Andrews University
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PAULINE PNEUMATOLOGY:
WHERE IS THE SPIRIT IN COLOSSIANS?

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ABSTRACT

Many New Testament scholars have noted significant differences between the theology of the undisputed Pauline writings and that of Colossians. One of these differences is the abundance of pneumatology in the former and its apparent absence in the latter. Most scholars agree that pneumatology is a central theme for Paul, but some of them question its presence in Colossians and, therefore, challenge its claimed Pauline authorship (Col 1:1; 4:18). Other scholars see the presence of the Spirit permeating the content of the letter in a way that corresponds with typical Pauline theology. Most, however, recognize some pneumatological references, but these are seen to be few and limited. This debate raises the question: If Colossians is a Pauline epistle, where is the Spirit?

This study seeks to answer this question by conducting an in-depth exegetical and intertextual analysis of pneumatological language and concepts in the undisputed Pauline writings and Colossians for the purpose of determining (1) the degree to which the Spirit is present in Colossians and (2) whether or not there is correspondence between the pneumatological content of the undisputed Pauline writings and that of Colossians. This analysis leads the study to conclude that, while pneumatology features less prominently in Colossians than in the undisputed Pauline writings, it is not altogether absent from it. Rather the Spirit is present in four explicit (Col 1:8, 9; 2:5; 3:16) and many implicit references (of which only seven are presented) that have deep linguistic and conceptual connections to the pneumatological content in the undisputed Pauline writings.
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Introduction

Many New Testament scholars have observed significant differences between the theology of the undisputed Pauline epistles and that of Colossians. One of these differences is the apparent absence of pneumatology in the latter. Most scholars agree that pneumatology plays an important role in Pauline theology as exemplified in passages like Rom 8, Gal 5, and 1 Cor 2, 12–14. Because it features so prominently in uncontested Pauline literature it can be considered one of his central themes. Yet they note that this stands in stark contrast to the content of Colossians. Little to no mention of the Spirit is quite a strange phenomenon for a letter bearing Paul’s name as author (Col 1:1; 4:18).

Therefore, studies in Colossians have led to three categories of conclusions regarding pneumatology in Colossians. On the one hand, some scholars claim that there is a “complete lack of references to the Spirit.” For example, C. F. D. Moule states in his later commentary on Colossians that “[t]here is practically nothing in this epistle about the Holy Spirit; although others (e.g. Romans) are rich in allusions.” Along similar lines, Eduard Schweizer says, “In

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1 See Eduard Lohse, Colossians and Philemon, Hermeneia, ed. Helmut Koester, trans. William R. Poehlmann and Robert J. Karris (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971), 89–91. Since the 1800s, the authenticity of the Pauline authorship of Colossians has been largely disputed primarily on linguistic, stylistic, historical, and theological grounds (see Mark Kiley, Colossians as Pseudepigraphy [Sheffield: JSOT Press, 186] 37-107, for a thorough summary of the disputes over Pauline authorship of Colossians). The theological reasons for considering Colossians as “un-Pauline” is that Colossians sets forth a theology quite different from that found within the undisputed Pauline epistles. Two of the main theological issues raised are the letter’s cosmic christology and realized eschatology, which seem quite at odds with the Christology and eschatology found in undisputed Pauline literature. For a defense of Pauline authorship of Colossians, see N. T. Wright, Colossians and Philemon, TNTC 12, ed. Canon Leon Morris (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), 31–34; Peter T. O’Brien, Colossians, Philemon, WBC 44, ed. David A. Hubbard and Glenn W. Barker (Waco, TX: Word, 1982), xli–xlix; Maria A. Pascuzzi, “Reconsidering the Authorship of Colossians,” Bulletin for Biblical Research 23.2 (2013): 223–246.


3 C. F. D. Moule, The Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Colossians and to Philemon (London: Cambridge University Press, 1957), 52. Interestingly, Moule, in his earlier commentary on Colossians, believed the Spirit did appear in at least one place (Col 1:8) in the letter (see The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon: With Introduction and Notes [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1893; repr., 1902], 70).
contrast to the Pauline Epistles, the Spirit plays hardly any role in our present letter.”

On the other hand, a small handful of scholars find pneumatology featured throughout Colossians, notably Vicky Balabanski and Gordon D. Fee. Reading the letter through Stoic cosmological lenses, Balabanski concludes her study of the Spirit in Colossians with these words: “Where has the Holy Spirit gone? Everywhere, actually. Colossians affirms that the Spirit of Christ is present throughout the cosmos, creating, sustaining, reconciling.” Fee’s careful exegetical study leads him to conclude, “Even though there is much less direct Spirit talk in this letter than in the others we have examined thus far (Philemon excepted), what we find is quite in keeping with what has gone before.”

The majority of New Testament commentators on Colossians, however, fall between these two categorical poles. They do not minimize the clear distinction between the undisputed Pauline writings and Colossians in regard to the presence (or lack thereof) of pneumatology.

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10 Thompson notices that “there are curious theological [differences] between Colossians and Paul’s other letters. Lacking are treatments of justification or the Law, the role of the Spirit, and the overarching eschatological framework that is foundational to Pauline thought (*Colossians & Philemon*, 3).” She continues, “Some of these
Nevertheless, they acknowledge the Spirit’s presence in Colossians, yet usually in only a single explicit mention (viz., Col 1:8).

This brief survey of secondary literature reveals a scholarly debate over the extent of pneumatological prevalence in Colossians, leaving open the question, where is the Spirit in Colossians? The present study seeks to address this question by demonstrating exegetically and intertextually (within the traditional Pauline corpus) that, while pneumatology features less prominently in Colossians than in the undisputed Pauline literature, it is not altogether absent from it. Rather the Spirit appears in four explicit and at least seven implicit references that have deep conceptual connections to the pneumatological contents of the undisputed Pauline letters.

Explicit References to the Spirit in Colossians

The most obvious place to begin a search for the presence of the Spirit in any piece of New Testament literature is to locate where explicit pneumatological language is used, namely πνεῦμα and its cognates. Πνεῦμα occurs twice in Colossians (see Col 1:8; 2:5), and its corresponding adjective, πνευματικός, also appears twice (see Col 1:9; 3:16). This part of the study will examine first the two occurrences of πνεῦμα, followed by an analysis of the two occurrences of πνευματικός in order to see whether or not the Spirit is referenced in these typical absences can and should be explained by the simple observation that these issues were not problematic among the Christians of Colossae. But certain issues which have arisen in these congregations have indeed been treated by Paul—and very differently—in other places. Colossians spends a fair amount of space on the shape of Christian conduct, noting the virtues that are to characterize the believer in Christ. But whereas Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, and Galatians place Christian life squarely under the rubric of the ‘the Spirit’ or ‘fruits of the Spirit,’ Colossians devotes virtually no space to the role of the Spirit. The problem is not that Colossians fails to treat a typically Pauline theme, but that Colossians fails to treat this in a typically Pauline manner. It is simply impossible to imagine the Paul of Romans or Galatians offering a portrait of the Christian life without recourse to the agency of the Spirit; and yet that seems to be precisely what happens in Colossians” (ibid.). Nevertheless, she maintains that the Spirit is present in the letter at Col 1:8–9 (see ibid., 21, 24) and that “… in spite of the difficulties, the letter can still best be explained as written or authorized by Paul during his own lifetime” (ibid., 4).

pneumatological terms.

Before entering into this analysis, an important grammatical/syntactical observation must be highlighted briefly regarding the occurrences of πνεῦμα and πνευματικός in Colossians. All four occurrences appear in the dative case, making this an important case for this study. This dative case is normal for Paul when speaking of the divine Spirit; of all the cases employed with πνεῦμα in Pauline writings, the dative case is the most frequent, with the genitive close behind. Also, when the dative πνεύματι (with or without the preposition ἐν) is used in Paul’s writings for the divine Spirit, the contexts in which it is found usually warrant an instrumental (means) sense, and much less often a locative (sphere) sense. From this, Paul’s purpose in employing the dative case of πνεῦμα is to indicate the means by which actions and events are effected (by the Spirit) or the sphere or realm in which they are to occur (in the Spirit).

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12. Πνεῦμα occurs twenty-four times in the nominative case, forty-six times in the genitive case, forty-nine times in the dative case, and twenty-seven times in the accusative case (these numbers do not account for occurrences in Hebrews). See discussion in Fee, God’s Empowering Presence, 21–24. Of course, when functioning as an adjective, πνευματικός takes on the case of the word(s) it modifies, like in Col 1:9; 3:16.

13. Some have suggested that when πνεύματι or ἐν πνεύματι is used with an instrumental sense, one should designate it as agency (personal) rather than means (impersonal) because the Spirit is personal. But treating it as means is more helpful in clarifying the syntax. First, calling this category a dative of means describes this syntactical usage of the ἐν + dative formula (or the stand-alone dative) more precisely. The dative of means indicates that there is an agent involved, who is employing a means (personal or impersonal) to accomplish the action expressed in the verb that the ἐν + dative formula (or the stand-alone dative) modifies. An agent, however, “is not used by another, but is the one who either performs an act directly or uses an instrument” (Daniel B. Wallace, Greek Grammar: Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996], 164 [emphasis original]). Second, the occurrences of the dative πνεύματι or ἐν πνεύματι in Pauline writings and in the rest of the New Testament do not fit all of the four lexical, contextual, grammatical, and linguistic keys specified by Wallace for identifying a dative of agency (see ibid., 163–164). Third, the New Testament utilizes other Greek formulas to indicate agency, such as ὑπὸ + genitive and διά + genitive (see ibid., 164–166, 431–439). Finally, to refer to this syntactical use of the dative πνεύματι or ἐν πνεύματι as instrumental (means) does not suggest that the Spirit lacks personality in Colossians or in the undisputed Paul writings. Rather it simply indicates that “personality is not in view”; it does not indicate whether or not the means is personal or impersonal (ibid., 162). Wallace provides a helpful English example: “... in the sentence ‘God disciplined me by means of my parents,’ ‘God’ is the agent who used the ‘parents’ as the means by which he accomplished something. The parents are, of course, persons. But they are conceived of as impersonal in that they are the instruments used by another” (ibid., 373 [emphasis original]). Furthermore, the Spirit is viewed as having personality in the Paul’s letters. He performs numerous functions as an agent that require personality (i.e., Rom 8:16, 26–27; 1 Cor 2:10–13; 12:11; Eph 4:30). In the end, reading πνεύματι or ἐν πνεύματι as agency when it expresses instrumentality seems to be an imposition of the interpreter’s presuppositions upon the text (see comments on Gal 5:16 in ibid., 165–166). For a more thorough explanation of this particular discussion on the dative case, see ibid., 162–166, 373–375, 431–435.

A final point concerning the dative case and πνεῦμα in Pauline writings is that when πνεῦματι refers to the divine Spirit, Paul seems to prefer to use it anarthrously (i.e., Rom 8:9; 9:1; 14:17; 1 Cor 12:3; 2 Cor 3:3; Gal 5:16; 1 Thess 1:5) and only arthrously when grammar requires it (i.e., 1 Cor 6:11; 12:9; 2 Cor 12:18; Eph 1:13). Thus, πνεῦματι does not demand the article in order to point unambiguously to the divine Spirit, as some have assumed. Conversely, when primarily and unambiguously referring to the anthropological spirit, πνεῦματι is always arthrous—and in some of these cases, there is also an implicit or secondary reference to the divine Spirit. Fee’s in-depth analysis of these observations confirms what is expressed here and also convincingly leads to the conclusion that “Paul knows no such thing as ‘a spirit’ or ‘a holy spirit’ when using [the anarthrous dative case of] πνεῦμα to refer to divine activity. He only and always means the Spirit of the living God, the Holy Spirit himself.”

Now if Colossians is Pauline, then, one would expect it to make a similar use of the dative πνεῦματι—that is syntactically instrumental (or possibly locative) and grammatically arthrous when referring to the anthropological spirit and normally anarthrous when referring to the divine Spirit. The following analysis will demonstrate that this is indeed the case.

πνεῦμα in Colossians

Looking for πνεῦμα in Colossians is the most obvious place to begin a study of pneumatology in Colossians, since this is the Greek term used for the divine Spirit in Paul and

15 This is what Easley concluded in his detailed study (see “The Pauline Usage,” 299–313, specifically 312). This is opposite for the use of πνεῦμα in the nominative, genitive, and accusative cases.
16 The following texts demonstrate this pattern: Rom 1:9; 8:16; 1 Cor 5:3; 7:34; 14:15 (two times); 1 Cor 2:13; and Col 2:5. The only exception to this pattern could be Eph 4:23 (see the helpful discussion on this text in Fee, God’s Empowering Presence, 709–712). This is also the case in the other three cases. For a more thorough explanation of this use of πνεῦματι, see ibid., 21–23.
17 For an example of a use of τὸ πνεῦματι that may have an implicit or secondary reference to divine Spirit, see the discussion below on Col 2:5 and in ibid., 24–26.
18 Fee, God’s Empowering Presence, 24.
the rest of the New Testament. Roberto Pereyra’s study of πνεῦμα indicates that it is used 160 times in Pauline literature and 115 of these occurrences refer to the Spirit of God. As noted earlier, two of these 160 occurrences are found in Colossians (Col 1:8; 2:5). The present section takes up the study of these two occurrences of πνεῦμα to determine whether or not they refer to the divine Spirit and if they correspond to Pauline pneumatology elsewhere.

