in order to discover its meaning and live" (no. 347). However, this mystery "has its foundation in the obscure abyss of its origin" (no. 349). And this mystery is even greater in the end to which eschatology opens the person. With the reception of the gift of the Spirit, the person fulfils their original vocation and reaches the state to which they were called, completing their journey from protology to eschatology.

Translated by Jen Cottini

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