

The Holy Spirit in Relation to the Person and Work of Christ

by John F. Walvoord

The sermon explores the role of the Holy Spirit in the birth and conception of Christ, and the nature of Christ's humanity.

Scripture: Isaiah 11:2, Isaiah 42:1, Isaiah 61:1, Matthew 10:20, Mark 13:11, Luke 1:15, Luke 12:12, John 20:22, Romans 8:11, Galatians 3:24, Galatians 4:4

Topics: "Holy Spirit", "Christology"

Description

John F. Walvoord delves into the intricate nature of the Gospel narratives, emphasizing the need for careful exegesis due to the combination of three dispensations: Law, Grace, and Kingdom. Christ's life demonstrated perfect obedience to the Mosaic law, fulfilling it in His death and teachings. The prophetic message of Christ anticipated the glorious kingdom while warning of exclusion and emphasizing matters of the heart. The Holy Spirit's Messianic work in every dispensation, especially in relation to Christ, is highlighted through Old Testament prophecies and Christ's teachings.

Transcript

To the careful interpreter of the Scriptures, no portion of the Word of God requires more careful exegesis than the Gospel narratives. Combining in their scope the elements of three dispensations, Law, Grace, and Kingdom, the problems of interpretation are multiplied, yet the accounts are so simple in statement that a child may read with profit. Christ lived in the days of the setting sun of Mosaic law. Its provisions had ruled Israel for fifteen hundred years, more frequently disobeyed than obeyed, equally misinterpreted by the literal Pharisee and the liberal Sadducee. It had been intended as a schoolmaster to bring Israel to Christ (Gal 3:24), but its pupils had not learned their lessons. Christ came to fulfill the law, not only in His death on the cross, but in His own life to demonstrate perfect obedience. He was "made under the law" (Gal 4:4). Repeatedly in His messages, Christ referred to and interpreted the law, correcting the interpretations which had abused it, and adding new concepts of God and truth. Even as Christ had a backward look at times to the law, so also His prophetic message anticipated the coming glorious kingdom. He teaches the people the principles of the kingdom, warns of the danger of exclusion, raises a lofty standard which pierced through the outward forms of religion to matters of the heart. His Messianic message is presented with all the clarity and revelation which could be expected from His lips. As the growing unbelief of the people indicates their rejection and brings the shadow of the cross nearer, Christ

turned to truth concerning the present age, the kingdom not in its outward display, but in its mystery form. The fulfillment of the promise of God to David is postponed, and into the foreground comes the undeclared purpose of God to call out from every nation a new company, composed of both Jew and Gentile, independent of all His promises to Israel, having its own calling and destiny. Only by bearing in mind that Christ lived in His prophetic ministry in the three dispensations of Law, Grace, and Kingdom is it possible to exegete with accuracy and profit the Gospel narratives which contain extended reference to all three systems of truth.

Aside from the intricate nature of the prophetic truth revealed by Christ, a further amazing event is enacted by God becoming incarnate, assuming human form, and living for a time within the limitations of the human frame. Culminating in the death and resurrection of Christ, the pages of the Gospel portray the most magnificent revelation, have reference to every important line of truth, and furnish a field of study which has been explored rather than mined for its treasures. It is not without point that the Old Testament so largely anticipates and looks forward to the coming of the Messiah, and the New Testament, after John, looks back to the work of Christ and gives itself to the task of interpreting what He did and what He is yet to do.

The period of time spanned by the Gospels is largely in the dispensation of the law, at least up to the death of Christ, and after this event fulfilling the law, the period of transition properly begins. Of primary interest is the relation of the Holy Spirit to Christ during His life on earth. Little that is new is found in the relation of the Holy Spirit to other men.

The period of the Gospels is of special interest in the study of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit because the work of the Spirit is Messianic in every dispensation to a large degree. In the Old Testament, prophecy abounds on the theme of the Messiah and of the work of the Holy Spirit in relation to Him. Much of this is in reference to the millennium, but some is more general. Notable passages are Isaiah 11:2-3, speaking of the fact that the Spirit would rest on Christ; Isaiah 42:1-4, quoted as fulfilled in Matthew 12:18-21; and Isaiah 61:1-2 which Christ claimed was fulfilled in His Person and work (Luke 4:17-21). Not only in relation to His Person, but also in relation to Messianic times the Holy Spirit is revealed to undertake for man. It is clear that the work of the Holy Spirit is inseparably related to all the Messianic purpose (Isa 32:15ff; 44:3-5; Ezek 36:26ff; Zech 12:10).

As in the Old Testament, the work of the Holy Spirit in relation to men other than Christ is individual and sovereign throughout the period of the Gospels. As in the Old Testament, some saints were filled with the Spirit, but this ministry was limited to a few, only four people being mentioned in addition to Christ: John the Baptist (Luke 1:15), Elizabeth (Luke 1:41), Zacharias (Luke 1:67), and Simeon (Luke 2:25). It was predicted that the disciples would be told by the Spirit what to say in persecution (Matt 10:20; Mark 13:11; Luke 12:12), and in John 20:22, apparently a temporary filling of the Spirit was given to provide for their spiritual needs prior to Pentecost, but none of these passages has reference to the normal operation of the Holy Spirit prior to Christ's death. The matter of greatest importance in the study of the Holy Spirit in the Gospels is the consideration of His ministry to Christ, to be considered here, and the predictions of His ministry through this age which will be subject to later discussion.