“your love in the Spirit” (Col 1:8)

In the introduction portions of all his letters, it is common practice for Paul to outline the major themes and issues that he intends to discuss in the body of those letters. Colossians does not deviate from this pattern; the theological themes mentioned in its introduction reappear elsewhere throughout the letter. With this in mind, it appears to be no coincidence that the first use of πνεῦμα in Colossians appears in its introduction. Thus, the reader may assume that some discussion on πνεῦμα will follow later in the letter—and this is indeed the case (as will be demonstrated in the rest of this paper).

This first occurrence of πνεῦμα is located at the end of the thanksgiving portion (Col 1:3–8) of the introduction to Colossians, where the author speaks of Epaphras, his fellow-slave of Christ, who connects the writer of Colossians to the Christians in Colossae and has been giving reports about their shared love (Col 1:8). This love is qualified by the anarthrous prepositional phrase, ἐν πνεῷματι, which is commonly used by Paul for the instrumentality of the Spirit (as noted above). On the one hand, N. T. Wright argues for that usage here, stating that this “is a

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20 This number includes the thirty-nine occurrences of πνεῦμα in the disputed Pauline letters (including Hebrews).
22 For example, the themes of knowledge, wisdom, understanding, and the will of God in Col 1:9 reoccur in 2:2–3, 8, 23; 3:10, 16; 4:5, 12).
love which is created by the Spirit.” On the other hand, Schwiezer presumes that this qualifier does not indicate the divine Spirit but only serves to specify a spiritual kind of love over against “one that is purely worldly” because of the lack of the article. As noted above, however, the presence of the article with πνεύματι is not the typical formula for referencing the divine Spirit in the dative case. Easley’s analysis of πνεύματι in the Pauline corpus concurs, concluding that Paul “prefers to use” the anarthrous form of πνεύματι over the articular form to refer to the Spirit and uses the articular form when syntax demands the article. This is demonstrated when τὴν ὑμῶν ἀγάπην ἐν πνεύματι in Col is aligned with the explicit pneumatological phrase χαρὰ ἐν πνεύματι ἀγίῳ, in Rom 14:17 (see tab. 1).

Table 1. The Parallel Structure of Col 1:8 and Rom 14:17

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<tr>
<th>Col 1:8</th>
<th>ὑμῶν</th>
<th>ἀγάπην</th>
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<th>πνεύματι</th>
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<tr>
<td>ἐν πνεύματι</td>
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| Rom 14:17    | χαρὰ       | ἐν     | πνεύματι | ἀγίῳ   |

Thus, the absence of the article leads away from Schwiezer’s reading of the text pointing to the divine Spirit.

Furthermore, reading Col 1:8 in its mezzo-canonical context (the undisputed Pauline writings) supports the interpretation that ἐν πνεύματι refers to the divine Spirit. For example, the connection of love (ἀγάπη) with πνεῦμα in Col 1:8 is a typical Pauline connection. The undisputed Pauline letters frequently connect ἀγάπη—especially that found in human hearts—

23 N. T. Wright, Colossians and Philemon, 55–56. Commenting on this passage, Keith Warrington writes, “... as a result of their coming to faith in Christ, a new force, the Spirit, has entered their lives and has stimulated them to love others. ... The role of the Spirit is to establish love in the lives of believers and to empower them to love” (Discovering the Holy Spirit in the New Testament [Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2005], 168).
24 Schwiezer, The Letter to the Colossians, 38. Moule also seems to find such an interpretation more convincing (The Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Colossians and to Philemon, 52). McDonald contends, “Some commentators have taken the words ‘in Spirit’ ... in an adjectival sense to qualify love. ... But such a spiritual, supernatural love can only be of the Holy Spirit” (Commentary on Colossians, 34).
26 See ibid., 638n12.
with the divine πνεῦμα, who is the source of that ἀγάπη (Rom 5:5; cf. 15:30). For Paul, love is “the more excellent way” of the believers’ practice of the χαρίσματα that are distributed by the Spirit (1 Cor 12:11, 31a–14:1a) and is the primary part of the fruit that the Spirit produces in the lives of believers (Gal 5:22–23). Therefore, the referent of πνεῦμα as the Spirit in Col 1:8 is in nowise vague, if read in the light of undisputed Pauline usage. The Spirit is the source of the Colossians’ love in Col 1:8. What is ambiguous, however, is the recipient(s) of the Colossians’ love; is the recipient(s) Paul and/or Timothy (Col 1:1) or one another in the Christian community at Colossae (Col 1:4; 2:2)? No matter how one understands the recipient(s), the divine Spirit is the referent of πνεῦμα in Col 1:8.

A final evidence that points to the πνεῦμα of Col 1:8 being the divine Spirit is its possible trinitarian connection. In his epistolary introductions, Paul normally makes at least a binitarian reference to the Father and the Son; this is often found in his formulaic greeting: χάρις ὑμῖν καὶ

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27 See also 2 Cor 6:6; 2 Cor 13:14; Gal 5:5–6; Phil 2:1; 1 Thess 4:8–9. ἀγάπη and πνεῦμα are also connected in 2 Tim 1:7, though a disputed Pauline epistle.

28 It is interesting to note, as does Soderlund (“Colossians,” 1160n1), that the famous Pauline “triad of ‘faith, hope and love,’” which is given in the context of talk about the Spirit and spiritual gifts (1 Cor 13:13), is present in Col 1:3–5, 8. Other Pauline passages “where these three elements are found in close association with one another are” Rom 5:1–5; Gal 5:5–6; Eph 4:2–5; 1 Thess 1:3; 5:8 (ibid.).


30 The dative here should most likely be understood as an instrumental dative (see Pao, Colossians and Philemon, 58), but a dative of sphere (locative)—for which John Eadie argues—is certainly possible. See John Eadie, Commentary on the Epistle of Paul to the Colossians (Glasgow, Scotland: Richard Griffin & Co., 1856; repr. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1957), 19; Fee, God’s Empowering Presence, 639.

31 See Fee, God’s Empowering Presence, 639. It seems most likely that this is the love that the Colossians share among one another based on Col 1:4.

32 To argue otherwise, seems to be special pleading for a particular way of reading Colossians. Keeping the Spirit out of Colossians altogether paints the picture of an even deeper contrast between its theological content and that of the undisputed Pauline letters, which provides further ground for denying authentic Pauline authorship. This may be what lies behind Schweizer’s refusal to see the Spirit in Colossians when explicit and implicit pneumatological language is used (see Letter to the Colossians, 17, 38).
“absent in the flesh, present in the S/spirit” (Col 2:5)

The second occurrence of πνεῦμα in Colossians (Col 2:5) is much more complex to decipher than the first. Using the contrasting conjunction ἀλλά, the author speaks about his presence with the believers at Colossae in the spirit (τῷ πνεύματι) despite his absence in the flesh (τῇ σαρκὶ). What is clear about this text is that the author is not physically (τῇ σαρκὶ) present with the Colossian believers. In fact, they—like those in Laodicea—have never met the writer face to face in the flesh, that is, in person (Col 2:1). Nevertheless, he claims to be with them spiritually (τῷ πνεύματι). It is this latter clause that creates the most difficulty for interpretation, leaving the reader questioning the nature of this spiritual presence that the writer has with the believers at Colossae.

33 In the undisputed Pauline letters, see Rom 1:1–15; 1 Thess 1:1–10. In the disputed Pauline letters, see Eph 1:1–14; 2 Tim 1:1–7; and the current letter under study.
34 Christopher A. Beetham notes that the Colossian introduction is one of the many passages that was used to build the Christian doctrine of the Trinity (Colossians and Philemon: A 12-Week Study, Knowing the Bible, ed. Dane C. Ortlund [Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015], n.p). See also Sven K. Soderlund, “Colossians,” in Life in the Spirit New Testament Commentary, ed. French L. Arrington and Roger Stronstad (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999), 1129; David W. Pao, Colossians and Philemon, vol. 12 of Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, ed. Clinton E. Arnold (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 58; McDonald, Commentary on Colossians, 34.
35 Perhaps this focus on the Father and particularly Christ is due to the Colossian heresy/ies that the letter addresses, which may impact more directly these persons of the Trinity.
Like in its first occurrence, πνεῦμα is used in the dative case and functions instrumentally (or as a locative) as a qualifying phrase, yet this time it bears the article. The presence of the article may indicate that the anthropological spirit is in view, since Paul always uses the article with dative references to the anthropological spirit and rarely uses the article with dative references to the divine Spirit (as stated earlier). Along such lines of interpretation, many scholars, have suggested that this use is solely anthropological, meaning that the writer simply wanted to convey that the Colossian believers were in his thoughts. Evaluating this interpretation, Fee writes, “It is extremely doubtful whether Paul, or any first-century person for that matter, would have used this contrast for such an idea.” Why not just say, “I am not there physically with you, but you are in my thoughts and prayers.” This is because Paul readily communicated this idea with more suitable language in his prayer and thanksgiving portions of his letters like at the beginning of Colossians in Col 1:3, 9, and thus probably means something more nuanced here. Furthermore, the writer of Col 2:5 indicates his presence with the Colossians, not the Colossians’ presence with him via his thoughts and prayers. Thus, Col 2:5 seems to be indicating something much deeper than merely thoughts and prayers.

The meaning of the writer’s presence with his Colossian readers “in the spirit” becomes clearer when read in connection with 1 Cor 5:3. While there are a few differences between the

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36 In his commentary on Colossians, Schweizer seems to hold this view, but slightly nuanced, when he writes that “the spiritual presence of the apostle” is “his psychic reaction to the joy about the news that has come from Colossae” (Letter to the Colossians, 119).
37 Fee, God’s Empowering Presence, 646. See also O’Brien, Colossians, 98.
38 See also Rom 1:9–10; Phil 1:3; Philm 4; Eph 1:16; 2 Tim 1:3–4.
39 Schweizer attempts to disassociate the two passages, despite their many connections, on the grounds that (1) 1 Cor 5:3 speaks of an “extraordinary act of Paul” and (2) that this extraordinary experience of the Paul is the Spirit mediating Paul’s physical presence, which is not the case in Col 2:5 because “nowhere else in Colossians does the Spirit of God assume theological importance” (Letter to the Colossians, 120). We will see that neither of these arguments align with the pneumatological data in Colossians.
two passages (see tab. 2 below), they are very closely linked linguistically—except for the difference of τὸ σῶματι in 1 Cor 5:3 and τῇ σαρκὶ in Col 2:5, which, in these contexts, can be taken to have synonymous meaning—as well as structurally, and conceptually (see tab. 2).

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In 1 Cor 5:1–13, Paul addresses a case of sexual immorality among the Corinthian Christians and calls for proper church discipline to be administered against the offender (vv. 2–5). Though absent bodily, Paul, present in the spirit, registers his judgment against the sexual offender in verse 3. Then, in 1 Cor 5:4 Paul further explains what the statement, “I am present in the spirit,” means: “When you are assembled in the name of the Lord Jesus and my spirit is present, with the power of our Lord Jesus ... .” Obviously, Paul’s spiritual presence is indicative of a very real presence—a presence that allows him to assemble and act with the Christian community in Corinth—even though that presence is not literal or bodily (face to face). This is certainly more

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40 The words are arranged slightly differently; the verbs are participles in 1 Cor 5:3 instead of indicative verbs as in Col 2:5, and τῷ σῶματι is used in 1 Cor 5:3 instead of τῇ σαρκὶ as in Col 2:5. Nevertheless, the latter vocabulary difference does not seem to affect the conceptual meaning portrayed in both passages (see Fee, God’s Empowering Presence, 645).

41 Of the nine uses of σὰρξ in Colossians, six—including Col 2:5—are used to refer to the physical body (Col 1:22, 24; 2:1, 5, 13; 3:22). The other 3 occurrences are used in the typical moral sense common in Paul’s writings (Col 2:11, 18, 23). See Beetham, Echoes of Scripture in the Letter of Paul to the Colossians, BibInt 96, ed. R. Alan Culpepper and Ellen van Wolde (Boston: Brill, 2008), 174.
than simply having the Corinthians in his thoughts.\textsuperscript{42}

While Schweizer, in his commentary on Colossians, denies a connection between the anthropological πνεῦμα and the divine πνεῦμα in Col 2:5 and 1 Cor 5:3,\textsuperscript{43} he admits that it is difficult to keep the two separate by saying that “it is not always clear whether Paul himself is thinking simply of the spirit naturally belonging to everyone, or of the Spirit of God, for the simple reason that the spirit of the believer is shaped completely by means of the Spirit of God.”\textsuperscript{44} With this realization, three other interpretative suggestions deeply connect the anthropological πνεῦμα to the divine πνεῦμα and, thus, seem closer to the point of Col 2:5 and 1 Cor 5:3.

