



Fatehi, Mehrdad.

The Spirit's Relation to the Risen Lord in Paul: An Examination of Its Christological Implications

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Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth

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The Spirit's Relation to the Risen Lord in Paul is a slightly revised version of Mehrdad Fatehi's 1998 doctoral thesis written under the supervision of Max Turner. In it he examines the Spirit's role in connection to both God and Christ in early Judaism and its significance for the divine Christology debate. The work is divided into four parts that span 15 chapters plus front (preface; contents; abbreviations) and back (bibliography; reference, author, and subject indexes) matter.

In Part 1 (chapters 1-2) Fatehi breaks new ground by moving past the examination of the *development of ideas* to explain the development of early Christology and onto an examination of the *experience of the risen Lord* as present and active among believers in the early Pauline churches. In the process he finds the "divine agency model" inadequate to explain the data in Paul arguing that:

The way Paul applies God-language to Christ seems to point beyond it. Both the specific ways in which the risen Lord was perceived to be active in the community – e.g. being present with them all, indwelling the individual believers, working in and through them in a miraculous way – as well as the religious attitudes accompanied by and probably resulted from such experiences – "pleasing him" as their ultimate motive, "fearing him," "belonging to him," "serving him," "living and dying unto him," "praying and singing to him," – most probably goes beyond

whatever could be imaginable about a mere agent alongside God and separate from him, however exalted he might have been. Divine agency would probably be regarded by those who had such experiences as an appropriate but insufficient conceptualisation. (19)

Chapter 2 gives an overview of the history of discussion by examining the work of scholars such as Gunkel, Bousset, Dunn, Turner, Fee, and others, and offering critical remarks on their work as well as explaining the need for further study.

In Part 2 (chapters 3-8) Fatehi turns to an examination of the Spirit and God (and Wisdom) in early Jewish literature (i.e., the OT, Qumran lit., Wisdom lit., Josephus, Intertestamental lit., Rabbinic lit., and Targums). In the course of each examination Fatehi concludes that in early Judaism the Spirit always refers to God's active participation in creation and his relation to his people. He says: "The Jewish experience of the Spirit is *always* and *essentially* an experience of God himself. [...] the Spirit-language is *exclusively* God-language." (163)

Part 3 (chapters 9-13) comprises the exegetical portion of this study and examines the Spirit's relation to the risen Lord in various Pauline texts after first examining the Spirit's relation to God in these very texts. Fatehi shows that Paul has not departed from the common Jewish understanding of the Spirit shown in the literature previously examined. Through detailed exegesis of texts in Romans, Ephesians, and 1 & 2 Corinthians, Fatehi is able to show that Paul relates the Spirit to Jesus in the same manner as the Spirit relates to God in Judaism (e.g., in communicating divine speech, bestowing gifts, guiding in righteousness, exercising lordship, indwelling, etc.). Christ is present and active among the Pauline churches through the Spirit in the way that God is present and active among Israel through the Spirit.

Part 4 (chapters 14-15) discusses the Christological implications of Fatehi's study. The Spirit's relation to Christ is after the analogy of the Spirit's relation to God which cannot be said of any other agent or mediator in Judaism, save Wisdom (who was simply a personification of one of God's attributes) thus there is a strong case for a divine Christology. Contra Dunn, who sees the lack of controversy over Paul's Christology as evidence that it wasn't divine, Fatehi argues that the identification of divine Wisdom with Christ was a *novum* "appearing in Paul's view of Christ as a 'divine' person within the Godhead who was actively present through the Spirit, something for which there was no real parallel in Judaism. Yet there was enough continuity to explain the lack of any awareness by the Christians, or suspicion by the Jews, of a breach of Jewish monotheism, if one could speak of such in the highly diverse situation of the first century Judaism." (332)

Fatehi's study is an extremely important contribution to the divine Christology debate. It's amazing that I haven't seen it quoted or interacted with more in the major material that has been

published on the subject in the last decade, e.g., Hurtado doesn't interact with it at all in *Lord Jesus Christ* which is somewhat surprising since he was one of Fatehi's examiners (see p. vii) and he only mentions briefly that Fatehi did some work on the subject in the preface to the 2nd edition of *One God, One Lord*. Likewise, Richard Bauckham and Gordon Fee don't mention this work at all in their recent books when this work would have strengthened both of their arguments at key points.

Fatehi's exegesis is generally convincing, in fact, he offers the most convincing exegesis I've seen to date for identifying the *κύριος* of 2Corinthians 3:17 with Christ. This is, of course, the traditional reading, but scholars such as Turner, Wright, and Fee (who has since changed his position on this passage -- see *Pauline Christology*, 174ff.) have presented persuasive readings that see the Spirit identified as *κύριος* based on Paul's exegesis of Exodus 34. Fatehi's exegesis withstanding, it was the simple argument that "it makes much more sense to speak of the Israelites' conversion to Christ rather than to God or the Spirit" (297), that sealed the deal for me. Unfortunately I wasn't as convinced by his arguments for identifying Christ with Wisdom. It would be nice to see how he would defend or change his position in interaction with Fee's strong critique of such an identification in *Pauline Christology*.

In terms of there being room for improvement I think Fatehi could have done better to explain just what it means for Christ to be "included within the Godhead" (331) or just what "Paul's view of Christ as a 'divine' person within the Godhead" (332) entailed in his conclusion. This is a term that has obtained some pretty technical meaning over the centuries and as such it isn't clear if Fatehi wishes to import all of that meaning into his use of it. Past this I have no major complaints. Fatehi interacted with all the right primary and secondary literature at the time of his writing. His argument is innovative and sound and it complements (if not improves upon) Hurtado's focus on cultic devotion by providing insight into what very probably was the impetus for such practices. This is a study that deserves a wide readership and more interaction from scholars in the field.