I. The Work of the Holy Spirit in Relation to the Birth of Christ

There are few supernatural acts of God which present a more inscrutable mystery than the birth of Christ. All the elements of the miraculous are present, defying the reason of man and the normal course of

nature; but whereas other miracles seem out of harmony with known natural law, the birth of Christ seems to require a change in the nature of God Himself. While the difficulties present no problem to faith, the statement of the factors that entered into the birth of Christ and their meaning are a most serious problem to the theologian. The doctrine of the virgin birth has been attacked vigorously because of its central importance to the Christian faith, and it has been defended with the best of scholarship and sustained by a mass of argument. Coming to the Scriptures in simple faith, building on the foundation of their inspiration and infallibility, the problem is still great, not to explain away the Scriptures, but to fathom and state in accurate terms what actually occurred. While all the questions which might arise cannot be answered, certain truths are made clear in the Scripture.

1. The Holy Spirit the Agent of Conception.

The Scriptures bear a clear testimony to the work of the Holy Spirit which resulted in the conception of Christ. Matthew reveals that Mary "was found with child of the Holy Ghost," and quotes the angel, "Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost: And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins" (Matt 1:18, 20, 21). Luke is even more specific. "And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God" (Luke 1:35). These passages should settle beyond doubt that Christ had no human father. The conception of Christ is definitely traced to the Holy Spirit. As in other operations of the Holy Spirit, however, the First Person and the Second Person are vitally related to His work. According to Hebrews 10:5, quoting loosely Psalm 40:6, Christ said, "Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me." The preparation of the body of Christ seems to be related to a work of the Father. Hebrews 2:14, likewise, seems to indicate that Christ took flesh and blood by an act of His own will. It is clear that that life which was joined to the humanity of Christ was none other than the Second Person who had existed from eternity. The inscrutable mystery can be stated, then, that Christ was begotten of the Holy Spirit, the life which was joined to humanity was that of the Second Person, and the First Person became the Father of the humanity of Christ. It must be noted that the Scriptures never refer to the Holy Spirit as the Father of Christ.

2. Mary the Mother of Christ.

The Scriptures considered are unequivocal in tracing the origin of the humanity of Christ to normal birth to Mary, the wife of Joseph. While the conception was supernatural, the birth of Christ seems to follow the natural pattern. The prophecies of the Old Testament are explicit that the Messiah should be born of a woman, a virgin, and Mary is said to fulfill these prophecies (Gen 3:15; Isa 7:14; Matt 1:18, 20, 21, 22, 23; 2:11, 13, 20, 21; 12:48; 13:55; Mark 3:31; 6:3; Luke 1:35, 43; 2:5-7, 16, 34, 48, 51; 8:19, 20; John 19:25, 26, 27; Acts 1:14; Gal 4:4). The evidence is so abundant for the motherhood of Mary that no serious attempts have been made to deny it even on the part of liberal scholarship, though the Corinthian heresy denied that the conception was miraculous and held that Jesus was possessed only for a time with a heavenly spirit,¹ and the Docetics held that His body was unreal.

3. The Nature of the Conception of Christ.

An investigation into the nature of the conception of Christ has its chief difficulty in solving the problem of the origin of the humanity of Christ. It is clear that Christ was born of Mary, yet certain features of His

Person are quite distinct from the human race. The problem of deity becoming part of humanity is a great miracle, but the origin of a sinless humanity is a problem of the first magnitude. Many questions could be asked. Did the humanity of Christ proceed from Mary alone? Was the humanity a product of generation or creation? Why was the imputation of sin upon the whole human race apparently non-operative in the case of Christ? Was His human nature sinless or merely sanctified? Such questions naturally arise in the course of the study of the conception of Christ. To a large extent we are shut up to reason, without explicit revelation, but to the degree a solution can be found a defense of the conception of Christ from serious errors is furnished. A proper examination of this field of truth would obviate such doctrines as that of the immaculate conception of Mary and heresies in the statement of the hypostatic union. and the known attributes of God. The truth probably is that the conception of Christ is both generation and creation, generation in the sense that He was born of a woman who conceived by the Holy Spirit, creation in the sense that a Second Adam was the product, a member of the race and yet the Federal Head of a new race. By analogy, Abraham was at once a Gentile and the first of the Israelite fathers. Christ was at once a member of the race and the Head of a new people.