The first of these interpretative suggestions, which links the anthropological πνεῦμα and the divine πνεῦμα in Col 2:5 and 1 Cor 5:3, comes from James D. G. Dunn, Eduard Lohse, and Schweizer (in his TDNT article on πνεῦμα and πνευματικὸς). They assert that the two uses of πνεῦμα in these texts speak of the “charismatic personality” of Paul.\textsuperscript{45} This is “the gift of the Spirit of God which has been given to him, which denotes his authority, and which also exerts an influence beyond his physical presence.”\textsuperscript{46} This “charismatic personality” of Paul enables him to operate “spiritually at a distance” (operatio in distans) with authority as an apostle among the Christians in both Corinth and Colossae.\textsuperscript{47}

Another interpretative suggestion comes from Peter O’Brien, building off of Ernest

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item The texts of Col 2:5 and 1 Cor 5:3 state that Paul is with his readers spiritually, not the other way around. Thus, the idea of the believers being with Paul in his thoughts does not represent most accurately the meaning of the text (see O’Brien, Colossians, 98).
\item Ibid., 119.
\item Schweizer, “πνεῦμα, πνευματικὸς,” 6:436.
\item Dunn, Jesus and the Spirit, 73.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
Best. He relates Paul’s spiritual presence with the Colossian and Corinthian believers as a result of their connection as believers united in Christ. Together they make up His body, the church, by means of the divine Spirit. O’Brien writes, “Paul is truly at Corinth and Colossae ... since the Spirit of God has united both him and the Colossians to Christ.” Because both Paul and the believers at Corinth and Colossae are “in Christ,” they are present with one another spiritually, linked together by the Holy Spirit in a special spiritual bond.

A third interpretative suggestion is proposed by Fee and David W. Pao. Fee notes that Paul’s letters were typically read in public to the addressed recipients during worship assemblies. This reading, done in the Spirit, is what made Paul present in τῷ πνεύματι. “Paul considers himself as truly present by the Spirit, as they gather in the presence and power of the Spirit for the reading of his letter.” Thus, Paul is with his addressees by the public reading of his letters in worship and by the Spirit bringing the words of the letters to bear upon the hearts of the listeners.

The question of which of these three suggestions is closest to Paul’s intent in 1 Corinthians and in Colossians is up for debate. Perhaps, the three of them go hand in hand. What is important, however, is that all three attempt to draw a close relationship between the anthropological πνεῦμα to the divine πνεῦμα in both 1 Cor 5:3 and Col 2:5, which seems to be the intent in both texts. Thus, this text cannot be properly interpreted as strictly anthropological without recognizing the presence of the Spirit therein. In fact, Fee notes that the connection of the anthropological πνεῦμα to the divine πνεῦμα is so strong in this passage that πνεῦμα here should be translated as “S/spirit.”

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49 O’Brien, Colossians, 98. R. Birch Hoyle offers a position that seems to combine both aspects of the first and third interpretative options (see his discussion in The Holy Spirit in St. Paul [Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1928], 105).
50 Fee, God’s Empowering Presence, 646. See also Pao, Colossians and Philemon, 141.
51 Fee, God’s Empowering Presence, 645–646.
here, the divine Spirit can also be counted as present here in Colossians with explicit pneumatological language.

πνευματικός in Colossians

Now we turn to the two explicit references to the Spirit that utilize the adjectival cognate of πνεῦμα, namely πνευματικός. It occurs twenty-six times in the New Testament, twenty-four of which are found in Pauline letters.\(^{52}\) Thus, “[t]his is an almost exclusively Pauline word in the NT.”\(^{53}\) Two of these twenty-four Pauline occurrences are found in Colossians (Col 1:9; 3:16).

What meaning does this Pauline adjective bear? Concerning its meaning, some have imposed a modern definition of the word “spiritual” upon Paul. In this understanding, something that is “spiritual” is regarded as religious in the positive sense or not secular or worldly in the negative. This is unfortunate because Paul used the term with much more depth. Πνευματικός is simply the adjectival form of πνεῦμα, used to describe persons or things that belong to the divine Spirit.

This can be seen quite clearly when one observes how Paul closely uses πνευματικός in conjunction with πνεῦμα, as he does in 1 Cor 2:10–16. There the Spirit of God (τὸ πνεῦμα τοῦ θεοῦ) or the Spirit who is from God (τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ) reveals the mysterious wisdom of God (1 Cor 2:10) so that believing humans can know it (1 Cor 2:12). This wisdom is then imparted through believers by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 2:13), judging (συγκρίνοντες) πνευματικὸς πνευματικὰ. These πνευματικά are defined in the next verse (1 Cor 2:14), which states that the natural person (ψυχικὸς ... ἄνθρωπος) is unable to understand the πνευματικά composing the wisdom of God. They are foolishness to him/her because they are judged (ἀνακρίνεται)

\(^{52}\) Both of the two non-Pauline occurrences are found in 1 Pet 2:5. This may indicate some Pauline influence upon the writer of 1 and 2 Peter (see 2 Pet 3:14–18). Of the twenty-four Pauline occurrences, nineteen are found in the undisputed letters (Rom 1:11; 7:14; 15:27; 1 Cor 2:13 [two times], 15; 3:1; 9:11; 10:3, 4 [two times]; 12:1; 14:1, 37; 15:44 [two times], 46 [two times]; Gal 6:1) and five are found in the disputed letters (Eph 1:3; 5:19; 6:12; Col 1:9; 3:16). As an aside, this may provide some evidence in favor of Pauline authorship of Colossians and Ephesians.

\(^{53}\) Fee, God’s Empowering Presence, 28.
πνευματικός—that is, “spiritually” or “by the Spirit”—and he/she does not accept τὰ τοῦ πνεύματος τοῦ θεοῦ. The article τὰ in 1 Cor 12:14 points back to the πνευματικά in 1 Cor 2:13 as its antecedent. Thus, πνευματικά are things of the divine Spirit. These πνευματικά are understood by the “spiritual” person (ὁ ... πνευματικός), who judges all things, but is himself/herself judged by no one (1 Cor 2:15), because he/she is “spiritual,” a person of the Spirit. He/she has accepted accept τὰ τοῦ πνεύματος τοῦ θεοῦ.

All this is to show that πνευματικός is simply the adjectival form of πνεῦμα that explicitly refers to the divine Spirit.⁵⁴ The separate exegetical work of Edward Gordon Selwyn and Fee on πνευματικός in other New Testament passages confirms what was exhibited here on 1 Cor 2:10–16.⁵⁵ Fee writes that πνευματικός

... functions primarily as an adjective for the Spirit, referring to that which belongs to, or pertains to, the Spirit. ... In fact, there is not a single instance in Paul where this word refers to the human “spirit” and has to do with “spiritual life,” as this word is most often understood in modern English. For Paul it is an adjective that primarily refers to the Spirit of God, even when the contrasts are to “earthly” bodies and “material support.”⁵⁶

Thus, the way in which the adjective, κυριακός, relates to the substantive, κύριος, in Paul’s writings (1 Cor 11:20) and elsewhere (Rev 1:10) is the same way in which πνευματικός relates to πνεῦμα.⁵⁷ This is the clear meaning in both of the adjectival occurrences of πνευματικός in Colossians, as will be demonstrated below.

“in all wisdom and understanding from the Spirit” (Col 1:9)

The first occurrence of πνευματικός is located in Col 1:9, which begins the body of the Colossian epistle. In this initial exhortation section, Paul tells the believers at Colossae of his

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⁵⁴ Another helpful Pauline passage that directly links πνευματικός with πνεῦμα is 1 Cor 12–14.
⁵⁶ Ibid., 29, 32 (emphasis original).
unceasing prayer and supplication on their behalf. His desire is for them to be filled with knowledge (ἐπίγνωσις) about God’s will for them. Paul states that he asks God that this filling of the Colossian believers with knowledge is to be ἐν πάσῃ σοφίᾳ καὶ συνέσει πνευματικῇ. What is the nature of the wisdom and understanding mentioned here?

Wisdom (σοφία), understanding (σύνεσις), and knowledge (γνῶσις/ ἐπίγνωσις) are important concepts in Colossians (1:28; 2:2–3; 3:16; 4:5) and in the undisputed and disputed Pauline literature. These concepts are explicitly tied to the Spirit for their origin and to Christ for their content and location (i.e., 1 Cor 2). As an example, 1 Cor 12:8 lists both the true word of σοφία and γνῶσις as χαρίσματα or πνευματικά given and distributed by the Spirit as He wills (12:11). A broader look at the undisputed Pauline letters uncovers a contrast between true wisdom, understanding, and knowledge and that from humans, as that which is from God, about Christ, and given and taught through or by (διὰ or ἐν) the Spirit to those who have come to faith in Christ (1 Cor 2:6–16; especially vv. 10, 13). This concern for spiritual wisdom, understanding, and knowledge is certainly present in Colossians, where Paul is encouraging the Colossian believers to forsake the philosophies and deceptions among them that are not according to Christ, and accept that which can be found only and fully in Him (Col 2:2–3, 8). Thus, the Colossian connection of ἐπίγνωσις, σοφία, and σύνεσις to the Spirit—via the adjective, πνευματικός—aligns nicely with the undisputed Pauline teaching. Also helpful in highlighting

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58 Pao notes that “knowledge,” “wisdom,” and “understanding” are also important concepts in Jewish tradition at large (Exod 31:3; 35:31; Isa 11:2; Sir 1:19; 1QS 4:4; 10:9, 12; 1QSb 5:21; 1QH 2:18; 11:17–18; 12:11–12). What is most significant about this observation is “the reference to the Spirit linked with ‘wisdom’ and ‘understanding’ in Exod 31:3; 35:31; Isa 11:2” (Colossians and Philemon, 69). Because of “the eschatological context,” Pao believes that there might be an allusion to Isa 11:2 in Col 1:9. He notes, that this “is particularly possible, especially since with the ‘Spirit of wisdom and of understanding’ there is also the ‘Spirit of knowledge,’ which becomes the agent of the new creation. Also noteworthy is the idea of fullness, although a different word group is used: ‘the [whole] earth will be filled [ἐνεπλήσθη] with the knowledge of the LORD’ (Isa 11:9). In any case, Paul’s prayer is not that the messianic figure in Isa 11 will come, but that God’s own entire people may likewise be filled with this ‘spiritual wisdom and understanding’” (ibid.). Beetham also picks up this Old Testament allusion of Isa 11:2 in Col 1:9 (see his extensive discussion in Echoes of Scripture, 61–79).

59 See discussion in MacDonald, Colossians and Ephesians, 47–48.

60 See also 2 Cor 6:6.
the Spirit’s presence in Col 1:9 is the conceptually parallel phrase in Eph 1:17, “that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him” (though this is a contested Pauline text). There wisdom and understanding (and revelation [ἀποκάλυψις]) are even more unambiguously linked to the Spirit with its use of the noun πνεύμα. Thus, πνεύμα and πνευματικός can be aligned as having the same meaning—both references to the Spirit. The phrase ἐν πάσῃ σοφίᾳ καὶ σύνεσι πνευματικῇ in Col 1:9 should be understood, then, as “by means of wisdom and understanding from the Spirit.”

**“psalms, hymns, and songs inspired by the Spirit” (Col 3:16)**

The second occurrence of πνευματικός and the final explicit Spirit reference in Colossians is found in the instrumental dative phrase ψαλμοῖς, ὑμνοῖς, φόδαῖς πνευματικαῖς (“spiritual psalms, hymns, and songs”) in Col 3:16. First it should be noted that this text is located within the larger section of the letter where the writer offers ethical admonitions to his readers (Col 3:1–4:6). Including such a section is a typical Pauline practice. It is in these ethical sections of his letters that Paul usually features the Spirit most prominently, indicating that the Spirit is the one who lies behind the practice of morality in the lives of believers. Gal 5:13–6:10 is a textbook example. Thus, if Colossians is a Pauline epistle (as it claims), one would expect to see the Spirit somewhere in its ethical admonition section.

