

The Truth of All Truths

By C. Baxter Kruger, Ph.D.

Director of Perichoresis, Inc.

In Jesus Christ, the life of the Triune God is united with the human race and with all creation.

To speak the name of Jesus Christ, biblically and in the tradition of the apostles is to say “Triune God,” and it is to say “human race” and it is to say “creation,” and it is to say “the Triune God, the human race and creation are not separated, but bound together in union.” The very existence of Jesus as the incarnate Son of the Father proclaims this union as reality.

In the person of Jesus Christ, the life of the triune God is united with the human race and with all creation. In him, humanity has been adopted, and creation has been lifted up into the trinitarian life of God. This Christological affirmation is the gospel to be proclaimed, and it is the starting point of proper Christian thought—the non-negotiable truth to be obeyed at all costs.

When we hear the name of Jesus today, we instinctively think of an individual man who lived, died on a cross, and rose again. These things are, of course, true. Jesus is a real man. He did live and die and rise again and ascend to the Father. Our difficulty is not here, but in the fact that we do not see any real connection between Jesus and ourselves and what happened to him in his life, death and resurrection. To our minds, Jesus’ death was an act of God for us, but it did not involve us. His death and resurrection were things that happened to him, not to us. They were intended for our benefit, but we were spectators and in no sense were we connected to him in his death and resurrection—until we do something to bring Jesus into our lives today.

Such a Jesus makes perfect sense to us in our individualistic mindset, but it betrays the Jesus of the apostles and of the early church. The apostolic Jesus is the Father’s eternal Son, and the One anointed in the Spirit, and he is the One in and through and by whom all things were created and are constantly sustained. These three fundamental truths about Jesus Christ have not been held together. When they are seen together and taken seriously, we suddenly find ourselves standing before a Jesus who is far larger than we have dared to dream. To speak of this Jesus is to

speak of an individual person, to be sure, but this person is the Father's Son, and this person is the One in and through whom all things exist, live and move and have their being. To confess that this divine Son became human is not only to say something about him; it is necessarily to say something about the being of God, and about all creation, and about their relationship together. In this incarnate Son, the life of the triune God and of creation are not separated, but bound together. He is himself the point of relationship.

Behind this stunning reality stands the fact that Jesus Christ is the eternal, beloved Son of the Father, who shares all things with Him in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. As the early church confessed, this relationship between Father, Son and Spirit is not new, not a mere form that the hidden God assumed 2000 years ago; it is the way God is and always has been. As St. Athanasius contended, there was never a time when the Father was without His Son and Spirit, existing alone as an abstract, non-relational deity. The relationship of the Father, Son and Spirit is eternal and precedes the creation of all things.

There is no dimension of divine being deeper than or beyond the Trinitarian relationship. Every act of God, therefore, is a trinitarian act, arising out of and involving the relationship of the Father, Son and Spirit. All things, therefore, as the apostles testify, have their origin and existence not simply through God, but in and through and by the Father's Son. For the Father never acts behind the back of or in isolation from His Son and Spirit. Not one thing, as John insists, was created or continues to exist apart from the Father's Son. It is of critical importance to recognize that confessing the eternal Trinity and the deity of Jesus Christ means that prior to the incarnation, there is a connection between the Father's Son and all creation, including the human race. For the Triune God is the Creator and the Father's Son is the One in and through and by whom all things were created and are sustained.

Note carefully these words from John Calvin's Commentary on the Gospel of John, as he comments on JN 1:4 and the phrase, "in him was life."

Hitherto he has taught us, that by the Speech of God all things were created. He now attributes to him, in the same manner, the preservation of those things which had been created; as if he had said, that in the creation of the world there was not merely displayed a sudden exercise of his power, which soon passed away, but that it is manifested in the steady and regular order of nature, as he is said to uphold all things by the word or will of his power, (Heb. 1:3). This life may be extended either to inanimate creatures, (which live after their own manner, though they are devoid

of feeling,) or may be explained in reference to living creatures alone. It is of little consequence which you choose; for the simple meaning is, that the Speech of God was not only the source of life to all the creatures, so that those which were not began to be, but that his life-giving power causes them to remain in their condition; for were it not that his continued inspiration gives vigour to the world, every thing that lives would immediately decay, or be reduced to nothing. In a word, what Paul ascribes to God, that in him we are, and move, and live, (Acts 17:28,) John declares to be accomplished by the gracious agency of the Speech; so that it is God who gives us life, but it is by the eternal Speech.”[i][1]