Owen advances the argument that the conception of Christ can be thought of as creation more accurately than generation: "This act of the Spirit was a creating act; not indeed like the first creating act, which produced the matter of all things out of nothing; but like those subsequent acts of creation, whereby out of matter already prepared, things were made what they were not before, and which they had not active disposition to, nor concurrence in. So man was formed of the dust of the earth, and woman of a rib taken from man. Thus in forming the body of Christ; though it was effected by an act of infinite creating power, yet it was made of the substance of the blessed Virgin."³ Dorner seems to hold much the same view: "And the soul itself is not given by Mary nor by the race, but by a Divine creative act."⁴ The viewpoint of Owen and Dorner, including as it does the necessary connection with the race, presents less difficulties than the other view. Those holding the traducian view of the origin of the soul generally avoid the use of the word creation in connection with the humanity of Christ, but this is not at all necessary. The natural method as used in the race might be traducian, while the supernatural method used in Christ might be likened to creation. If the word creation is used in regard to Christ, it must be severely limited as Owen does to avoid any thought of creation ex nihilo. It partakes of the idea of both creation and generation.

(2) Was the Humanity of Christ Sinless or Merely Sanctified? One of the chief difficulties in avoiding the idea of creation of the humanity of Christ is that one is faced with the problem of producing through a sinful medium a holy child. The fact that the child born to Mary is sinless is conceded by all who accept the Scriptures. How can Mary, who partakes of the sin of Adam, become the mother of a holy and sinless child? If the humanity is the object of an act described as creative, the problem is much relieved, but if the humanity is transmitted in the act of conception, some explanation must be found. Shedd's answer is that the humanity is sanctified before it is joined to deity: "The human nature assumed into union with the Logos was miraculously sanctified, so as to be sinless and perfect."⁵ In support of this argument he quotes various Scriptures to the point that Christ is holy and sinless. Shedd concludes: "With these statements of the symbols, the theologians agree. They assert the sinfulness of the Virgin Mary, the consequent sinfulness of human nature as transmitted by her, and the necessity of its being redeemed and sanctified, in order to be fitted for a personal union with the Logos."⁶ What Shedd apparently overlooks is the tremendous difference between being sanctified and being holy. Every saint in heaven is sanctified and free from all sin, and as such is a token of God's grace through eternity. The case would be quite different, however, if any saint could be found who had never known sin. Of Christ, however, it is said specifically, that he "knew no sin" (2 Cor 5:21). One must choose, then, between the view that the

humanity of Christ came into existence creatively, and the view that it was transmitted in its natural sinful state and sanctified before being joined to deity. Augustine who advanced and supported the idea of traducianism in respect to the race as a whole sums up the dilemma in these words: "If the soul of Christ be derived from Adam's soul, he, in assuming it to himself, cleansed it so that when he came into this world he was born of the Virgin perfectly free from sin either actual or transmitted. If, however, the souls of men are not derived from that one soul, and it is only by the flesh that original sin is transmitted from Adam, the Son of God created a soul for himself, as he creates souls for all other men, but he united it not to sinful flesh, but to the 'likeness of sinful flesh,' Rom 8:3."7

There is a sense, however, in which both views demand sanctification. Owen who insists on the creative idea also affirms the idea of sanctification: "The human nature of Christ being thus miraculously formed, was sanctified from the instant of its conception, and filled with grace according to its capacity. Being not begotten by natural generation, it desired no taint of original sin from Adam; it was obnoxious to no charge of sin, but was absolutely innocent and spotless, as Adam was in the day he was created."8 Owen, however, uses, the thought of sanctification in a different sense than Shedd does. To Owen, sanctification is merely setting aside to holy use with a positive endowment of grace, while Shedd includes in the idea the thought of cleansing from defilement.

The question of whether the humanity of Christ was sinless or merely sanctified must be answered by the positive assertion that it was ever sinless, unless the creative origin of the humanity of Christ be denied.

(3) Was Adam's Sin Imputed to Christ? The doctrine of imputation, while not a popular subject of study by Christians generally, lies at the heart of the whole program of salvation. The Epistle to the Romans has as its central theme the doctrine of imputation. When Christ died on the cross, all sin was imputed to Him, with the result that all the righteousness of God can be imputed to the believer in Christ. While the imputation of Adam's sin to Christ on the cross is commonly accepted, what can be said of the imputation of sin to Christ at His conception? A study of Romans 5:12-21 will reveal the whole race under the condemnation of Adam in that Adam's sin, while not theirs experimentally, by imputation becomes the burden of his seed. Entirely apart from the sin nature of man which may be transmitted mediately, imputation of sin is immediate.⁹ If the problem of the mediate transmission of a sin nature to Christ may be solved by accepting the theory of creation as Owen defines it, the problem of imputation remains. It is clear from Scripture that Adam's sin was not imputed to Christ until the cross. How can this be explained?

Very little attention has been given to this theme by theological writers, and this not without cause. The Scriptures make it clear that Adam's sin was not imputed to Christ until the cross, but do not explain why. While the problem cannot be finally solved, certain observations can be made. First, it is in the nature of imputation that it is related to judgment rather than to experience. Imputation has in view our standing before God as our Judge. Imputation in itself does not influence men to sin or have any real effect upon man's will or experience, though it may result in a difference in divine blessings. Thus in the case of Christ, imputation of sin does not become an issue until Christ takes our place of judgment on the cross. Then imputation becomes a reality.