Looking at Col 3:16 within this context one realizes that there are several exegetical

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61 Though the words are slightly different, the concept is the same (see Fee, *God’s Empowering Presence*, 642–643; Barth and Blanke, *Colossians*, 176).
difficulties with this text. This paper, because of space constraints, cannot attempt to solve all of these, since the meaning of πνευματικαίς is not totally reliant upon their resolution. What is clear about this text is Paul’s imperative that the “word of Christ,” the gospel message, be allowed to indwell the Colossian believers and that this is supposed to happen (1) horizontally by them both teaching (διδάσκοντες) and admonishing (νουθετοῦντες) one another and (2) vertically by singing (ᾠδοντες) to God. Whether modifying the horizontal participles, διδάσκοντες and νουθετοῦντες or the vertical participle, ᾠδοντες, the three songs function as instrumental datives, indicating the means by which the action(s) of the participle(s) is/are accomplished. Based on the structure of the Greek sentence, πνευματικαίς could modify all three types of songs but, at the least, modifies the latter, ᾠδαῖς, by describing the nature of these songs; they are “spiritual.” What does πνευματικαίς mean here?

On the one hand, Schweizer indicates that this descriptor is used “simply to distinguish them from secular songs, without this involving the explicit notion of the spirit being at work in them ... However, ‘spiritual’ is also probably intended to emphasize the fact that these hymns are deeply rooted in their hearts ... and directed towards God.” Wright too sees πνευματικαίς as distinguishing this singing from “secular singing.” This goes against the general sense of πνευματικός as a descriptor that directly references the Spirit explained earlier. On the other hand, Markus Barth and Helmut Blanke argue that this is hardly the case; “‘spiritual’ is to be read as a precise definition,” namely that it “has the theological content that the word ‘(Holy)}
Spirit’ has in the undisputed Pauline epistles.”  

Who reflects most accurately the intent in the text?

Col 3:12–17 is in the context of the writer’s ethical discussion of setting the mind “on things that are above, not on things that are on earth,” (Col 3:2)—reminiscent of the stark dichotomy in Galatians between the realm of the flesh and the realm of the Spirit (Gal 5:13—6:10). The things that are above are where Christ is, namely the throne of God (Col 3:1). This is the sphere or realm of the Spirit (Rev 1:4; 4:2, 5; 5:6). The contrast is not simply between the spiritual and the secular, but between the earthly realm (the fleshly realm) and the realm of the Spirit.  

Thus, the three types of songs are to be sung by the Colossian believers in the realm of the Spirit, that is inspired by the Spirit.

Further evidence for taking πνευματικαῖς in Col 3:16 as an equivalent of the divine πνεῦμα can be found in three lines of evidence. First, internally, this passage can be viewed as a trinitarian text, like that which can be found in the introduction of the letter (Col 1:3–8). Christ (ὁ λόγος τοῦ Χριστοῦ) is mentioned at the beginning of Col 3:16 and the Father (τῷ θεῷ) at the end. Sandwiched in between is the adjective πνευματικαῖς. Taking πνευματικαῖς as an explicit mention of the Spirit, does indeed make this text a trinitarian passage, where all three persons of the Godhead are involved, in various ways, in the worship offered by the Colossian believers.

Similar trinitarian references—both those developed and those made in passing—are sprinkled

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68 Barth and Blanke, *Colossians*, 428. See also Soderlund, “Colossians,” 155. Agreeing with Barth, Blanke, and Soderlund, Warrington comments, “Paul is not referring to Christian choruses as opposed to secular songs of the theater or folk songs. He is describing an outpouring of the Spirit, through the believers, of worship to God. One of the Spirit’s roles is to inspire new songs and motivate believers to sing praise to God” (*Discovering the Holy Spirit*, 170).

69 Commenting on 1 Pet 3:18 about the flesh and Spirit distinction, Ernest Best notes, “The contrast is not between two parts of man’s nature ... (a contrast which is on the whole foreign to the N.T.), nor between two parts in Christ, ... nor is it possible to mean that Christ went in bodiless fashion to preach to the ‘spirits’ (v. 19). When Spirit is opposed to flesh in the New Testament the opposition of divine Spirit to human existence is intended” (*1 Peter*, New Century Bible Commentary [London: Oliphants, 1971], 139, as quoted in Thiselton, *The Holy Spirit*, 149).

70 See earlier discussion on Col 1:8 and that in Fee, *God’s Empowering Presence*, 657.
throughout Pauline (disputed and undisputed) literature.\textsuperscript{71} Second, externally, in the undisputed Pauline passage of 1 Cor 14:15, Paul connects the act of singing—ψάλλω, which is the verbal cognate of the noun ψαλμός used in Col 3:16—to the Spirit, as it is in the context of exercising the χαρίσματα, which are given by the Spirit.\textsuperscript{72} Arguably, the τῷ πνεύματι can be seen as a reference to both the anthropological spirit primarily and to the divine Spirit secondarily as in Col 2:5.\textsuperscript{73} Also externally, understanding the parallel of Col 3:16 to Eph 5:19 is instructive for one’s interpretation of πνευματικά in the former passage (see tab. 3).

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 3. The Parallel between Col 3:16 and Eph 5:18–19</th>
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<tr>
<td>καὶ μὴ μεθύσκεσθε οἶνῳ, ἐν ὧ δέ στιν ἀσωτία,</td>
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<tr>
<td>ό λόγος τοῦ Χριστοῦ ἐνοικεῖτο ἐν ύμίν</td>
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<tr>
<td>πλουσίως ἐν πάσῃ σοφίᾳ:</td>
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<tr>
<td>ψαλμοῖς, ἰδίοις, ὁδαίς</td>
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<tr>
<td>πνευματικάις</td>
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<td>ἐν χάριτι,</td>
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<td>ἄδοντες</td>
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<tr>
<td>ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις ὑμῶν</td>
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The whole discussion in Eph 5:18–19, and in that which follows, is framed in the experience of

\textsuperscript{71} For a few key examples, see 1 Cor 12:4–6; 2 Cor 13:14; Eph 4:4–6.
\textsuperscript{72} See MacDonald, \textit{Colossians and Ephesians}, 143.
\textsuperscript{73} In this text, ψαλάω is modified by τῷ πνεύματι. While this is most clearly an anthropological reference (note the article), the divine Spirit most definitely permeates, to some degree, the meaning of all the usages of πνεύμα in 1 Cor 12–14, because of the context (See Montague, \textit{The Holy Spirit}, 217). Recall Schweizer’s admission that “it is not always clear whether Paul himself is thinking simply of the spirit naturally belonging to everyone, or of the Spirit of God, for the simple reason that the spirit of the believer is shaped completely by means of the Spirit of God” (\textit{Letter to the Colossians}, 119).
being filled with the Spirit (πληροῦσθε ἐν πνεύματι). This gives great clarity to the meaning of πνευματικάς in Eph 5:19 as an explicit reference to the Spirit who inspires the speaking (λαλοῦντες) or singing (ᾆδοντες) and playing (ψάλλοντες) of the three types of songs. While Col 3:16 is framed in the experience of being indwelt by the word of Christ—indwelling and filling can be seen as conceptually similar—the evidence seems to suggest that the Spirit is also in view in the use of πνευματικάς in Col 3:16. The canonical intertextual parallel could even lead the reader to conclude that the indwelling of the word of Christ is made possible through the filling of the Spirit. Thus, πνευματικάς in both Col 3:16 and Eph 5:18 should be read as indicating the presence of the Spirit.

**Implicit References to the Spirit in Colossians**

In addition to the explicit pneumatological references above, there are many implicit references to the divine Spirit in Colossians. To locate these implicit Spirit references, concepts and terms that bear pneumatological importance in the undisputed Pauline epistles were collected, and then searches were conducted to see if any of these concepts or terms occurred in Colossians. Each of these occurrences were analyzed exegetically and intertextually to determine whether or not there was pneumatological meaning behind them. Of these, at least seven were determined to have some degree of an implied pneumatological connection. The following subsections explore these seven implicit references to the Spirit.

**Walking in the Spirit**

The first important pneumatological concept in Paul and Colossians is that of “walking” (περιπατέω). The term περιπατέω is often employed as an important ethical metaphor by Paul in his undisputed (Rom 6:4; 8:4; 13:13; 14:15; 1 Cor 3:3; 7:17; 2 Cor 4:2; 5:7; 10:2, 3; 12:18; Gal
5:16; Phil 3:17, 18; 1 Thess 2:12; 4:1, 12;) and disputed (Eph 2:2, 10; 4:1, 17; 5:2, 8, 15; Col 1:10; 2:6; 3:7; 4:5; 2 Thess 3:6, 11) writings, like in the Old Testament. Whenever used, it indicates the way in which a believer of Christ should conduct his or her life, that is what his or her habits of behavior should or should not be; it indicates the journey of the Christian’s life.74

The two key ethical virtues that are associated with the περιπατέω metaphor are love (Rom 13:8–14; 14:15; Gal 5:13–26; 1 Thess 4:1–12; see also Eph 4:1–3; 5:2) and holiness/righteousness (Rom 6:4ff; 8:4–11; 1 Thess 4:1–12; see also Eph 4:17–24). This will become significant later when looking at the pneumatological meaning of this metaphor in Colossians.

First, it is important to note that the περιπατέω metaphor is deeply pneumatological for Paul. In Rom 6, Paul writes of the spiritual experience of dying and being buried with Christ and walking in “newness of life” with the raised Christ that is symbolized in the ordinance of baptism. There the περιπατέω metaphor is christologically focused, but not exclusively so. For this experience leads to a resurrected life or a regenerated Christian life that is described in Rom 6:4 as walking in the “newness of life” (ἐν καινότητι ζωῆς). This “newness of life” is, of course, connected with Christ, but also with the Spirit. One chapter later, Paul clarified the meaning of this experience of “walking in newness” by defining it as service (δουλεύειν) in the “newness of the Spirit” (ἐν καινότητι πνεύματος) in Rom 7:6.75 Farther along in Rom 8:4, Paul describes those who have been justified by Christ as those who walk “not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit” (κατὰ πνεῦμα).

These same opposite ways of walking—in the Spirit or in the flesh—are also featured in

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75 The concepts of “newness” καινότης/καινός (Rom 6:4; 7:6; 2 Cor 3:6; Eph 2:15; 4:24) and “renewal” ἀνακαινόω/ἀνακαίνωσις (Rom 12:2; 2 Cor 4:16; 5:17; Col 3:10; Titus 3:5) are deeply connected to the Spirit in Paul, and, thus, there may be another implicit pneumatological reference in Col 3:10. See Fee, God’s Empowering Presence, 646–647.
other undisputed Pauline passages. Paul writes in Gal 5:16 (ESV), “But I say, walk by the Spirit (πνεύματι), and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh (ἐπιθυμίαν σαρκός).” They can also be seen in his rebuke of the Corinthian believers for being “fleshly” (σαρκίνοις) people or people of the flesh instead of being “spiritual” (πνευματικοίς) people or people of the Spirit (1 Cor 3:1). This rebuke follows Paul’s deep discussion of the Spirit and wisdom in 1 Cor 2. Thus, the believers at Corinth were “fleshly” because they were walking “in a human way”—not according to wisdom and the Spirit, but according to the flesh with jealousy and strife (1 Cor 3:3). Finally, Paul’s entire ethical admonition in 1 Thess 4:1–12 is framed with a περιπατέω metaphor (see vv.1, 12). Here Paul appeals to his readers, ἐν κυρίῳ Ἰησοῦ, that is christologically, for them to walk in the ways prescribed in this passage. The “walking” is linked also to a theological purpose in verse one, which is “to please God” (ἀρέσκειν θεῷ). Finally, this ethical walking is pneumatologically enabled; the Holy Spirit is given (v. 8) to Paul’s readers in order to fulfill God’s call to walk in “holiness” (v. 3, 4, 7). All of these pieces of evidence show that while the περιπατέω metaphor has christological significance and theological purpose in the undisputed Pauline literature, it is emphasized as a pneumatological experience. Thus, the περιπατέω metaphor is a trinitarian experience that is emphatically pneumatological at its heart.

How is the περιπατέω metaphor used in Colossians? Does it have this same trinitarian meaning? Is it connected to the Spirit? Most obviously, we see that the περιπατέω metaphor in Colossians has become emphatically christological. In Col 1:10, the believers at Colossae are to walk with a christological purpose, that is “in a manner worthy of the Lord (τοῦ κυρίου), fully

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76 All Scripture quotations marked as ESV are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2001).

77 The concept of “holiness” or “sanctification” (ἁγιασμός and its cognates), which is the character of this “walking” in 1 Thess 4:1–12 as indicated by its triple use (v. 3, 4, 7), is deeply linked to the Spirit in Paul. See Rom 1:4; 15:16; 1 Cor 6:11; 2 Thess 2:13. The Spirit is often described as “holy” (ἁγιός) in Pauline writings (see Rom 5:5; 9:1; 14:17; 15:13, 16; 1 Cor 3:19; 12:3; 2 Cor 6:6; 13:13; 1 Thess 1:5, 6; 4:8 for this in the undisputed Pauline writings and Eph 1:13; 4:30; 2 Tim 1:14; Titus 3:5 for this in those that are disputed).
pleasing him.” Here pleasing the κύριος has replaced pleasing θεός in 1 Thess 4:1, which demonstrates some interchangeability of the terms, since, of course, the κύριος and the πατήρ are both θεός. But this also seems to indicate that Christ, the κύριος, is particularly emphasized in the passage. Even so, the πατήρ remains present. For example, two of the four participles (αὐξανόμενοι and εὐχαριστοῦντες) used to prescribe how to walk in Col 1:10–12 are theologically focused: “increasing in the knowledge of God (τοῦ θεοῦ)” (Col 1:10) and “giving thanks to the Father (τῷ πατρὶ)” (Col 1:12). 

