

"Who for us men and our salvation, came down from heaven, and was made flesh from the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary, and was made man and crucified for us under Pontius Pilate. He suffered and was buried, and the third day he rose again according to the Scriptures and ascended into heaven, and sits on the right hand of God the Father. And he shall come again in glory to judge both the living and the dead; his kingdom shall have no end."

Here is the summary of this chapter taken from the Foreword.

If it was not God himself incarnate who suffered for us on the cross in making atonement, then the sacrifice of Christ has no ultimate and final validity, and we are still in our sins. If Jesus Christ and God are not of one and the same being, then we really do not know God, for he is some hidden inscrutable Deity behind the back of Jesus, of whom we can only be terrified – and then the final judgment of the world will be a judgment apart from and without respect to Jesus Christ and his forgiving love and atoning sacrifice. Cut the bond in being between Jesus Christ and God, and the Gospel message becomes an empty mockery. But if Jesus Christ is of one and the same being with God, then all that Jesus said and did on our behalf, has staggering significance for us and the whole creation. But in this case it is essential to realise that Jesus Christ the Son of God is also man, of one and the same being and nature as we are. If he is not really man, then the great bridge which God has thrown across the gulf between himself and us, has no foundation on our side of that gulf. Jesus Christ, to be Mediator in the proper sense, must be wholly and fully man as well as God. Hence the Creed stresses the stark reality and actuality of his humanity: it was for our sakes that God became man, for us and for our salvation, so that it is from a soteriological perspective that we must seek to understand the human agency and life of Jesus Christ. He came to take our place, in all our human, earthly life and activity, in order that we may have his place as God's beloved children, in all our human and earthly life and activity, sharing with Jesus in the communion of God's own life and love as Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

The Incarnation

We have seen from chapter 2 that:

- God really became man
- It was an act of God in himself coming to us as man. So it became a vicarious way for us.
- human agency was undiminished
- it was as "whole man" that the Son of God came to redeem
- came in the form of a servant - "being united with what is so degraded"
- ideas of "servant" and "priest" go together

Chapter 5 - Soteriology

God Himself suffers on the cross.

God unknowable [inscrutable] and hidden if He is found to be back behind Jesus.

Cut the bond between Jesus and God and the Gospel is evacuated of meaning. If Jesus Christ is one and the same being as God then it is staggeringly wonderful.

Need to realise that Jesus Christ is fully God and man

If not fully human then there is no bridge connecting us and God from our side.

Need to study the human agency of the life of Jesus Christ

We must share and have his place as our elder Brother.

The Atonement: seen from the vantage point of the Incarnate Word of God

- The Incarnation falls within the being and life of God. There is something 'new' here, even for God
- Atoning mediation falls within his own being and life. It does not take place outside of Christ.
- The Head of Creation acted in two ways simultaneously: he acted instead [ἀντὶ] of all and also on behalf of [ὑπερ πάντων] all.
- The Saviour Christ embodies the act and fact of salvation. This act is both personal and ontological.
- That it was soteriological implies that it was of the ὁμόουσιον.

[1] The event of the atonement was worked out in the λόγος itself. It was not done from outside [*ad extra*] upon man, but it was done as an act of God become man, in our stead and upon our behalf, from within [*ad intra*].

- Moral relations have to do with the gap between what we are and what we ought to be. It is this gap that needs to be healed. But it needs to be healed 'apart from the law' [Romans 3.21]. What God does is that He re-grounds the whole moral order in God Himself. [The western transactional accounts of the Lord's death were strange to the ears of the Greek patristic theology.]

[2] Realist approach to the fact.

- In Jesus Christ, God the Son has united himself with us in actual existence. And so the atonement takes place within the incarnate life and being of the Mediator.
- Nicene teaching, echoing Paul, is that the God in Christ has substituted himself for us unmaking our sin and death has won so that we may partake of his righteousness [Romans 8.3].
- "If sinlessness had not been seen in the nature which had sinned, how could sin have been condemned in the flesh, when that flesh had no capacity for action, and the Godhead knew not sin" Athanasius
- 'Only what was taken up from us into himself is saved'. Origen had said this and it was taken up by Athanasius and the Cappadocian fathers. "the un-assumed is the unhealed; but what is united to God is saved".
- The redemption of the human mind for it was in the inner man - his rational human soul - that man had fallen and was enslaved to sin, not just in his body.
 - healing and renewal of the human mind must include the saving effect of God's work through the mediation of Christ. Therefore the teaching of Jesus handed down in the Gospels is an essential ingredient of his saving work.
 - redemption of man's estranged and rebellious mind means atoning reconciliation includes the whole of our Lord's incarnate life, from his cradle to his grave.

[3] Representation and substitution

The sense of awe that the multifaceted use of words brings when applied to the atonement. Such words as ransom, sacrifice, reconciliation, propitiation, expiation express an overlapping description of what has taken place.

[4] ἀντάλλαγμα [λύτρον] there is a wonderful 'sacrificial exchange'.

Christ is both a victim and Priest. He is the offerer and the Offering. There was a wonderful exchange embedded in the Incarnation which leads to the translation of man from one state of being into another state brought about through Christ.

καταλλαγμή - the reconciliation is in fact an 'atoning exchange'. It is an exchange of

- the holy for the wicked
- the just for the unjust

- incorruptible for the corrupted
- immortal for the mortal

The idea of an atoning exchange is the inner hinge upon which rests the whole doctrine of the incarnation redemption through the descent [κατάβασις] and ascent [ἀνάβασις], the death, resurrection and exaltation of the Son of God.