Second, in the nature of His position as the Second Adam, Christ was the Head of a new people. While it was necessary for the purpose of incarnation for Christ to become truly human, it was not necessary in His conception to partake of Adam's sin. The imputation of sin to Christ at birth is contrary to the evident purpose of God and out of harmony with the program of His life and ministry prior to the cross. Christ is never said to be in Adam, while everyone else at birth is so regarded in Scripture. To be in Christ is to

sever our connection in Adam. The two ideas and two positions are at opposite poles.

Third, it was essential to redemptive purpose that the Savior be able to save and be willing to save. All those in Adam fail to meet either of these conditions. If sin had been imputed to Christ at His conception, it would not only have made impossible the union of God and man, but it would have made impossible His substitutionary sacrifice. He would, therefore, be dying for His own sins justly His because of imputation, rather than dying willingly as the sinless One who voluntarily took unto Himself the judgment of sin. It may be concluded, therefore, that the imputation of Adam's sin to Christ did not take place at the conception and that this is in harmony with all we know of Christ.

4. Conclusion.

More important from a practical standpoint than the inquiry as to the nature of the conception of Christ are the conclusions relative to the nature of His humanity. Here we deal not with speculation but with revelation, and the conclusions reached are of great importance in determining the doctrine of His Person. While it is not possible to discuss the intricacies of the doctrine of the hypostatic union, attention may be directed to the humanity of Christ, resulting from the work of the Holy Spirit, that humanity which was joined inseparably without confusion or loss of its true humanity to the Second Person of the Trinity.

(1) The Elements of the Humanity of Christ. The Scriptures make it clear that the humanity of Christ included all the essential elements. Christ possessed a true body, composed of flesh and blood and all the normal human functions (Heb 2:14). The immaterial factors of soul (Matt 26:38; Mark 14:34; John 12:27; Acts 2:27) and spirit (Mark 2:8; 8:12; Luke 23:46; John 11:33; 13:21) are included in His humanity. It may be conceded that some of the characteristics of His body were temporary and were abandoned after His death in the glory of His resurrection, but this argument has no bearing on the validity and completeness of His humanity. Only the characteristics of the body were subject to change, and this also followed the pattern of all flesh in that Christ died and in resurrection received a spiritual body, the pattern of those who will be raised in Him. The Scriptures make it clear, then, that Christ did not take to Himself in the incarnation a human body which was indwelt by deity, but that rather He took to Himself a human nature and body. He did not simply possess a human body, but He possessed a human nature. Yet, in the incarnation, Christ did not take possession of a human person, else He would have had dual personality. As Charles Hodges says, "The Son of God did not unite Himself with a human person, but with a human nature. The proof of this is that Christ is but one person."¹⁰ It may be concluded that the Scriptures demand that the humanity of Christ be complete, and any other viewpoint is a serious departure from revealed truth.

(2) The Human Nature Was Without Sin. In contrast to all other human beings, Christ was without sin both in His immaterial and His material being. This was essential to the hypostatic union as it is inconceivable that deity could be united with humanity in one Person if this would involve sin. While the attributes of the divine nature do not transfer to the human nature and the attributes of the human nature never transfer to the divine nature, the attributes of either nature may be attributed to the Person of Christ. Therefore, if the human nature were sinful, the Person of Christ would have this characteristic. It is essential to every important doctrine that the Person of Christ be sinless and to this the Scriptures give abundant testimony (Isa 53:9; John 8:46; 2 Cor 5:21; Heb 4:15; 7:26; 1 Pet 1:19; 2:22; 1 John 3:5). The sinlessness of the human nature is a result of the work of the Holy Spirit in conception, as we have seen, the humanity being kept from all sin.

(3) The Human Nature Partook of Unmoral Limitations. While guarded from every taint of sin, the human nature of Christ partook of the limitations true of humanity. This involved on the part of the human nature that it was temptable and peccable, even though the Person of Christ was impeccable. The human nature lacked omniscience, omnipotence, omnipresence, and infinity which of course characterized the divine nature. The body of Christ had all the normal feelings and emotions which are natural to humanity except those arising in a sin nature. There was nothing lacking to His humanity which was essential to it, and there was nothing added to His humanity which was unusual, apart from the divine nature itself. The human nature of Christ was very similar to that of Adam's before the fall, the great difference being found in its union with the divine nature.

(4) Christ Was of the Seed of David. While the birth and conception of Christ involved many unusual factors, and while we do not understand how all these elements were produced, the fact is clear that Christ was born of the seed of David as Mary's true son. His was the lineage of David as to His humanity, and probably the racial characteristics of Israel were evident in the body of Christ apart from sin. Christ was never accused of not being a true Israelite as far as His race was concerned. It is essential to all the purpose of God in fulfilling His promises to David that Christ should be of his seed. On this hangs the fulfillment of the prophecies relating to the millennial kingdom and God's purpose relative to the earth. The viewpoint that the humanity of Christ was effected creatively does not exclude this aspect, but rather includes all the natural features related to His conception and birth.

