

DAILY DOSE OF DOCTRINE

November 5 - 9, 2007



November 5, 2007 **The Second Person –
the Son**

“For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”¹

‘Only-begotten’², is a difficult concept. A human father ‘generates’ offspring and may ‘beget’ only one. But God has produced many creatures, has he not? And because generating a child is an event, does this imply that the Son had a ‘beginning’? In fact, ‘only’ or ‘uniquely’ begotten may point to the fact that ‘begetting’ is rather different from our experience.

The theologians suggest that, instead of ‘generating’ being a one-time event, it is a description of the eternal reality of the Trinity. Unlike our children who are pro-created, born, grow and separate from us, the Father and Son dwell in an eternal reality of generation in which the Son is always proceeding from the Father and dwells in an unending bond of love with him. The eternal generation of the Son “is a timeless act, the act of an eternal present, an act always continuing and yet ever completed.”³

The painful separation of a parent-child relationship (after child-birth or through death, distance or disagreement) is a fallen, earthly thing. It hurts because it is counter to our being ‘in the image of God’. It is not the way of the Father and the Son and it will not be so for us in heaven! In eternity, these broken relationships will be gloriously healed!

¹ John 3:16 (NIV – alternate reading)

² Greek: ‘monogeneis’ See John 1:14, 18; 3:16, 18

³ L. Berkhof, Systematic Theology, p. 93 He goes on to give this definition: “It is the eternal and necessary act of the first person of the Trinity, whereby He, within the divine Being, is the ground of the second personal subsistence like His own, and puts this second person in possession of the whole divine essence, without any division, alienation or change.” p. 94

November 6, 2007 **The ‘Blasphemy’ of
‘Son’-ship**

"All things have been committed to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him."¹

While Jesus taught his disciples to speak of God and to address him as ‘our Father’, he himself spoke of him and addressed him simply as ‘Father’ or ‘my Father’. This greatly annoyed the Jewish religious leaders who rightly discerned that it constituted a claim to be ‘equal’ with God and was therefore blasphemous.²

Offence today regarding ‘The Son’ has more to do with sensitivity to gender issues. If God is beyond gender, why not substitute ‘child’ to avoid offence?

Besides being a ‘name’ revealed in Scripture³, ‘Son’ points to status. Most ancient and many present day cultures prize boys above girls. Communicating to a sinful, sexist world, the Bible declares the equality of the First and Second persons of the Trinity.

The Bible also boldly proclaims something similar for us: *“You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”*⁴ If Paul had written ‘sons and daughters’ or even ‘children’, his readers might have construed that to mean there could be first and second class believers. The fact that both male and female Christians are ‘sons’ declares that in the Kingdom of God, creation equality is restored. All of us are, once again, ‘first-class’ children of God in Christ.

¹ Matt. 11:27 (TNIV)

² John 5:18

³ See October 24th for discussion of this.

⁴ Galatians 3:26-28

November 7, 2007

The Son's Specific Work

"...his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe. The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven."¹

If the Father is the 'initiator' of Creation, the Son is its 'mediating' cause'. Like an architect and contractor², they work hand in glove, with the Son creating and maintaining all things.³

This 'mediating' role also applies to the work of redemption. In the counsels of the triune God before the foundation of the world, the Son took it upon himself to execute the plan of redemption. Leaving the security of heaven, he became one of us, taking on the form of a servant, to reveal God's reality to us by his teaching and actions⁴. In particular he gave his life for our sins, paying the debt that we could not pay so that we might be forgiven and have the opportunity to be reconciled to God once again.⁵

And that mediating role continues. We are encouraged to "*approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need*" because we have a high priestly mediator who is able to empathize with our struggles and who intervenes for us at the throne of God when we pray in his name.⁶

¹ Hebrews 1:2-3

² Some scholars argue that the term 'carpenter' used of Joseph and Jesus in Matt. 13:55 and Mark 6:3 should actually read 'contractor' or 'builder'!

³ See also John 1:3, 10; 1 Cor. 8:6

⁴ Philippians 2:6-11

⁵ Ephesians 1:3-14

⁶ Hebrews 4:14-16; John 16:23-24

November 8, 2007 **The Third Person –
the Holy Spirit**

*“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.
Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was
over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was
hovering over the waters.”¹*

The Hebrew term ‘ruach’ and the Greek work “pneuma” are both derived from words that mean ‘to breathe’. He is the life-giving breath of God who, as the Nicene Creed says “proceeds from the Father and the Son”.

As the ‘uniquely-begotten’ Son proceeds from the Father in ‘eternal generation’, the Spirit proceeds from both the Father *and* the Son² in eternal ‘spiration’. We might think of it as the eternal ‘breathing out’ of God.³

While the name ‘Holy Spirit’ does not raise any gender issues, many of us struggle to think of the Spirit as a ‘person’. Images of ‘wind’, ‘breath’ or ‘power’ tend to conjure up images of energy rather than ‘personhood’.

As previously noted⁴, the Bible speaks of the Spirit in personal terms. The Spirit is entirely divine and a personal being, “who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified”⁵.

¹ Genesis 1:1-2 (TNIV)

² John 14:26; 15:26; 16:13-15

³ L. Berkhof, Systematic Theology, p. 97: “*that eternal and necessary act of the first and second persons of the Trinity whereby they, within the divine Being, become the ground of the personal subsistence of the Holy Spirit, and put the third person in possession of the whole divine essence, without any division, alienation or change.*”

⁴ See article for October 26

⁵ Nicene Creed

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you and you will be my witnesses..."¹

In general, it might be said that it is the special task of the Spirit to bring things about by acting immediately in the world or within or upon a person.

The Spirit was present at Creation, generating life and so putting the 'finishing touches' on God's works.² The in-breathing of the Spirit also revives life at God's command.³ In short, wherever we see God at work in the created universe or directing the course of history, we see the Holy Spirit at work.

In the work of redemption, the Spirit has a number of roles, all to do with the active working of God's plan.

It was the Holy Spirit who 'overshadowed' Mary to bring about the virgin birth and prepare a body for Christ.⁴ The Spirit anointed Christ at his baptism that he might minister with the fullness of God's power and gifts.⁵ The Spirit inspired Scripture⁶ and so helps us to understand the nature and purposes of God. The Spirit dwells within believers, instilling new birth and the life of Christ, bring about transformation and empowering for service.⁷ The Spirit gives spiritual gifts and various roles to believers so that the Kingdom of God may be built up.⁸ And the Spirit does all these things to bring glory to our Lord Jesus Christ.⁹

¹ Acts 1:8 (TNIV)

² Genesis 1:2; 2:7

³ Ezekiel 37:5-6

⁴ Luke 1:35 and Hebrews 10:5-7

⁵ Luke 3:22 and John 3:34

⁶ John 16:13; 2 Tim. 3:16

⁷ John 3:5-8; Galatians 5:13-28; Acts 2

⁸ Ephesians 4; 1 Corinthians 12-14; Romans 12

⁹ John 16:14 (Note – a fuller discussion of the work of the Spirit will take place in future articles after Easter.)