The whole relationship between Christ and ourselves can be listed in this way:

- his obedience and our disobedience
- his holiness and our sin
- his life and our death
- his strengthened our weakness
- his grace and our poverty
- his light and our darkness
- his wisdom and our ignorance
- his joy and our misery
- his peace and our lack of peace and anxiety
- his immortality and our mortality

All this is worked out in the saving economy of the incarnation. It is here that there is accomplished such a saving interchange.

Implications of this miraculous atoning exchange

[1] The gifts are quite unlimited and the benefits are inexhaustible; because what is offered is a life which not only exceeds what is called for, but has a value which outweighs the universe. It has a universal range but it is not universalism [Origen].

It was an exchange which involved the exchange of divine and human life of Jesus Christ [Gregory of Nyssa] which has the effect of healing/finishing the ontological relation between every man and Christ. [Our reconciliation is stored up in the cross].

It is of eternal value because it was not done over our heads, but it was done in Jesus Christ, who, because he is the eternal Son leads to us being made like God [θεοποίησις]. Our creaturely, evanescent existence is anchored in the very being and life of God as is Jesus Christ himself.

[2] It is an exchange which is the redemption of suffering.

Since the Son of God, having become man does not cease to be God, he becomes man in the conditions of our limited existence in space/time. Yet He did not leave the throne of the universe.

As to impassibility - his redemptive work was the reversal of human suffering in Christ. Which were the sufferings of the Messiah and not the eternal logos' Person. So Jesus Christ has penetrated into our passion, our hurt, our violence and the condition we find ourselves under judgment and our dereliction. To all these he has brought his serenity [ἀπαθεία] to bear redemptively upon our suffering.

He has suffered He suffered and did not suffer for through his eternal tranquillity of his divine impassibility he took upon himself our passibility and redeemed it. This idea doesn't submit to logical categories but is to be understood dynamically and soteriologically. The same argument would be applicable to the wisdom and ignorance where he makes our ignorance his as he takes the form of the servant.

the implication of the Word or Mind of God became flesh in Jesus Christ is that he shared in our ignorance - penetrating the darkness and unknowing we have - that we might share in his

wisdom. This redemption of man's poverty and ignorance has an essential place in the atoning exchange.

[3] The third form of atoning exchange is θεοποιήσις. He was made man that we might become divine [Athanasius]. This exchange is soteriologically [salvationally] understood in that He took up our body and did not lose his own proper being. [There is a parallel to this in the way that we receive -not 'take up'- the Holy Spirit and yet we do not lose our own being].

[i] This atoning exchange results in no change to divine and human being [οὐσία] for He is not less in becoming man just as we are not less human in being brought under the presence of the divine being.

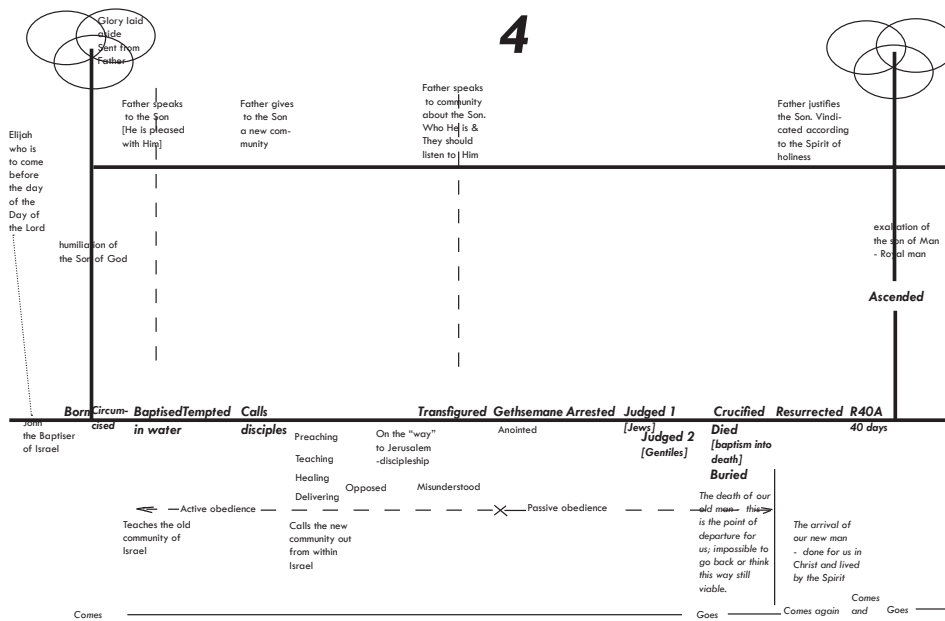
When Athanasius made clear that 'we might become divine' we understand this in the sense of the Word of God has come to us and acts directly upon us [or we could say that Jesus Christ has become man and brought us into kinship with himself]. So 'deification' = the obverse of 'inhomination' [becoming man]. It is more than thinking simply that he has recreated over our lost humanity; rather, it lifts us up in Christ to enjoy a new fullness of human life in communion with divine life.

[ii] θεοποιήσις is closely related to our reception of the Holy Spirit. For to have the Holy Spirit dwelling within is to be made partakers of God beyond ourselves. This is so for, on the one hand, it was because of the Incarnation that the Holy Spirit descended on the man Christ and so become accustomed to dwell in humanity. On the other hand, man was accustomed to receive God and to have Him dwelling in him. So we are God's temple. This given and receiving of the

Holy Spirit is actualised in the life of the Son of God for our sakes. It is the deifying content of the atoning exchange. So it is that

"...

Pentecost must be regarded not as something added on to the Atonement, but the actualisation within the life of the Church of the atoning life, death and resurrection of the Saviour" TTF [TTF] page 190.



Notice how Athanasius understands the way the Holy Spirit is mediated to us by and through the humanity of Christ who sanctifies himself in the Spirit that we might be sanctified in Him. Christ's baptism in the Jordan is seen as one baptism with two episodes - it being actualised at Pentecost.

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