Additionally, the emphatic christological focus of the περιπατέω metaphor seems to have “swallowed up”—almost entirely—the typically Pauline pneumatological emphasis. The imperative of Col 2:6 is a case in point. There the readers are commanded to “walk in Him,” namely “Christ Jesus the Lord” (τὸν Χριστὸν Ιησοῦν τὸν κύριον), instead of “in the Spirit” (Gal 5:16), “in the newness of the Spirit” (Rom 6:4 with 7:6), or “according to the Spirit” (Rom 8:4). Nevertheless, like the theological purpose, the pneumatological significance is not entirely absent, only implicit. This can be seen best in the connection of the περιπατέω metaphor to the concepts of wisdom (σοφία), understanding (σύνεσις), and knowledge (γνώσις/ἐπίγνωσις) in Col 1:10 and in the command to “walk in wisdom” (ἐν σοφίᾳ) in Col 4:5. As has been discussed already, σοφία is explicitly linked to the Spirit by Paul elsewhere as coming from Him, using the adjective πνευματική in Col 1:9. Reading, then, Col 4:5 within the broader mezzo-canonical contexts of Colossians and that of the undisputed Pauline writings, leads one to understand that the experience of walking “in wisdom” is necessarily an experience of walking “in the Spirit” and in Christ. Furthermore, three of the four περιπατέω metaphors in Colossians occur within the

78 Also, in Col 3:6, a theological statement is made in regard to “walking.” The “wrath of God” (τοῦ θεοῦ) is coming because of people “walking” in sinful ways (see Col 3:5–8). The Colossian believers used to be guilty of walking in these sinful ways, of course, prior to their conversion to Christ (Col 3:7). They are commanded to “put off” these sinful ways (Col 3:8) and “put on” Christian virtues (Col 3:12–17).
context of love,\(^{79}\) which, as stated above, is one of the virtues that is deeply connected to περιπατέω elsewhere in Paul and produced by the Spirit (Col 1:8). All these interconnections suggest that Colossians maintains the trinitarian significance of the περιπατέω metaphor in the undisputed Pauline literature, yet with an emphatic christological focus, to which the theological purpose and the pneumatological significance (even more so) have become secondary and implicit.

**Fruit-bearing by the Spirit**

A second key pneumatological ethical metaphor used by Paul is that of fruit-bearing, from the Greek words, καρπός and καρποφορέω. It is used to describe the believer’s experience of sanctification (Rom 6:20–22).\(^ {80}\) In the undisputed Pauline writings, the concept of fruit-bearing has both christological (Phil 1:11) and pneumatological (Rom 7:4–6; Gal 5:22–23) significance with a theological purpose (Rom 7:4–6; Gal 5:21; Phil 1:11), similar to the περιπατέω metaphor. Christologically and theologically, Paul indicated in Phil 1:11 that the experience of being filled with fruit of righteousness (πεπληρωµένοι καρπον δικαιοσύνης)—of which love (ἀγάπη) is primarily in view (see Phil 1:9)—is made possible “through Jesus Christ” (διὰ Ίησοῦ Χριστοῦ) for “the glory and praise of God” (εἰς δόξαν καὶ ἔπαινον θεοῦ).

Pneumatologically, Paul connects fruit-bearing for God (καρποφορήσωµεν τῷ θεῷ) to serving “in the newness of the Spirit” (δουλεύειν ἡμᾶς ἐν καινότητι πνεύµατος) in Rom 7:4–6\(^ {81}\) and lists nine virtues in Gal 5:22–23—of which again love (ἀγάπη) is primary—that are called “the fruit

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79 The περιπατέω metaphors in Col 1:10, 2:6, and 3:7, follow Col 1:4, 8, 2:2, and 3:14 respectively, where “love” is mentioned.
81 This is contrasted in Rom 7:4–6 with fruit-bearing to death (εἰς τὸ καρποφορήσαι τῷ θανάτῳ), which is connected to serving in the oldness of the letter (δουλεύειν ἡμᾶς ... οὗ παλαιότητι γράφματος).
of the Spirit” (ὁ ... καρπός τοῦ πνεύματός). Thus, fruit-bearing in Paul is a trinitarian experience; it is deeply christological and pneumatological and has a theological purpose.

When looking at Colossians, this trinitarian experience—christological and pneumatological significance with a theological purpose—is also clearly articulated in its fruit-bearing passages. In the thanksgiving section of Col 1:3–8, the author writes about the newfound hope of the Colossian believers that is reserved for them in heaven (v. 5). They learned of this hope in “the word of the truth of the gospel” containing christological content; it came to them through Epaphras, Paul’s fellow-servant (v. 7). This truthful gospel word was both bearing fruit (καρποφόρος ὑμενον) and increasing (αὐξανόμενον) “in all the world” (ἐν παντὶ τῷ κόσμῳ) and among the Colossian Christians (v. 6). This should be understood as meaning both numerical growth and internal growth of sanctification in the believers at Colossae.

The internal fruit that was produced was explicitly identified earlier in the passage as their “faith in Christ Jesus” and their “love for all the saints” (v. 4), for which “God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” is to be given thanks (v. 3). Herein lie the theological, christological, and pneumatological significances of fruit-bearing that was seen in the undisputed Pauline literature. First, the explicit mention of Christ (Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ) here and in verse three (τοῦ κυρίου ἣμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ) tie in the christological significance. The writer states that the hope-filled christological content of the truthful gospel word has produced the fruit of faith in the lives of the Colossian believers. Jesus as their saving Messiah is the object of that faith. Second, the Father is given thanks for the fruit-bearing among the Colossian believers (Col 1:3; see also v. 12),

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82 This list should not be understood as being comprehensive and complete.
83 In Col 1:10, the concepts of both bearing fruit (καρποφόροντες) and increasing (αὐξανόμενοι) come up again. This time they are two of the four ways mentioned in Col 1:10–12 for walking worthy and pleasing the Lord. The second and fourth participial phrases contain the theological reference for bearing fruit in Colossians, namely “increasing in the knowledge of God (τοῦ θεοῦ)” (Col 1:10) and “giving thanks to the Father (τῷ πατρὶ)” (Col 1:12).
84 See Beetham, *Echoes of Scripture*, 55.
85 Ἱησοῦ is ordered before Ἰησοῦ in verse four apparently in order to add emphasis to the Colossian believer’s faith in Jesus as their Christ or Messiah.
bringing in the theological significance of fruit-bearing.

Third, and most relevant for this study, the pneumatological significance comes to view in the second of the stated fruit of the gospel, namely their “love for all the saints.” As was discussed above, this love is wrought in the hearts of the Colossian believers by means of the Spirit (ἐν πνεύματι in Col 1:8). Love (ἀγάπη) is the primary and preeminent fruit of the Spirit in the undisputed Pauline writings (Rom 5:5; 15:30; 1 Cor 12:11, 31a–14:1a; 2 Cor 6:6; 13:14; Gal 5:5–6, 22–23; Phil 2:1; 1 Thess 4:8–9) as it is here in Colossians with its repeated mention in the letter’s introduction and elsewhere (see Col 1:4, 8; 2:2; 3:14). In Colossians, this love is an experience or attitude that is deeply connected to the regenerated human heart (Col 2:2; 3:15–16; 4:7–9) and is expressed through good works toward God and others. Paul has made it clear throughout the undisputed letters that this love is due to the Spirit’s work on the human heart that enables it to have and share love (Rom 2:29; 5:5; 15:30; 2 Cor 1:22; 3:3; Gal 4:6–7).

This pneumatological significance of fruit-bearing underpins Colossians, especially its ethical admonition section (Col 3:1–4:6). Col 3:12–17 illustrates this well. Prior to this pericope, the letter of Colossians enumerates the deeds of the old self or humanity (Col 3:5–10) that should be “put off” by those who have died, been buried, and raised with Christ (Col 2:11–13) and are, thus, renewed (Col 3:10). This is quite reminiscent of Paul’s list of “the works of the flesh” (τὰ ἐργα τῆς σαρκός) in Gal 5:19–21, which also falls in an ethical admonition section. In fact, there is some overlap of the sinful traits or vices mentioned in the two lists (see tab. 4).

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86 In fact, Col 3:14 states this explicitly: “And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.”

87 Beetham states it this way, “The same theological undercurrent” of fruit-bearing by the Spirit and the primacy of love in the regenerate heart “flows just under the surface of Colossians, subtly emerging at several points” (ibid., 51).
Table 4. Vices in Gal 5:19–21 and Col 3:5–10

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gal 5:19–21</th>
<th>Col 3:5–10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>πορνεία</strong> (v. 19)</td>
<td><strong>πορνείαν</strong> (v. 5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ἀκαθαρσία</strong> (v. 19)</td>
<td><strong>ἀκαθαρσίαν</strong> (v. 5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ἀσέλγεια</strong> (v. 19)</td>
<td><strong>πάθος and ἐπιθυμίαν κακήν</strong> (v. 5) (similar in concept)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>εἰδωλολατρία</strong> (v. 20)</td>
<td><strong>εἰδωλολατρία</strong> (v. 5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>θυμόι</strong> (v. 20)</td>
<td><strong>θυμόν</strong> (v. 8)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Following Colossian’s vice list, Col 3:12–17 itemizes positive traits or virtues that the regenerate Christian should “put on.” This is also done in Gal 5:22–23, but there the virtues are called “the fruit of the Spirit” (ὁ ... καρπὸς τοῦ πνεύματος), giving them explicit pneumatological significance. Beetham helpfully places these two lists in a diagram (which is adapted below in tab. 5) that reveals a close connection between the two passages that is “hardly coincidental.”

Table 5. The Fruit of the Spirit in Gal 5:22–23 and Col 3:12–17

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gal 5:22–23</th>
<th>Col 3:12–17</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>ἀγάπη</strong></td>
<td>τὴν ἄγαπην (v. 14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>χαρά</strong></td>
<td>εὐχάριστοι γίνεσθε (v. 15) εὐχάριστοτευντες τῷ θεῷ πατρὶ (v. 17) (see μετὰ χαρὰς, εὐχάριστοτευντες τῷ πατρὶ in Col 1:11–12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>εἰρήνη</strong></td>
<td>ἡ εἰρήνη (v. 15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>μακροθυμία</strong></td>
<td>μακροθυμίαν (v. 12; see also Col 1:11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>χρηστότης</strong></td>
<td>χρηστότητα (v. 12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ἀγαθωσύνη</strong></td>
<td>(see ἀγαθωσύνη in Eph 5:9)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

88 Ibid., 51–52.
πίστις (see Col 1:4, 23; 2:5, 7, 12)

πραΰτης πραΰτητα (v. 12)

ἐγκράτεια

σπλάγχνα οἰκτιρμοῦ (v. 12)

ταπεινοφροσύνην (v. 12)

Col 3:12–17 lists six of the nine fruit that are listed in Gal 5:22–23 and includes at least two others not mentioned there.⁸⁹ As Gal 5:22–23 orders ἀγάπη first, so Col 3:14 also stresses the primacy of love stating, “But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection.”⁹⁰ Beetham suggests, “At Col 1:8, Paul had already stated that love—like he had at Gal 5:22a—was produced by the Spirit. This may suggest that the rest of the virtues mentioned in Col 3:12–17 likewise stem from the enabling inner work of the Holy Spirit.”⁹¹ The use of πνευματικαῖς in this passage certainly leans in this direction. Thus, the strong contextual, conceptual, and linguistic connections between these two passages indicate that what is in view in Col 3:12–17 is also a listing of “the fruit of the Spirit,” though this is not stated explicitly.⁹²

The virtues that are to be “put on” in Col 3:12–17, then, also bear deep pneumatological significance as they do in the undisputed Pauline literature.⁹³ All these evidences show that

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⁸⁹ Thus, neither list comprehensively lists the fruit of the Spirit.

⁹⁰ Emphasis supplied.

⁹¹ Ibid., 52.

⁹² Perhaps the reason why this is not explicitly stated is due to the emphatic christological focus of this passage and of the entire letter. Through this heavy stress on Christ, the writer seems to be attempting to communicate something significant regarding the issues or heresy/ies with which his readers were struggling and the need of a proper christology in resolving those issues. More will be said about the “why” question at the end.