The record of Scripture does not satisfy in every respect the natural curiosity of an inquiring mind into the various factors of the conception and birth of Christ. Sufficient is revealed, however, to satisfy both faith and reason. However inscrutable the process, the birth of Christ is clearly revealed to have resulted from conception produced by the Holy Spirit, and in due time Christ was born, the eternal Second Person forever united to a complete and sinless humanity, providing in His birth the provision of God for revelation and salvation.

II. The Work of the Holy Spirit in Christ as a Child

Concerning the period of the life of Christ from His birth to the beginning of His public ministry, comparatively little is known, only the events surrounding His birth and the incident in the temple at the age of twelve being revealed. The relation of the Holy Spirit to Christ during this period is not the subject of extended revelation, but from what is known a number of important conclusions may be reached

1. Christ Filled with the Holy Spirit from the Moment of Conception.

In the Old Testament predictions of Christ, it is expressly revealed that Christ should have the fullness of the Holy Spirit. Such passages as Isaiah 11:2-3, 42:1-4 and 61:1-2 are explicit. The Gospels speak frequently of the fulfillment of these passages, and particularly after His baptism reveal Christ as filled with the Holy Spirit (Luke 4:1). While it is not possible to produce evidence beyond question, it is a matter of reasonable inference that Christ was filled with the Holy Spirit from the very moment of conception. A number of reasons present themselves for holding this opinion.

(1) From the doctrine of the Trinity, it may be inferred that the Persons of the Trinity are inseparable. For this reason, the Person of Christ even when in the womb of the Virgin Mary was attended and filled by the Father and the Holy Spirit.

(2) In the case of John the Baptist, it is revealed that he was filled with the Holy Spirit from his mother's womb (Luke 1:15). If this blessing should attend the birth of the forerunner of Christ, it is inconceivable that the blessedness of Christ Himself should be less in degree.

(3) According to John 3:34, the Holy Spirit is not given by measure unto Christ, His ministry to Christ and His presence being abundant in every particular. As the verb is in the present tense, it would indicate that this is characteristic and continual.

(4) Not a single reason can be found why the Holy Spirit should not have filled Christ from the moment of conception. As the Person of Christ was ever holy and without sin there was nothing to hinder the full ministry of the Spirit. The purposes of God being so great in Christ, and the filling of the Holy Spirit being so evidently in keeping with His Person, the reasonable conclusion may be reached that Christ always possessed the fullness of the Holy Spirit. remain immutable, the human nature is subject to change as the Scriptures bear testimony.

(1) The Humanity of Christ Subject to Physical Growth. Without possibility for argument, the Scriptures make clear that Christ in His physical development followed the general pattern of all flesh. He was a normal baby when born, and during the ensuing years grew physically into manhood. This is expressly stated in Luke 2:40, 52, where we learn that he "grew," and "increased in wisdom and stature." Without departing from the natural aspects and characteristics of physical growth, it is entirely possible that the body of Christ, being devoid of sin, developed more rapidly and manifested perfection of body which could not be true in sinful men. In contrast to the picture often drawn of Christ, His body was probably unusually strong and graceful, devoid of the hereditary effects of sin as manifested in the race. The account in the temple of Christ at the age of twelve, while chiefly in reference to His mental powers, indicated that He was developed beyond His years in every way. While the omniscience of deity was present then, as always, it is not clear that His divine attributes are manifested in this instance.

(2) The Human Nature of Christ Subject to Increase in Wisdom. While it will always be an inscrutable mystery how in one Person, Christ can be said at the same time to be ignorant and omniscient, weak and omnipotent, these apparent contradictions are dissolved when the characteristics are traced to their respective natures, human and divine. Without detracting from any of the attributes of the divine nature, it may be said of the human nature that it was capable of growing in knowledge and mental ability. This is expressly claimed in Luke 2:40, 52 where Christ is said to be "filled with wisdom," and to have "increased in wisdom." Christ himself referred to the limitations of wisdom in His human nature (Matt 24:36; Mark 13:32; John 14:10). How can this process of increase in wisdom with its attendant factor of lack of knowledge be defined?

It is clear in the first analysis that the human nature is not omniscient. However wise its own mental powers may have been, unaided by deity it lacked the attribute of omniscience which is a quality only God possesses. The human nature of Christ was undoubtedly the seat of the most brilliant human mind ever found in the world. Whatever lack of knowledge may be found in it is likewise evident in every other human mind apart from revelation. The limitations of humanity must be acknowledged, but not overstressed. It is evident that the ministry of the Holy Spirit to the humanity of Christ supplied knowledge of every fact necessary to duty, to avoid sin, or to do the will of God. The lack of knowledge consisted in some cases in the contrast of theory to experience. Hence, Christ learned obedience by suffering (Heb 5:8), and the nature of trial and temptation was experienced by actual contact (Heb 2:18). In it all, Christ reached a perfection in development through His experiences (Heb 2:10). All of these elements applied only to the

human nature and through the human nature become the properties of the Person of Christ.