Following the apostles, Calvin is at pains to point out that the existence and the continued existence of all things are completely dependent upon the Son of God. What then are we to make of the fact that it was this Son who became human? Did this Son break his relationship with his Father and the Spirit when he became a human being? Did he dissolve his relationship with the human race and all creation in his incarnation? What does the incarnation of this Son mean, except that the connection that he has with all creation is tightened and made all the more real and abiding? If he is not the Father’s eternal Son, in and through and by whom all things were created and are sustained, it would be sensible to see him as a mere individual, and to see ourselves disconnected from him and what happened to him. But given that he is this Son, given that his relationship with his Father is unbroken, and given that he upholds creation, then what happens to him has dramatic implications for the whole universe, from the being of God itself to every atom and the entire human race. If we were created in and through and by this Son; if we live and move and have our being in this Son, then, for good or ill, what happens to him in his incarnate life, death and resurrection necessarily involves us. How could it be otherwise? How could the death and resurrection of this Son incarnate be a single hair less momentous than the event of creation. For, as the apostles testify, this Son’s death was not the death of an individual man, but the death of the One in whom all things were created and are held together. What is the meaning of this Son’s life, death, resurrection and ascension, if not that in him we were crucified, dead and buried, and we were raised again to new life and exalted to the Father’s embrace? How could the human race and creation be excluded from what happened to this Son in his incarnate life and death and resurrection? How could we possibly be mere spectators to the incarnate journey of this Son? How could we conceive of him as simply an individual man? When this Son died, something necessarily happened to creation, and something necessarily happened to the human race. When this Son died, we died with him; the old humanity was crucified, put to death. In this Son’s resurrection, the human race was brought back into life, recreated in union with his Father. In this Son’s ascension, we were exalted to the Father’s embrace, included in his life with his Father and Spirit.

To speak the name of Jesus Christ, therefore, is to speak of the Father’s eternal Son, who shares being and life with the Father in the Holy Spirit, and it is to speak of the

One in and through and by and for whom all things were created and are sustained, and it is to speak of the One who became incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary, and died, rose again and ascended to the right hand of the Father. How could we confess this Son and fail to see that the human race and all creation are necessarily bound up in what became of him? To speak the name of Jesus Christ is not to speak of a mere individual, whose existence is isolated from the life of the Father or of creation. To speak his name is to speak of the Father's Son, and it is to speak of the One in and through and by whom all things were created and are sustained, and it is to speak of the One who became human, and it is to speak of the One who, in becoming human, is himself the joining of the life of the Triune God with the human race and all creation. The very existence of Jesus Christ proclaims, "The Triune God, the human race, and the whole creation are not separated, but bound together in union." Failure here is failure to affirm the full deity and full humanity of Jesus Christ. It is failure to believe that the One who became incarnate is the Father's eternal Son in and through and by whom all things were created and are upheld.

Jesus Christ is the One in whom the life of God and the existence of creation are together. He is the gospel of the Triune God. His existence is good news, and his existence carries profound implications for our interpretation of the cosmos and of the human race. Is Jesus an accident? Is this union between the Triune God, the human race and creation in Jesus Christ plan "B," quickly implemented after the failure of plan "A" in Adam? Or is Jesus Christ plan "A," the eternal foreword to all divine activity? What does it mean to speak of Jesus Christ as the eternal Word of God, if not that Jesus is the eternal point? What does it mean to speak of him as the Alpha and the Omega if not that he is—in his union with his Father and Spirit, and with us and with creation—the truth preceding creation itself? Why, and on what grounds would we look beyond Jesus Christ—in his three-fold union—to find another, higher, deeper or secret plan of God? Is this union a divine afterthought?

As the fully divine Son incarnate, Jesus Christ is the One in whom the Triune God, the human race and creation are not separated, but bound together in relationship. And as this union is not an afterthought, but the eternal foreword, Jesus Christ stands before us as the truth of all truths. He is at once the gospel itself and the *raison d'être* of the cosmos, both the one constant in the universe and its integration point, and he is the divine hermeneutic, the true light shining from eternity. In him we are confronted with divine revelation, with the true law, the rule of faithful thinking about God, humanity and creation, beyond which there is only the sophisticated silence of human projection.

