

Jesus' Revelation of His Father: A Narrative-Conceptual Study of the Trinity with Special Reference to Karl Barth

Abstract

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This thesis seeks to relate doctrinal conceptualisation of the Trinity closely to the portrayal of Jesus' relationships with his Father and the Spirit in the gospel narratives, with the latter informing the former. Barth's concept of revelation, involving the Trinity, is presented and critiqued as a 'linear' concept. An alternative non-linear concept of revelation, based on Matt 11:25-30 and emphasizing Jesus' communion with his Father through the Spirit as the basis of revelation, is put forward and used as an interpretative clue to the narratives of Jesus' words and actions. The interpretations of selected narratives from Matthew witness to Jesus' revelation of his Father and his Lordship in words and actions. These interpretations, partly influenced by Barth, emphasise that (i) Jesus fulfils his own teaching on unconditional love and (ii) Jesus' Lordship is revealed acutely and exercised controversially in his radical fulfilment of this unconditional love for the people, which transcends Jewish ritual and legalistic barriers. The certainty and boldness in Jesus' radical teaching and its fulfilment also witness to his true humanity expressed in his communion with and trust in his Father, which Barth perhaps did not emphasize. Jesus' unity with his Father, which is characterised by knowledge, obedience, trust and love, is paradoxically and climactically revealed in his abandonment by his Father on the cross.

Jesus' Lordship raises the question of his relationship with the Spirit. A careful study of this relationship in Matthew and Luke distinguishes Jesus' relationship with the Spirit from his disciples' relationship with the Spirit, with serious implications for J. G. Dunn's Spirit Christology. Informed by the narrative study and prompted by Barth's intuitive insight, a conceptualised solution to the problem of the compatibility between Logos Christology and Spirit Christology is put forward. This conceptualised solution raises the question of Jesus' unity with his Father in their relationships with the Spirit, whose answer requires both *filioque* and *per filium* in the context of Jesus' ministry.

By exploiting some useful aspects of Lampe's understanding of the Spirit and taking note of Tillich's emphasis on spirit as spiritual presence, the meaning of communion is further explored and the non-linear concept of revelation is refined by employing three senses of 'spirit'. The narrative studies witness to Jesus' Lordship, his unity with his Father and his relationship with the Spirit. These three aspects are brought together conceptually in the refined / new non-linear concept of revelation developed in this thesis, with some implications for a trinitarian approach to Christology which upholds Jesus' divinity and emphasises his perfect humanity (involving perfect communion and obedience). Jesus' unity with his Father and his unity with the Spirit are experienced in his unique life and understood as the mystery of the Trinity.

The Chinese phrase, 精神 / 'Jin Sun', which plays a similar role to *rûah* in Hebrew in connecting inner nature and outward action, might have influenced the author's understanding of Jesus' communion with, and thereby his revelation of, his Father through the Spirit.