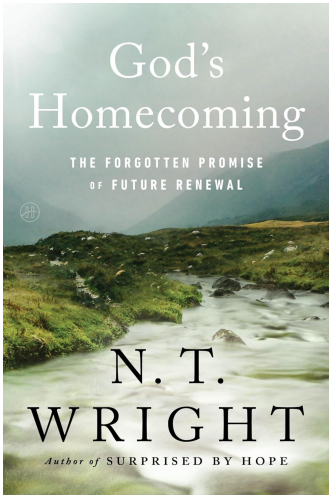
Excerpt Page from N.T. Wright
Trinity A — May 31, 2026

Excerpt from N.T. Wright's *God's Homecoming: The Forgotten Promise of Future Renewal* (HarperOne, 2025), pages 283, 290, 303-305.

N.T. Wright wrote this book to help us get the Bible's story straight. In the past seventeen hundred years of western Christianity, we have traded the Bible's real story about God coming home to earth, setting things right and fulfilling creation, to a more Platonic story of the human soul going home to heaven after we die. In the last chapter, however, he spends more time considering what to say about the time in between the "psychosomatic" deaths of our earthly bodies and God's raising us with resurrection bodies when new creation comes to completion. Here's the beginning of his answer:



The obvious though revolutionary answer to the question of personal continuity between bodily death and bodily resurrection is hiding in plain sight. The early Christians seem not to have been particularly interested in the question that so exercises modern people, especially at funerals ("where are they now?"). But they supply us with the material from which a good answer can be given. Jesus's first followers, I suggest, would have answered in terms of the holy spirit: the spirit who dwells within us in the present will continue to sustain us between death and resurrection. Failing to see this, the tradition has replaced the spirit with a platonic soul. Hence the problems we have seen, and many others.

So how does this work out? . . . Once God's spirit has come to dwell in a person, and to be (so to speak) fused with their own spirit, *God himself provides the continuity between the previous bodily life and the future one*.

On Trinity Sunday, this chapter also happens to be the one that speaks the trinitarian language the most. Here's more on what he started to elaborate above:

I suggest . . . that when God the father gives the spirit to dwell within an individual (or indeed a church, as in 1 Corinthians 3) this is not intended as a short-term injection of spiritual power, sufficient to drive faith, hope, and love until the time of bodily death but to be discontinued thereafter. *When the spirit has come home to a person, the spirit, fused together with the human spirit and holding it in continuing lift, will stay "at home," holding that person in life, through and after bodily death, and on to the point where the same spirit will raise that person from the dead.* Though Paul never says this in so many exact words . . . , he could equally well have said that the spirit, having come to dwell in a believer so that the believer has become "one spirit" with Jesus, will then sustain them after bodily death within the mystery of the holy trinity.

The chapter closes with a close reading of Isaiah 40, where God is comforting God's people — as God comforts us when we lose loved ones and face death ourselves. Once again the Trinity is cited as important:

[Isaiah 40] closes with the great promise that we should take for ourselves as we look out at our traumatic world and seek the fresh vocation through which God will return once more in the power of the spirit: "Why do you say, My way is hidden from YHWH? . . . Have you not known? . . . YHWH is the everlasting God . . . he does not faint or grow weary . . . He gives power to the faint, and strengthens the powerless" (Isaiah 40:27-29). We need that reminder every time we are rightly overwhelmed by the tragedy and agony of our world. The church's vocation is never triumphalistic, but always, as Paul knew, worked out through our own weakness, apparent powerlessness, and even failures. Yes: "Even youths will faint and grow weary, and the young will fall exhausted" (verse 30) — we know that, we feel that, but, as in verse 8 (and then again at 55:11) the word of God remains the solid rock: "those who wait for YHWH shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint" (Isaiah 40:30-31).

That should be our prayer for ourselves and our communities: the prayer of the homecoming of the triune God. God promised Israel he would return. God fulfilled that promise in Jesus. God now longs to fulfill it again, and again, through the holy spirit, the comforter. The doctrine of the trinity is not, after all, a strange philosophical fantasy of thinkers who have lost their biblical roots. When we recover those roots, and learn to understand the whole narrative of the faith in these terms, we find that we don't need complex medieval interpretative strategies. The coming of the triune God is all the hermeneutical framework we require. As we read the Bible prayerfully we are confronted, again and again, with the triple reality of the God of all comfort.

This gives us the complex lens (I am thinking of varifocal spectacles) through which to read the whole scripture. We move from the close-up lens of ancient Israel, of creation and covenant, to the midrange lens of the incarnate son, in whom all God's promises find their "yes" and through whom all things are made new. Then, lifting up our eyes to the long-range lens, we see before us the hope, and the church's task, of spirit-given comfort, reconciliation, and healing.

The gospel message has all too often been shrunk. It has been turned into a self-help message of how we might find our way up to heaven, and then sometimes (particularly in the modern Western churches) of how to have a happy life while we wait for that eventuality. But the promise of God's powerful and comforting homecoming works in the opposite direction. It is gloriously fulfilled in the son, and powerfully implemented through the spirit — which means, through those in whom the spirit dwells, those who confess Jesus as Lord and savior in the full Isaianic and gospel sense. Let us pray afresh in our own day for the power of the spirit, that through new vision and vocation, through the work of churches and individuals, there may be signs of hope, glimpses of glory, justice, and mercy lived out so that all flesh may see and know the God who is father, son, and spirit, the God who comes home with the message of comfort, the gentle shepherd who will put all things right at last, the powerful wind that fills us now and will one day fill all creation.