III. The Holy Spirit in Relation to the Baptism of Christ

The baptism of Christ by John has been the subject of considerable discussion. All agree that the incident was the induction of Christ into his Messianic ministry proper, although the interpretation of the meaning of baptism in the case of Christ varies. All the Gospels record that Christ was baptized by John and that on that occasion the Holy Spirit descended from heaven in the form of a dove and abode on Christ. What is the meaning of this unique ministry of the Holy Spirit?

1. Not the Beginning of the Holy Spirit's Ministry to Christ.

It has been demonstrated already that Christ was filled with the Holy Spirit from the moment of conception. The coming of the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove must not be interpreted, then, as meaning the beginning of the ministry of the Holy Spirit to Christ.

2. A New Phase of the Ministry of the Holy Spirit.

The filling of the Holy Spirit is ordinarily associated with some outward manifestation, but it is not necessarily so at all times. During the years of preparation, Christ was in relative obscurity, though filled with the Holy Spirit. The descent of the Holy Spirit upon Christ at His baptism does not make any essential change in His relationship, but it does mark the beginning of a new phase of His ministry. From now on, the Holy Spirit will effect the outward signs of Messiahship, the miracles and the prophetic ministry of Christ being its major evidence. As the coming of the Spirit in the form of a dove was visible and outward, so the ministry of the Spirit would be visible and outward from then on. An observer from that moment on could see the full-orbed ministry of the Spirit in the life and work of Christ.

3. A Renewed Declaration of the Unity of the Trinity.

The baptism of Christ was the occasion for a notable illustration of the doctrine of the Trinity. After Christ had been baptized, the Father spoke from heaven, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matt 3:17). The Holy Spirit descended in the form of a dove, and Christ was coming up from the Jordan. No better instance of revelation of the Trinity could be desired. At the same time, however, the occasion was one for declaration of unity. Christ is proclaimed as the Son of God, and the Holy Spirit is declared to be permanently resident in Christ. While Three Persons are revealed, it is clear that there is One God.

IV. The Holy Spirit in Relation to the Prophetic Office of Christ

Christ during His earthly life lived and taught as a prophet. His office was attested by miracles, and His unusual teachings led many to recognize His prophetic gift. In the sphere of limitation which Christ voluntarily assumed in the incarnation, He was dependent on the Holy Spirit for the exercise of His prophetic office. This conclusion is sustained by an examination of Christ's own teachings.

1. The Holy Spirit the Normal Source of the Prophetic Gift.

The work of the Holy Spirit in revelation in the Old Testament has already been considered at length. The New Testament is equally explicit in referring the work of revealing truth to the Holy Spirit. Christ in particular gave extended teaching on the subject. He told His disciples that when they were brought before rulers in judgment for preaching the gospel the Holy Spirit would give to them what they should speak

(Matt 10:20; Mark 13:11; Luke 12:12). Concerning the need of the apostles for spiritual revelation, Christ promised that they would receive the teaching of the Holy Spirit which would enable them to give their prophetic message (John 16:13-14). The epistles frequently allude to the same truth. It is therefore a normal operation of the Holy Spirit to sustain the prophetic gift.

2. Christ Anointed of the Holy Spirit to Preach.

At least two references point to the special work of the Holy Spirit in relation to the prophetic office of Christ. According to Matthew 12:18-21, Christ claimed fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy (Isa 42:1-4) that the Messiah would have the Spirit upon Him in His prophetic work. Even more explicit are the words of Christ in the synagogue at Nazareth where He quoted Isaiah 61:1-2 and said, "This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears" (Luke 4:21). The anointing of the Holy Spirit in preparation for His preaching ministry as prophesied by Isaiah is fulfilled in Christ. While there was resident in the Person of Christ all the attributes of deity, in the limitations of His earthly walk Christ chose to be dependent on the Holy Spirit for the exercise of His prophetic gift. By the Spirit He was "anointed" to preach, and His prophetic office is sustained by the constant ministry of the Holy Spirit. performed by the power of the Spirit is afforded. It may be noted that Luke 4:14, preceding the passage, reveals that Jesus had returned from His temptation "in the power of the Spirit into Galilee." The display of divine power in various forms apparently resulted from the work of the Holy Spirit on His behalf.

3. Did Christ Perform Miracles in His Own Power?

From the Scriptures considered it is evident that at least some miracles of Christ were performed by the power of the Holy Spirit. The question is often raised whether some of the miracles of Christ were performed in the power of His divine nature. The incarnation and the self-limitation which this involved did not strip Christ of a single attribute; it only denied their independent use where this would conflict with His purpose to live among men as a man. Even in the limitations of the flesh, before the cross, Christ possessed omnipotence. In effecting miracles was the power that of the Second Person or that of the Third Person? The same question could be raised in some of the other works of Christ, such as His work as Prophet.