⁹³ The following virtues mentioned in Colossians are connected to the Spirit in the undisputed Pauline writings: ἐλπίς (Col 1:5, 23, 27 [see Rom 5:4–5; 8:23–25; 15:13; Gal 5:5; cf. Eph 4:4]), ἀγάπη (Col 1:4, 8; 2:2; 3:14 [see Rom 5:5; 15:30; 1 Cor 12:31–13:1; 14:1; 2 Cor 6:6; 2 Cor 13:14; Gal 5:5–6, 22; Phil 2:1; 1 Thess 4:8–9), χαρά (Col 1:11 [see Rom 14:17; 15:13; Gal 5:22; Phil 1:19–27; 2:1–2; 1 Thess 1:6; 5:19]), εἰρήνη (Col 3:15 [see Rom 5:1–5; 8:6; 14:17; 15:13; Gal 5:22]), μακροθυμία/ὑπομονή (Col 1:11; 3:12 [see Rom 5:3–5; 2 Cor 6:4–6; Gal 5:22]), χρηστότης (Col 3:12 [see 2 Cor 6:6; Gal 5:22]), πίστις (Col 1:4, 23; 2:5, 7, 12 [see Rom 5:1–5; 1 Cor 12:9; Gal 3:2, 5, 14; 5:5–6, 22]), and πραΰτης (Col 3:12 [see 1 Cor 4:21; Gal 5:23; 6:1]).
Colossians gives the metaphor of fruit-bearing trinitarian meaning, at least implicitly—connecting the Father, Christ, and the Spirit to it in a similar way to what Paul did in his undisputed letters.

Power and the Spirit

A third prominent pneumatological concept that is shared between Colossians and the undisputed Pauline epistles is that of “power”—the Greek word being δύναμις. There are two of what Fee calls “‘power’ texts”94 in the first chapter of Colossians (vv. 11, 29), both of which are in sync with Paul’s discussions of power in his undisputed letters. Outside of Colossians, Paul’s concept of divine power is trinitarian in nature, being tied to Christ (1 Cor 1:24; 5:4; 2 Cor 12:9; Phil 3:10), to God the Father (Rom 1:16, 20; 9:17; 1 Cor 1:18, 24; 2:4–5; 6:14; 2 Cor 4:7; 6:7; 13:4), and especially to the Spirit (as will be demonstrated below), who seems to be the primary agency of power in the triune Godhead, as elsewhere in the New Testament.95 In Rom 1:4, Jesus, is declared the Son of God “in” or by “power” (ἐν δύναμι), and this declaration in power was made “according to the Spirit of holiness” (κατὰ πνεῦμα ἁγίωσύνης). Later in Romans, Paul writes of “the power of the Holy Spirit” (ἐν δύναμι πνεύματος ἡγίου) that works in the lives of believers (Rom 15:13) and of “the power of the Spirit” (ἐν δύναμι πνεύματος) active in his own ministry among the Gentiles (Rom 15:19). In fact, these are the two locales where the power of the Spirit is at work in the other undisputed epistles. First, power and the Spirit are closely linked when Paul writes about the power experiences of believers (2 Cor 6:6–7), especially in regard to the Spirit’s giving of χαρίσματα or πνευματικά. After all, one of the gifts given to some believers in the church is “the working of miracles” or ἐνέργημα δύναμεων (1 Cor 12:10, 28–29; cf. Gal 3:5). This is also true of the disputed Pauline letters (e.g., Eph 3:16; 1 Tim 1:7). Second, Paul

94 Fee, God’s Empowering Presence, 643.
95 For some examples, see Luke 1:35; 4:14; Acts 1:8; 10:38; Heb 2:4.
frequently associates the Spirit with the power demonstrated in his ministry (1 Cor 2:4–5; 1 Thess 1:5). Because the joining of the Spirit and power is done so regularly in Paul and throughout the New Testament, Fee writes, “One may thus assume ... that many of [Paul’s] references to power imply the presence of the Spirit.”

**“being empowered with all power” (Col 1:11)***

This is certainly true with the two “power texts” in Colossians, the first of which is found in Col 1:11. It literally reads, “being empowered with all power according to the might of His glory for all endurance and patience.” This is the third of four participial phrases that describe how to walk in a worthy manner of the Lord. This passage is emphatically a “power text” with its Hebrew reduplication of the root of δύναμις used in both the participle, δυναμόθεμενοι, and in its modifying prepositional phrase, ἐν πάσῃ δυνάμει, (which are strategically placed together so that the reduplication is clear when reading the text: ἐν πάσῃ δυνάμει δυναμόθεμενοι) and with the power words used in its second modifying prepositional phrase, κατὰ τὸ κράτος τῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ.

There is no doubt that the power, which is being given to the Colossian believers who walk worthy, is divine. This is indicated by the absolute quality or totality of the said power conveyed in the adjectival modifier πάση in the prepositional phrase ἐν πάσῃ δυνάμει and by the modifying κατὰ phrase, with its personal pronoun that points back to either the Father (τοῦ θεοῦ) and/or Christ (τοῦ κυρίου) in Col 1:10 as its antecedent(s). Additionally, the passive participle indicates that the power comes from outside of the believer and should be read as a divine passive. Either the Father (τοῦ θεοῦ) or Christ (τοῦ κυρίου) in Col 1:10 (or maybe both?) could

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96 Fee, *God’s Empowering Presence*, 36. There are many Pauline passages that speak of “the power of God” in which the Spirit is not directly referenced. However, the Spirit could be the agent Paul had in mind when writing these passages because of the use of the phrase “the power of God” in 1 Cor 2:5. In the verse prior to this one, Paul connected “power” to the Spirit. Thus, “the power of God” in 1 Cor 2:5 could be ethically read as a reference to the power of the divine Spirit.

97 Translation supplied.

98 Emphasis supplied to indicate the “power” words.
be read as the primary agent(s) in view, thus connecting power to the Father and/or Christ the Lord, like in the undisputed Pauline writings.

However, the Spirit’s agency cannot be dismissed in this experience of “being empowering with all power” just because an explicit reference to the Spirit is lacking. Rather the Spirit, like in the undisputed Pauline writings, is present in this power passage at least implicitly. This becomes a more probable exegetical possibility when looked at in two ways. Internally, one must recognize the overabundance of pneumatological language that surrounds Col 1:11—that already has been discussed above—from the explicit mentions of the Spirit in Col 1:8 (ἐν πνεύματι) and 1:9 (πνευματική) to the plethora of Pauline pneumatological concepts that permeate this introductory section of the letter, such as the metaphors of “walking” and “fruit-bearing” and the references to various spiritual gifts (wisdom, understanding, knowledge, power, etc.) and the fruit of the Spirit (faith, hope, love, joy, endurance, patience, etc.).

Externally, a comparison of Col 1:11 and Eph 3:16, where there are deep contextual and terminological parallels (see tab. 6), is also quite telling.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 6. Terminological Connections between Col 1:11 and Eph 3:16</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Col 1:11</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ἐν πάσῃ δυνάμει δυναμούμενοι κατὰ τὸ κράτος τῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ εἰς πᾶσαν ὑπομονήν καὶ μακροθυμίαν</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Eph 3:16, like Col 1:11, is located within a prayer for the letter’s readers, the content of which is a request for them “to be strengthened with power.” Along with these contextual linkages, the two texts have parallel power terms, such as δυνάμει/δυναμούμενοι, κράτος/κραταιοθῆναι, and δόξης, and parallel prepositional phrases, such as ἐν πάσῃ δυνάμει and δυνάμει, κατὰ τὸ πλοῦτος

99 See Pao, Colossians and Philemon, 73.
100 I am indebted to Fee for finding this comparison (God’s Empowering Presence, 644).
"His working that is at work in me with power" (Col 1:29)

The second “power text” in Colossians is found in 1:29. In this part of the letter (1:24–29), the writer alerts his readers to the sufferings that he has endured because of his ministry for the church to the Gentiles. He grounded his ministry both theologically (Col 1:25, 27) and especially christologically (Col 1:24, 27, 28). However, though the passage lacks an explicit mention of the Spirit, a pneumatological significance should not be denied. In Col 1:29 the author states that all his labors for his readers were done with “striving according to His

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101 The antecedent of αὐτοῦ is τὸν πατέρα in Eph 3:14.
102 Fee writes, “As usual in such passages, however, where power language occurs without a specific mention of the Spirit, the emphasis lies on power terminology, not on the presence of the Spirit per se. The Spirit, therefore, must be understood as the presupposition of this language, not as its direct reference point. God is the obvious subject of the empowering; from all kinds of texts in Paul we may assume this means ‘by the power of God’s Holy Spirit’” (God’s Empowering Presence, 644).
[Christ’s] working that is working in [him] with power." Like in the first Colossian “power text,” Col 1:29 has a Hebrew reduplication: κατὰ τὴν ἐνέργειαν αὐτοῦ τὴν ἐνεργουμένης ἐν ἐμοί. The word family to which ἐνέργεια and ἐνεργέω belong is most often used by Paul elsewhere to describe divine action that is at work in the life of believers (see 1 Cor 12:6, 11; Gal 2:8; 3:5; 5:6; Phil 2:13; 3:21; 1 Thess 2:13). This is mostly a work of God in general or the Father specifically (1 Cor 12:6; Gal 2:8; 3:5; 5:6; Phil 2:13; 1 Thess 2:13) and the Spirit (1 Cor 12:11; Gal 3:5), although Christ is the focus of the ἐνέργεια mentioned in Phil 3:20–21.

Interestingly, the use of ἐνέργεια and ἐνεργέω in Col 1:29 is primarily christological. Christ is the explicit agent of the divine passive ἐνεργουμένην and the antecedent of αὐτοῦ in Col 1:29. Nevertheless, the Spirit cannot be left out. There is a pneumatological means by which this christological working in the author is accomplished, since it was said to have been carried out “with power” or by means of “power” (ἐν δυνάμει). This is the same prepositional phrase used in Col 1:11, which has been shown already to be deeply pneumatological in Pauline writings (Rom 15:18–19; 2 Cor 1:4; 1 Thess 1:5). Again Ephesians is helpful for reading Col 1:29 pneumatically. As already explored, Eph 3:16 states explicitly that the agency of the Spirit was responsible for the strengthening of the Ephesian believers with power. In this context, Eph 3:20 speaks about God’s work in its writer and his readers using the prepositional phrase, κατὰ τὴν δύναμιν τὴν ἐνεργομένην ἐν ἡμῖν (“according to the power that is working in me”), in which the words ἐνεργέω and δύναμις are connected, like in Col 1:29. Thus, this power of God that was working in the author of Ephesians and his readers was that of the Spirit. God accomplishes this internal working through the Spirit. Seeing Col 1:29 in light of Eph 3:16, 20 reveals the Spirit’s agency in the connection of ἐνέργεια/ἐνεργέω and δύναμις. Thus, in a similar

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103 Translation supplied.
104 See also Eph 1:11, 19, 20; 3:7, 20, a disputed letter of Paul.
105 The later use of ἐνέργεια in Col 2:12 is contextually christological and syntactically theological.
way to the empowering of the believers in Col 1:11, the Spirit can be seen as implicitly behind the working of Christ in the life and ministry of Paul in Col 1:29. This second “power text,” then, also bears pneumatological significance that reveals a triune involvement of God in Paul’s ministry to the Gentiles, though implicitly so.

Circumcision of the Heart in the Spirit (Col 2:11)

The fourth pneumatological concept of Paul that appears also in Colossians is circumcision (περιτομή), particularly the “inward” circumcision (Rom 2:29). The issue of physical circumcision became a very contentious issue for Paul’s ministry as he was regularly confronted by “Judaizers” who were zealous for the law and sought to force this Jewish rite upon all his Gentile converts.106 Paul and those who met in the Jerusalem council decided that physical circumcision should not be required for Gentile converts (Acts 15:22–29) because God was working powerfully among them with his Spirit and because Scripture passages, such as Amos 9:11–12, speak about their conversion (Acts 15:6–21). Paul provides another reason in Rom 2:28 stating that the outward physical circumcision does not make a real Jew and it certainly cannot justify nor save (Rom 2:28). Rather, all the circumcised and uncircumcised are saved by faith (Rom 3:30; Gal 5:6; 6:15). Thus, all who truly belong to God’s covenant people should experience an inward spiritual circumcision, one that “is a matter of the heart” (Rom 2:29), just as many Gentiles had in spite of their lack of “Jewishness.”107 This spiritual metaphor of circumcision is a pneumatological work for Paul; it is accomplished by the Spirit (ἐν πνεύματι) and not by the letter of the law (Rom 2:29). In Phil 3:3 (ESV), Paul explains that those who “are the circumcision” are deeply connected to the Spirit and to Christ, so much so that they “worship

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106 It was the reason that necessitated the calling of the council in Jerusalem (Acts 15:1–5) and is what led to Paul’s later arrest in Acts 21.