What happened in this Son, Jesus Christ, involves the being of God and the whole universe, for in him they meet and are together. Immanuel is not a theory. It is the truth, the light of life, the non-negotiable point of departure for the Christian community. The Christian church is summoned to be the sphere within creation where this Son is known, embraced and taken with profound seriousness. The church is called to be the community in which the light of Jesus Christ is allowed to shine, where the truth of all truths is allowed to question every assumption, and the fact that in him the Triune God, the human race and creation are not separated, but bound together is permitted to restructure the basic vision of the human mind and heart. The Christian church is called to proceed in earnest faith and joy, obediently bringing every thought captive to Christ. It is the church's great privilege and calling to think through the implications of the stunning reality established in Jesus Christ for every sphere and discipline of human thought, from theology proper to ecology and international politics, from sin and human brokenness to economics, education and healing. No leaf is to be left unturned until the staggering implications of Jesus Christ's existence are understood and received in all joy. In this calling the Christian church is the witness to the human race and to the cosmos of Jesus Christ, the Father's Son, the Anointed One, the rhyme and reason and the Lord and life of all creation, until the knowledge of the Lord covers the earth as the waters cover the sea.

Key Scriptural Passages

Christ as Light of the World

JN 8:12 Col 2:8-10 Eph 1:3-5 2Tim 1:8-9 Eph 3:11

Father-Son Relationship

Mt 17: 5 Mt 11:27 Jn 1:1-3; 18 Jn 4:34

Jn 5:21-22, 30 Jn 8:28-29 Jn 10:30, 38 Jn 14:11-11 Jn 14:20-30

Jn 12:44 Jn 16:15-17 Jn 17:5, 10-11, 21

Holy Spirit

Mt 3:15-17 Jn 16:5-15 Jn 14:16-20 Rom 5:1-5 Rom 8:1-16

Eph 3:14-21 GAL 4:1-6

Christ's Union with Us

Jn 1:1-3 Heb 1:1-3 Col 1:16-20 Col 2:9-15 ICor 8:1-6

Jn 14:20 2Cor 5:14-21 Eph 2:1-6 1Pet 1:3 Col 3:1-4

Acts 17:28

Finished Work of Christ

Eph 1:3-14 2Cor 5:14-21 Jn 17:4 Heb 10:11-14

Affirmations

- Jesus is the Father's Son.
- Jesus is the One Anointed in the Spirit.
- The relationship of the Father, Son and Spirit is not new, but eternal.
- God is eternally Triune.
- The Creator is the Father, Son and Spirit.
- All things were created and are sustained in, through and by the Son.
- The Incarnation of the Son does not dissolve his relationships with the Father and the Spirit or his relationships with the human race and all creation.
- In this Son's incarnate life, death, resurrection and ascension, Jesus Christ reconciled all things and lifted up the human race to the Father's embrace in the Spirit.
- In Jesus, the life of the Triune God, the human race, and creation are not separated, but bound together in union.
- This union in the incarnate Son is not plan "B." It is the eternal plan of the Triune God, predating creation and the fall of Adam.

- Therefore, Jesus Christ, in his three-fold union is the truth of all truths, the light of the cosmos, the divine hermeneutic.
- The church is called to take Jesus Christ seriously, rethinking everything in the light of his identity as the eternal Son incarnate in whom the Trinity, humanity and creation are not separated, but bound together in union.

Tasks

- To establish the biblical, historical and theological basis for this vision of Jesus Christ.
- To articulate what it means to think as a Christian person in faithfulness to Jesus Christ.
- To establish and apply a thoroughly Trinitarian and Christological hermeneutic for the Old and New Testaments.
- To offer a critique of the Western/Augustinian model of theological thought.
- To set forward a clear and beautiful statement of the Gospel of the Triune God.
- To work out the implications of the reality established in Jesus Christ for all parts of Christian theology, from the doctrine of God to reconciliation, from evil, sin and judgment to the church, heaven and hell.
- To overcome the latent sacred/secular split in Western culture and affirm the dignity of our humanity in Christ.
- To develop a Christological vision of human history.

- To bring our Christ-centered, Trinitarian vision to bear upon the disciplines of human thought, from science and economics to law and education, from politics and ecology to medicine and psychology.

- To affirm and establish religious, economic and political, ecological, psychological and medical structures that serve the living expression of the trinitarian life of God in our human existence.

[1] John Calvin, *Commentary on the Gospel According to John*, translated by William Pringle (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House), 1:4).