It must be admitted that the problem is beyond final solution. However, there are some clear instances in Scripture which would seem to point to a conclusion that the power of the Second Person was not entirely inoperative and could be used at will. It would seem that Christ chose to perform miracles in the power of the Spirit rather than that He had no alternative. Frequently in reference to the miracles of Christ the word power ($\delta\upsilon\ \nu\alpha\mu\iota\varsigma$) is used (Mark 5:30; Luke 5:17; 6:19; 8:46). The power in point is often said to have proceeded from Christ. In connection with the healing of the woman who touched Christ in the throng, Christ perceived that power "had gone out of him" (Mark 5:30; Luke 8:46). Again in Luke 5:17, the power to perform healing is referred to Christ Himself: "The power of the Lord was present to heal them." According to Luke 6:19, power went out from Christ in performing the miracles of healing. From the language of these passages, a conclusion might be reached that Christ acted in His own power. The final solution to the problem cannot be reached except to state that Christ performed His miracles in the power of the Spirit, and that He could if He wished and probably did exercise His own power as well. In the unity of will and action of the Trinity, the cooperation of the Second and Third Person in doing mighty works should be expected.

VI. The Holy Spirit in Relation to the Sufferings of Christ

The sufferings of Christ are an inexhaustible theme for meditation and study. From them flow many precious truths and foundational doctrines. The relation of the Holy Spirit to these is seldom mentioned, though the Holy Spirit admittedly has an important ministry to Christians in their times of sufferings. From all we know of the Holy Spirit and His relation to Christ, it would seem most natural that Christ should be sustained by Him in His sufferings. As revealed in the Scripture, though there are few passages, it is clear that the Holy Spirit did have this ministry.

1. The Relation of the Holy Spirit to the Sufferings of Christ in Life.

Fulfilling the prophecy of Isaiah, Christ on earth was "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief" (Isa 53:3). It was the ministry of the Holy Spirit to sustain and strengthen Him. In connection with the temptation of Christ, we note that Mark records that He was driven by the Spirit into the wilderness: "And immediately the spirit driveth him into the wilderness" (Mark 1:12). While in the wilderness, angels were His ministers, but immediately after this trial, Luke records that Christ "returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee" (Luke 4:14). While there are no direct statements, it would be reasonable to assume that the Holy Spirit ministered to Him during this time of suffering and trial.

A twofold inference aids in establishing this fact. First, from the unity of the Trinity, it must be concluded that their relationship involves mutual sustenance. While this concept is hardly necessary when all Three Persons are free to exercise omnipotence, when the Second Person denies Himself the use of some of His attributes for a time, it would be proper for the other Persons to minister to Him.

A second inference may be drawn from the abundant ministry of the Comforter to Christians while they are in this world. The Holy Spirit is ever ready to strengthen and comfort the saint in distress (John 14:26; 15:26), and teach them the truth of God.

It may be concluded that the Holy Spirit continually ministered to Christ. As Owen writes: "By him he was directed, strengthened, and comforted in his whole course, in all his temptations, troubles, and sufferings from first to last; for there was a confluence of them upon him in his whole way and work; a great part of his humiliation for our sakes consisting in these things. This God promised to him, and this he expected, Isa 1.7, 8, xlii.4, 6, xlix.5, 8."¹¹

2. The Relation of the Holy Spirit to the Sufferings of Christ in Death.

According to Hebrews 9:14, Christ offered Himself to God in death by the Holy Spirit: "How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" There has been opposition, of course, to this interpretation, Westcott, for instance, arguing that the absence of the article before Πνεύματος indicates that the reference is to Christ's Spirit.¹² Others have taken the view referring it to the Holy Spirit. H. C. G. Moule, for instance, disagrees with Westcott,¹³ and George Smeaton writes plainly, "The expression: 'the eternal Spirit,' can only mean the Holy Spirit according to the usual acceptance of the term,-not the divine nature of Christ, as too many expositors have understood it."¹⁴ While in the last analysis the Greek would probably admit either interpretation, the matter must be settled on theological grounds. The question is whether Christ offered up His whole Person as a sacrifice, or whether merely the human nature was the sacrifice. As Smeaton puts it: "To explain the text as if it described the divine nature as priest and the human nature as the sacrifice, is inadmissible. The WHOLE PERSON is priest and victim; for all done by either nature belongs to the Person: HE offered HIMSELF, says the apostle."¹⁵

If the reference to the Spirit is a reference to the Holy Spirit, in what sense did Christ offer himself to God through the Holy Spirit? The context does not give us any specific light on the subject, but the general content of Scripture points to the inclusion of all the ministry of the Holy Spirit to Christ as being antecedent to His act in dying. There is implication that the whole process of the incarnation leading to the cross was related to the work of the Holy Spirit. As Christ was sustained in life, so also in death the Holy Spirit sustained Christ. In the difficult hours of Gethsemane and all the decisive moments leading to the cross, the Holy Spirit faithfully ministered to Christ.