107 See discussion in Konsmo, The Pauline Metaphors, 80–89.
by the Spirit of God (πνεύμα τοῦ θεοῦ) and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh,”¹⁰⁸ that is in their physical circumcision (see Phil 3:4–6).

It seems that Col 2:11 is speaking about this Spirit-actuated inward circumcision of the heart.¹⁰⁹ In this text, the Colossian believers are encouraged not to be captives of the heretical philosophy of human tradition that was circulating among them because in Christ they “were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ.” Their christological experience of being united with Christ has caused them to be “circumcised with a circumcision made without hands.”¹¹⁰ This entails “putting off the body of flesh,” which is clarified in Col 3:9 as “putting off the old self/humanity with its practices.”¹¹¹ This is an abandonment of one’s old way of thinking and living, the old self or humanity,¹¹² and is experienced spiritually in connection with “the circumcision of Christ,” which Beetham convincingly argues is an objective genitive, meaning “the circumcision that Christ underwent”—namely “his violent death by crucifixion.”¹¹³ Thus, the “circumcision made without hands” is the experience of conversion, a spiritual death and burial of the “old self/humanity” by baptism—that is connected to Christ’s death and burial—and a spiritual resurrection with Christ to a “new self/humanity” “through faith in the working of God” (Col 2:13; cf. Rom 6:1–11).

So the question remains, who accomplished this work of inward circumcision in the lives of the Colossian believers? The passage clearly speaks of this circumcision as having a divine origin. This was not a “circumcision made in the flesh by human hands” (see περιτομὴ ἐν σαρκὶ

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¹⁰⁸ Emphasis supplied.
¹⁰⁹ R. Martin agrees (see Colossians: The Church’s Lord and the Christian’s Liberty: An Expository Commentary with a Present-day Application [Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1972], 84).
¹¹⁰ Here again is a Hebrew reduplication: περιετομῆθη περιτομῇ ἀχιροποιήτῳ.
¹¹¹ Translation mine.
¹¹² See Beetham, Echoes of Scripture, 175–176.
¹¹³ See ibid., 176–177.
χειροποιήτου in Eph 2:11), but rather one “made without human hands” (see περιτομή ἀχειροποιήτῳ in Col 2:11). As Beetham demonstrates in Mark 14:58 and 2 Cor 5:1—the only other occurrences of ἀχειροποιήτος in the New Testament—the Greek word ἀχειροποιήτος indicates divine origin over against human origin. This is further substantiated by taking the passive verb περιετμήθητε as a divine passive.

Interestingly, Col 2:11 reveals that the divine origin of “circumcision made without human hands” is trinitarian in nature. It has a christological origin indicated by the prepositional phrases ἐν φώ and ἐν τῇ περιτομῇ τοῦ Χριστοῦ in Col 2:11 and the dative αὐτῷ in Col 2:12. It also highlights a theological origin by the prepositional phrase διὰ τῆς πίστεως τῆς ἐνεργείας τοῦ θεοῦ ("through faith in the working of God"), signifying involvement of God the Father. Additionally, a pneumatological origin for inward circumcision may be implied in the passage. First, inward circumcision is explicitly the work of the Spirit in undisputed Pauline literature (see Rom 2:29; cf. Phil 3:3). Second, the use of τῆς ἐνεργείας may hint additionally at the work of the Spirit, because of the pneumatological significance implicit elsewhere in Colossians and explicit elsewhere in the undisputed Pauline writings. Third, Col 2:12 mentions the resurrection of Christ from the dead (τοῦ ἐγείραντος αὐτῶν ἐκ νεκρῶν) in connection with the “working of God.” Often in Paul, Christ’s resurrection is actuated by the Father (Rom 4:24–25; 6:4; 8:11; 10:9; 1 Cor 6:14; 15:15; 2 Cor 4:14; Gal 1:1; 1 Thess 1:10) and by His life-giving Spirit (Rom 1:4; 8:11).

Fourth, Beetham has identified an echo to the Old Testament found in Col 2:11 that is

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114 See ibid., 172–173.
116 See the above discussion of ἐνεργεία and ἐνεργέω in the subsection that discusses the “power texts” in Colossians and their pneumatological significance.
117 Eph 1:19–20 is a “power text” and, thus, may reference the Spirit in addition to the Father as the power who raised Christ from the dead.
associated with the Spirit. “While several texts of Scripture speak of a circumcision (or uncircumcision) of the heart (e.g., Deut 10:16; Jer 4:4, 9:25–26; Ezek 44:7, 9), only one ever speaks of God circumcising the heart. That text is Deut 30:6.”

This “rare concept similarity” is what unites Deut 30:6 to Col 2:11. In Deut 30:1–6, Moses prophetically informed the people of Israel that one day they will be driven out of the promised land to live as captives among the pagan nations because of their covenant-breaking (Deut 30:1). But when they choose to return to the Lord and wholeheartedly obey His voice (Deut 30:2), the Lord will restore them by gathering them together and bringing them into the promised land to live there again (Deut 30:3–5). In conjunction with their restoration from exile in captivity, Moses declared to Israel, “And the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your offspring, so that you will love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live.” (Deut 30:6 [ESV]). While, Col 2:11 does not share a restoration of Israel context with Deut 30:6, both similarly speak of an inward circumcision that has a divine origin—God performs the circumcision in both cases.

The pneumatological significance of this Old Testament echo becomes apparent when the similarities among Deut. 30:1–10, Jer 31:31–34, and Ezek36:22–32 are considered. In a helpful diagram, Beetham shows the parallels among the three passages and especially highlights the conceptual connections that Deut 30:6, Jer 31:33, and Ezek 36:26–27 particularly share. Table 7, which builds on Beetham’s diagram, attempts to represent these connections.

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118 For a fuller discussion that what can be given here, see Beetham, *Echoes of Scripture*, 157–179. R. Martin also picks up on this echo as well, noting some conceptual connections of Col 2:11 and Old Testament passages, such as Deut 10:16; 30:6; Jer 4:4; 31:31–34; Ezek 36:26–27 (see *Colossians*, 84).
Table 7. Conceptual Connections among Deut 30:6, Jer 31:33, and Ezek 36:26–27

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Deut 29:1, 30:6</th>
<th>Jer 31:33</th>
<th>Ezek 36:22, 26–27</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>These are the words of the <strong>covenant</strong> that the Lord commanded Moses to make <strong>with the people of Israel</strong> in the land of Moab, besides the <strong>covenant</strong> that he had made with them at Horeb. ...</td>
<td>For this is the <strong>covenant</strong> that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD:</td>
<td>“Therefore say to the house of Israel, Thus says the Lord GOD ...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>And <strong>the LORD your God</strong> will circumcise your <strong>heart</strong> and the <strong>heart</strong> of your offspring, so that you will love <strong>the LORD your God</strong> with all your <strong>heart</strong> and with all your soul, that you may live.</td>
<td><strong>I will put my law within them</strong>, and I will write it on their hearts.</td>
<td>And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the <strong>heart</strong> of stone from your flesh and give you a <strong>heart</strong> of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my <strong>statutes</strong> and be careful to obey my <strong>rules</strong>.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All three passages discuss with striking similarity an inward change of the human heart that is carried out by God in a covenant context.¹²² Jer 31:33 and Ezek 36:26–27 are also connected by their common reference to God’s “law,” “statutes,” and “rules” (as indicated by the italics) that are kept as a result of the inward heart change. Deut 30:6 and Ezek 36:26–27 both mention a removal of something before that which is new is given; for Deut 30:6 this is the removal of the foreskin of their hearts by inward circumcision (cf. Deut 10:16; Jer 4:4) and for Ezek 36:26–27 this is the removal of the heart of stone. Nevertheless, there are differences between the three passages. The major difference that is most relevant for our study is the double mention of the Spirit in Ezek 36:26–27. Along with the new heart comes a new Spirit, which is God’s Spirit, who effects the heart change in the believer. Like the undisputed Pauline letters, the heart change, or circumcision of the heart, has a pneumatological origin implicitly in Deut 30:6 and Jer

31:33 and explicitly in Ezek 36:26–27. Thus, the Old Testament echo of Deut 30:6 in Col 2:11, then, suggests an implied pneumatological origin of the “circumcision made without hands.” In these ways, the inward circumcision of the Colossian believers can be viewed as trinitarian in nature—explicitly so christologically and theologically and implicitly so pneumatologically.

**Indwelling by the Spirit**

A fifth pneumatological concept in the undisputed Pauline writings that also can be found in Colossians is the concept of “indwelling.” The typical Greek formula for expressing the concept of “indwelling” is οἰκεῖω or ἐνοικεῖω + ἐν + the indwelt object(s) (usually ὑμῖν)—although εἰμί (sometimes implied) + ἐν + the indwelt object(s) is used often (see Rom 8:9–11; 1 Cor 3:16–17; 6:19; Gal 2:20; Eph 2:22; Col 1:27; 3:16; 2 Tim 1:14). Paul employs these “indwelling” formulas to describe the intimate relational union that exists between God and His people. For Paul, all three persons of the Godhead share in this special union, but Christ and the Spirit are especially prominent because of their economic roles as the primary divine agents of the Godhead in the implementation of the plan of redemption.

First, a theological “indwelling” of the Father in the believer by the Spirit may be seen in 1 Cor 3:16–17. There the church at Corinth is told that the Spirit of God (τὸ πνεῦμα τοῦ θεοῦ) dwells in/among (οἰκεῖ + ἐν) them, because they are the temple, or dwelling place of God (τοῦ θεοῦ). God is mentioned twice in these verses but in connection with the Spirit. Thus, it is by means of the Spirit that God the Father “indwells” the Corinthian church. Second, Rom 8:10 exhibits a christological “indwelling” of believers, again, by the Spirit. Christ is said to be “in/among” the readers of Romans; this is possible by the Spirit, who three times is said to dwell

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123 Millard J. Erickson writes, “The believer is indwelt by the Spirit (John 14:17), the Son (2 Cor 13:5), and possibly even the Father (John 14:23; 1 Cor 3:16)” (Christian Theology, 3rd ed. [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013], 308).
in them. 2 Cor 13:5 also speaks of Christ being in/among believers (Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς ἐν ὑμῖν) as well as Gal 2:20 where Christ is said to live “in me” (ζῇ ἐν ἐμοὶ Χριστὸς). Third, 1 Cor 6:19, in addition to the aforementioned “indwelling” passages, speak of a pneumatological “indwelling.” In this passage, Paul grounds Christian sexual ethics in the fact that the physical body of each individual believer is a temple or dwelling place of the Spirit. As such, the Spirit is said to be in the Corinthian believers (ἐν ὑμῖν). Thus, in Paul’s undisputed writings “indwelling” is a trinitarian experience of the believer, that is actuated by the Spirit. The Spirit brings the personal presence of God—that is of both the Father and Christ—to the believer.

This concept of “indwelling” appears twice in Colossians. First, Col 1:27 speaks about the glorious mystery among the Gentiles, “which is Christ in you [ὁ ἐστιν Χριστὸς ἐν ὑμῖν], the hope of glory.” Here the alternate formula of εἰμί + ἐν + object (ὑμῖν) is used to indicate a christological “indwelling” of the Colossian believers that is consistent with the undisputed Pauline writings. Commenting on this text, Wright says that “Christ indwells, by his Spirit, all those who ... are said to be ‘in him.” While this is not explicitly stated here, like in Rom 8:9–11, because of the heavy emphasis on Christ, it could be the presupposition behind it. The Spirit is the “indweller,” who makes the presence of both the Father and the post-resurrected Christ available to the believer.

The concept of “indwelling” occurs again in Col 3:16. Here the typical Greek formula for “indwelling” is used (ὁ λόγος τοῦ Χριστοῦ ἐνοικεῖτο ἐν ὑμῖν). Again, the “indwelling” spoken of in Colossians has christological significance. The Colossian believers are instructed to “let the

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124 Twice the typical formula οἰκεῖ ἐν ὑμῖν (Rom 8:9, 11) is used and the third time uses the adjectival participle ἐνοικοῦν along with ἐν ὑμῖν (Rom 8:11). This third mention of “indwelling” in Rom 8:9–11 resembles 2 Tim 1:14, where Timothy is told to “guard the good deposit entrusted to you” διὰ πνεύματος ἁγίου τοῦ ἐνοικοῦντος ἐν ὑμῖν.

125 See Pao, Colossians and Philemon, 248.
126 Wright, Colossians and Philemon, 92.
word of Christ dwell in” them. The means by which this is accomplished are later explained in the text with the participial phrases that follow. Like in Col 1:27, the Spirit cannot be overlooked in this “indwelling” text, but must be seen as implicitly undergirding it. This becomes clearer when one notes that one of the ways by which the word of Christ is to “indwell” the Colossian believers is by their regular singing of psalms, hymns, and songs that are inspired by the Spirit (see the above section on Col 3:16). The Spirit, then, is explicitly mentioned in this very same text by the adjective πνευματικάς.127 Hence, though Colossians emphasizes christology when it speaks of “indwelling,” the Spirit should be seen as present implicitly. This fits the thought of the undisputed Pauline writings, which is clear that the Spirit is the means by which both the Father and Christ “indwell” or are present with believers.

Renewed by the Spirit (Col 3:10)

A sixth pneumatological concept that is common to Colossians and the undisputed Pauline writings is “renewal” and “newness.” There are two Greek word families used by Paul to communicate this concept: καινός (and its cognates καινότης, ἀνακαινόω, and ἀνακαίνωσις) and, to a much lesser extent, the overlapping term νέος (and its cognates ἀνανεώ).128 Paul employs these terms to describe the conversion experience in which a sinner becomes a “new creation” (καινὴ κτίσις in 2 Cor 5:17; cf. Gal 6:15) by way of Christ’s death, that is a person is transformed or renewed (ἀνακαινόω and ἀνανεώ) to be a believer and follower of Jesus Christ. Elsewhere, this experience is called the new birth (John 3) or regeneration (Titus 3:5). According

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127 Wright notes a further implicit Spirit connection in the passage can be seen in understanding what “the word of Christ” is. He says that “the word of Christ” most likely “refers to the gospel message announcing what God has done in and through Christ, which was set out in 1:15–20 ... ; or, just possibly, to the word which Christ speaks in the present by His Spirit” (Colossians and Philemon, 144). Thus, the Spirit can be acknowledged as the one who brings the word of Christ to the Colossian believers, causing it to indwell them.

128 Paul primarily uses the καινός word family for this concept. There are other cognates in these two families, but they are not mentioned here because they are not used by Paul. νέος overlaps the meaning of καινός. However, in some contexts νέος is used to indicate that a particular person or thing is young in age (see “νέος,” BDAG, 669).
to Paul in Rom 12:2, the experience of renewal (ἀνακαίνωσις) takes place in the mind (νοῦς) and in 2 Cor 4:16, “our inner self” (ἐσω ἡμῶν ἄνθρωπος) is renewed (ἀνακαινοῦται) day by day. This experience of “newness,” for Paul, is a pneumatological experience. The “new covenant” (καινῆς διαθήκης) into which “renewed” believers enter with Christ is “of the Spirit” (πνεύματος), who “gives life” (2 Cor 3:6). Rom 6:3–4 describes this renewal as a baptism into Christ’s death and burial and a resurrection from the water to “walk in newness of life” (ἐν καινότητι ζωῆς). Again, this “newness of life” is later described in Rom 7:6 as serving “in the newness of the Spirit” (ἐν καινότητι πνεύματος). This pneumatological significance of renewal and newness is also expressed in the disputed Pauline writings. Titus 3:5–6 states that this experience of renewal is “of the Holy Spirit” (ἀνακαινώσεως πνεύματος ἁγίου). Eph 4:23–24 calls for the Ephesian believers “to be renewed in the Spirit of your minds” (ἀνανεώσθαι δὲ τῷ πνεύματι τῶν νοῶν ὑμῶν), which is a putting on of the new self or humanity (τὸν καινὸν ἄνθρωπον). Thus for Paul, “the role of the Spirit in the Christian community is to make people and situations new.”129

The concept of renewal appears in Col 3:10, which speaks about putting off the old self/humanity (τὸν παλαιὸν ἄνθρωπον) and putting on the new self/humanity (τὸν νέον). This new self is being renewed in knowledge, which indicates a connection to the renewing of the mind in Rom 12:2 and the inner self of 2 Cor 4:16 and the new self in Eph 4:23–24. A relevant question arises from the fact that Col 3:10 does not state explicitly which person of the Godhead is the referent of the divine passive particle ἀνακαινούμενον. A case can be made for the Spirit as the referent. Internally, Col 3:10 is found in the ethical admonition section of the letter and this study has shown already how deeply pneumatological this passage is, with its many implied

pneumatological concepts (see above) and its explicit mention of the Spirit in Col 3:16. Externally, 2 Cor 4:16, Eph 3:16, and 4:23–24 all have linguistic and conceptual connections to Col 3:10. All use the conceptually synonymous verbs ἀνακαινόω (2 Cor 4:16; Col 3:10) and ἀνανεόω (Eph 4:23–24) except Eph 3:16, and all speak about this renewal (or, in the case of Eph 3:16, this strengthening) as affecting the inner self (ἔσω ἄνθρωπος in 2 Cor 4:16; Eph 3:16) or the new self/humanity (τὸν καινὸν ἄνθρωπον in Eph 4:23–24 and τὸν νέον ἄνθρωπον in Col 3:10). Also all of these passages explicitly reference the Spirit except for Col 3:10. These intertextual connections among these four passages may suggest that the Spirit is also implicitly in Col 3:10, hiding behind the divine passive, ἀνακαινούμενον.131

Called in One Body by the Spirit (Col 3:15)

Finally, one of Paul’s favorite metaphors for the church is that of the “body.” In the “body” metaphor, Paul compares the composition (one body with many members) and the coordinated function of the human body to how the church is to be organized and function (Rom 15:4–5; 1 Cor 10:16–17; 12:12–27).132 For Paul, the metaphor is rich in both christological and pneumatological meaning. Christologically, the metaphorical “body” or church is said to be of Christ; it belongs to Him (1 Cor 10:16–17; 12:27). Pneumatologically, it is the Spirit who distributes different gifts to different members of the body “as He wills” (1 Cor 7:11) for bringing about the common good (1 Cor 12:7) and for the “building up” of the body, the church (1 Cor 14:26; cr. Eph 4:11–13). Moreover, the Spirit is the one by whom all believers are baptized, thereby gaining entrance into body and becoming members of it (1 Cor 12:13).

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130 2 Cor 4:16 has τὸ σῶμα τῆς πίστεως in 4:13, Eph 3:16 has διὰ τοῦ πνεύματος αὐτοῦ, and Eph 4:23–24 has τὸ πνεῦμα τοῦ νοοῦ. For a more detailed discussion of these passages, see Fee, God’s Empowering Presence, 323–324, 693–698, 709–717, respectively.
Both Colossians and Ephesians echo (Col 1:24; 2:19; 3:15; Eph 4:12) and further develop the concepts taught by this “body” metaphor in the undisputed Pauline writings. First, they uphold the christological meaning of the “body” metaphor by referring to Christ as the possessor of the body or church (Eph 4:4; 5:30) but also deepen it by speaking of Christ as the head of the church. As such the church should relate to Christ as the human body relates to its head (Eph 1:22–23; 2:16; 5:23; Col 1:18; 2:19). Second, Ephesians also upholds the pneumatological meaning of the “body” metaphor in Eph 4:3–4 speaking of the unity that the Spirit brings to the church “in the bond of peace” as well as the Spirit’s role of calling people to become part of the one “body” as members through “the one hope.” Colossians, however, nowhere explicitly mentions the Spirit in conjunction with the “body” metaphor. But it does echo the idea of “calling” from Eph 4:4. In Col 3:15, the believers at Colossae are reminded that they “were called in one body.” This experience of being called in one “body” is explicitly pneumatological in Eph 4:4 with the referent of the divine passive ἐκλήθητε being the Spirit, who is mentioned twice right before the verb. The calling to “one hope” in one “body” of Eph 4:4, then can be understood as being “effected by the Spirit.”

Though, again, while the statement about calling in one “body” in Col 3:15 does not reference the Spirit but rather is saturated with christological significance, pneumatology still seems to undergird it. This is especially probable when the explicit mention of the Spirit (πνευματικαῖς) in the following verse (Col 3:16) is seen in contextual connection with Col 3:15. Furthermore, the larger section of Col 3:5–17 seems to be deeply tied to the pneumatological passage of Gal 5:16–26 about fruit-bearing (as was demonstrated above). Thus, in light of these factors and the conceptual connection to Eph 4:3–4 and 1 Cor 12:13, the Spirit seems to be the implied actuator of the calling of the Colossian

133 Fee, God’s Empowering Presence, 647. Pao argues for the Father being the agent behind the passive ἐκλήθητε based on Col 3:12 (see Colossians and Philemon, 246). Although, this could add a theological significance to the concept of “calling,” making it also an action in which all three persons of the Godhead participate.
Summary and Conclusion

This lengthy exercise was undertaken to answer the question, where is the Spirit in Colossians? The data presented above emphatically demonstrates that the Spirit is not absent nor nearly so in Colossians, even though He is not featured as prominently as in the undisputed Pauline epistles. Rather the Spirit can be seen in four explicit references where the words πνεῦμα and πνευματικός are used and in seven implicit references where Pauline pneumatological concepts like “walking,” “fruit-bearing,” “power,” “circumcision,” “indwelling,” “renewal,” and “calling in one body” occur.

This study has several implications for future studies in Colossians. First, the Spirit is present in Colossians and thus, it is a pneumatological letter like Paul’s other writings, though less explicitly so. Second, because the explicit and implicit pneumatological references in the letter have been demonstrated sufficiently as being typical of Paul, the claim of the absence of the Spirit or of its difference from the undisputed Pauline corpus should not be set forth as substantial grounds that warrant a denial of Pauline authorship of Colossians. Finally, Colossians should be viewed as teaching a fully trinitarian theology in a similar fashion to that of the undisputed Pauline writings, though more implicit and presuppositional.

Concluding this study here leaves at least one important question unanswered. Although present, why is pneumatology featured less prominently in Colossians than it is in the undisputed Pauline epistles? The data above manifests a heavy stress on Christ. More is said about the second person of the Trinity in Colossians than of the first and especially the third. Also shown above, Christ often takes on some of the economic roles that are unambiguously and explicitly
pneumatological in the undisputed Pauline writings. Preliminarily, all this suggests that the difference is due to a deeply christological concentration in the letter that is necessitated by the heresy/ies, which was/were circulating among the believers at Colossae. Sven K. Soderlund agrees with this proposal by saying, “Paul’s primary concern in this letter is to refute false teachings having to do with Christology rather than pneumatology; hence, he concentrates on Christ rather than on the Spirit.”

George T. Montague also agrees:

> What is endangered by the Colossian crisis is not so much the doctrine of the Spirit as the doctrine of Christ. ... Paul does not withdraw his doctrine of the Spirit—there are enough traces of it ... to show that he is faithful to his own previous teaching. However, it cannot be denied that some stress on the Spirit has been sacrificed in the interest of the person and the primacy of Christ. ... for the moment, in the Colossian situation, the urgency of the Spirit’s role as such seems to have yielded to the more pressing urgency of Christology.

The quantitative difference between Colossians and the undisputed Pauline writings on their treatments of the Spirit could be explained as an effort to highlight christology—which seems to have been negatively impacted by the Colossian heresy/ies—rather than an intentional negation of a typical Pauline pneumatology. As any good letter writer, Paul had the personal needs of

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134 Thompson notices that in Colossians, Christ has assumed the role of the Spirit elsewhere in Pauline writings in the area of spirituality or Christian practice: “One of the most striking features about Colossians, especially when compared to Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, and Galatians, is that the Spirit seems to figure so little in the letter’s theology and injunctions. Paul does not assign to the Spirit the role of life and liberty or the power to ‘transfer’ from one dominion to the other; nor does he speak of it as the potency of Christian living. Instead, the life of the Spirit, what we might call ‘spirituality’ or Christian practice, is a matter of living according to the dominion of Jesus rather than the dominion of darkness” (Colossians & Philemon, 153).

135 Soderlund, “Colossians,” 1129 (emphasis original). Schweizer also notes this emphasis on christology: “Many statements which Paul always or very frequently associates with the Spirit are found here without any such reference. In consequence, a different point of reference, most often ‘Christ,’ appears instead” (Letter to the Colossians, 38, 38n19). Unwarrantedly, Schweizer suggests that this is evidence that Colossians was not written by Paul himself (ibid., 17).


137 Warrington agrees, “Paul wrote this letter mainly in response to a heresy that undermined the person of Jesus. Consequently, although there are few references to the Spirit in the letter, there are many references to the person of Christ” (Discovering the Holy Spirit, 167). Swete also seems to agree with this, stating, “In the Epistle to the Colossians the Apostle’s thoughts are carried by a new controversy into another field” and this is why “he mentions the Spirit only once,” namely in Col 1:8 (The Holy Spirit, 231). Though he does not mention explicitly what this “new controversy” is. See also Pao, who writes, “Paul does not emphasize the work of the Spirit in this letter, probably because Christology, not pneumatology, is at the center of his dispute with the false teachers (Colossians and Philemon, 58).
his audience in mind and shapes his writing accordingly.¹³⁸ Thus, the Father and especially the Spirit have slipped into the background of Colossians to some degree so that Christ could come more fully and wholly into the foreground.

¹³⁸ See Bruce, Epistle to the Colossians, 28.


Moo, Douglas J. *The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon*. The Pillar New Testament