While on the cross, Christ, in fulfillment of Psalm 22:1, cried, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Matt 27:46). It is possible that there was a cessation of the Spirit's ministry during this period without altering the fact that Christ offered Himself by the Spirit to God. While the Holy Spirit could succor Christ in making His decision and in fulfilling the eternal purpose of God in taking the path which led to the cross, only Christ could bear the load of sin. In this the Holy Spirit could not avail.

The work of the Holy Spirit in relation to the sufferings of Christ on the cross consisted, then, in sustaining the human nature in its love of God, in submission to the will of God and obedience to His commands, and in encouraging and strengthening Christ in the path of duty which led to the cross. In it all the ministry was to the human nature, and through it to the Person of Christ. The inquiring mind must ever confess that the truth is infinite and beyond our complete comprehension.

VII. The Holy Spirit in Relation to the Resurrection and Glorification of Christ

The Holy Spirit who had sustained Christ throughout the period of His humiliation might be expected to have part also in His glorification. The Scriptures reveal that such is the case. Particularly in the act of resurrection, the Holy Spirit undertook for Christ.

1. The Holy Spirit in Relation to the Resurrection of Christ.

The Scriptures frequently refer the resurrection of Christ to God without distinction as to Persons. In Acts 2:24, for instance, Peter in reference to Christ said, "Whom God hath raised up." Christ before His death had revealed His own power in resurrection. To Martha He had said, "I am the resurrection, and the life" (John 11:25). In John 10:17-18 Christ announced: "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again." In like manner the Father is revealed to have raised Christ from the dead (Eph 1:17, 20).

In cooperation with the Father and the Son, the Holy Spirit undertook His part in the resurrection of Christ. According to Romans 8:11, the Holy Spirit acted in the resurrection of Christ even as He acts in the spiritual resurrection of those who believe: "But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you." The passage assigns to the Holy Spirit a specific agency in connection with the resurrection.

Other passages may sustain this, though these are less clear. According to 1 Peter 3:18, Christ was "quickened by the Spirit." It is probable that this has reference also to the Holy Spirit rather than Christ's human spirit. Less clear is Romans 1:4, which probably refers to the human spirit of Christ.

The exact nature of the work of the Holy Spirit in the resurrection of Christ is not revealed. Owen feels it included rendering the dead body of Christ holy and free from all natural process of corruption during the time it was in the tomb.¹⁶ While this seems in harmony with the predictions of Psalm 16:10 that His body would not see corruption, this idea must be left in the realm of opinion. More sure is the fact that the resurrection of Christ involved the production of a spiritual body, embodying the characteristics of immateriality and spirituality along with its physical aspects. The realm of creation and resurrection is clearly in the proper office of the Holy Spirit, and the reunion of the soul and body of Christ seems to fit properly into the sphere of ministry of the Spirit. In any event, the act of resurrection displays the power and glory of God as few other events.

2. The Holy Spirit in Relation to the Glorification of Christ.

From the fact that the Holy Spirit had part in the resurrection of Christ it may be assumed that He also had part in the glorification of Christ. On this subject, however, the Scriptures are silent. As Kuyper says, "The work of the Holy Spirit in the exaltation of Christ is not so easily defined. The Scripture never speaks of it in connection with His ascension, His sitting at the right hand of the Father, nor with the Lord's second coming."¹⁷ From the nature of the Holy Spirit we may assume that He would be related to the blessed estate of our Savior. From His work in us, we would assume a most intimate relation between the glorified Savior and the indwelling Spirit. Of the Spirit we learn not only of His sufferings and death, but we are also taught the power of the resurrection of Christ and the riches of the glory of His grace. Even as the Holy Spirit was infinitely faithful in every ministry to Christ, so in the experience of the Christian whether in the flesh or in glory the ministrations of the Spirit are infinitely wonderful.

Dallas, Texas

(To be continued in the April-June Number, 1941)

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The difference between Christian theologians and Christian laymen is only a difference in degree; one class blends itself with the other; there are in Christianity no exoteric and esoteric systems. Every reflecting laymen acquires at the present day some theological education. The commentaries on the Bible, the systematic instruction in the Catechism, the popular histories of the church constitute the beginning of his theological course. Unless he have some insight into the faith which he adopts, then is he blind in his faith.-Bibliotheca Sacra, February, 1844.

1 George Park Fisher, History of Christian Doctrine, p. 56.

3 A Discourse Concerning the Holy Spirit, pp. 91-92.

4 A System of Christian Doctrine, Vol. III, p. 341.

5 Dogmatic Theology, Vol. II, p. 296.

6 Op. cit., p. 297.

7 Letter 164, quoted by Shedd, Loc. cit.

8 Op. cit., p. 95.

9 Cf. Charles Hodge, Systematic Theology, Vol. II, pp. 192-203.

10 Op. cit., p. 391.

11 Op. cit., p. 99.

12 The Epistle to the Hebrews, pp. 263-264.

13 Veni Creator, p. 32.

14 The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit, p. 132.

15 Op. cit., pp. 132-133.

16 Op. cit., pp. 102-103.

17 The Work of the Holy Spirit, p. 110.

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