

Jesus Christ, Holder and Giver of the Holy Spirit in Saint Athanasius the Great

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Abstract:

In the current exegesis it has been determined that Jesus, the Son of God, can be established as the subject of a causal sentence of John 3:34b and Christians who believe in Him as the recipients of the Spirit given by Him in wholeness. In the patristic literature, the one who strongly emphasized Christ in the act of giving the Spirit, meaning the one who showed Christ as Holder and Giver of the Holy Spirit while emphasizing the indissoluble link between Christ and the Holy Spirit, is St. Athanasius the Great. He also fought against the adoptionist belief of the anointing of Christ with the Holy Spirit as represented by the Aryans. Saint Athanasius' deep understanding of the co-affiliation of the Word and the Holy Spirit's action makes him treat jointly Christology and Pneumatology, and see them indissolubly linked.

Keywords: *Christ, Holy Spirit, Holder, Giver, Word, the Son of God, anointment, sealing, sanctification, man.*

In a previous study we have talked about the interior and indissoluble link between the presence and work of Christ and the Holy Spirit in the economy of salvation (Cristescu 2014). The approach in this issue, however, cannot be restricted to the limits of that study. It is therefore appropriate to extend it herein. Before we do this, however, it is necessary to make a journey into current exegesis to understand its new guidelines, especially regarding the biblical place of Jn. 3:34b.

This has led commentators to ask themselves who is the subject of the causal sentence: οὐ γὰρ ἐκ μέτρου δίδωσιν τὸ πνεῦμα? In a unanimous consensus they stated that God is the subject and the sentence shows Christ as the bearer of the Holy Spirit receiving the Holy Spirit in its inexhaustible fullness from the Father. Another possibility of understanding this is not mentioned by these commentators and, of

course, neither discussed (Schnelle 1998: 77). But also at the ancient commentators Chr. Schoettgen, J. Wettstein, and P. Billerbeck it can be found regarding Jn. 3:34, a reference to a sentence according to which the Spirit of prophecy was given to the prophets of Israel “by measure” (Wettstein 1962: 857).

Some commentators have seen this sentence as a conception widespread in early Christianity and concluded that this sentence would be the basis of the words of Jn. 3:34. The words οὐ γὰρ ἐκ μέτρου δίδωσιν τὸ πνεῦμα are understood to mean that unlike the prophets, Jesus can be characterized as One who possesses the Spirit “without measure.” For this reason in His words and deeds, He is incomparably superior to them. For such an interpretation is quoted R. Schnackenburg: “To the latter, as a preacher of God’s word as no one before him, God gives the Spirit in an undivided wholeness” (Schnackenburg 1992: 329). But in this interpretation Jesus is only bearer of the Spirit and not the subject of the causal sentence in Jn. 3:34.

Considering the text from Jn. 3:34, H. Chr. Kammler could yet prove with philological and objective arguments the interpretation already represented by Origen (Origenes 1903: 523) and St. Cyril of Alexandria (Saint Cyril of Alexandria 1886: 289A-C) as appropriate, according to which, Jesus, the incarnate Son of God, can be established as the subject of the causal sentence and Christians who believe in Him as recipients of the Spirit given by Him in wholeness. Kammler first asks himself whether the interpretation of the current commenters according to which the Evangelist John represents Jesus Christ as the bearer of the καθεξοχεν Spirit is appropriate (Kammler 1996: 170).

The understanding is determined by the fact of establishing the subject of the verb δίδωσιν and the person seen as the recipient of the Holy Spirit. Two possibilities are mentioned: if God is the subject, the dative of the object is Jesus Christ, sent by God. Then Jn. 3:34b has to be translated “God gives the Holy Spirit without measure to the one sent by Him.”

On the contrary, if Jesus Christ is the subject of the verb δίδωσιν, the dative of the object understood from the context can be seen in those who receive His confession, meaning believers. John 3:34b has to be translated as follows: “The One sent by God gives the Spirit without

measure to those who receive His confession” (Kammler 1996: 171). In order to prove that this understanding is the proper one, Kammler refers to Origen and St. Cyril of Alexandria.

He also refers to W. Thüssing who says regarding the place of Jn. 3:34: “Viewed from a purely grammatical point of view, Jesus is the subject of δίδωσιν, as He is the one of λαλεί. If accepting (n.n. statement) that Jesus Himself is the subject of the sentence provides a meaning according to the Gospel theology, it must be preferred” (Thüssing 1970: 154). Kammler brings philological arguments that contradict the thesis that Jesus was given the Holy Spirit by God in unique wholeness.

In St. John's Gospel, shows Kammler, Jesus is the One and Only, Who as preexisting Son came down from heaven being God, the One Who makes the Father accessible. All verbs in the context of vs. 34b, which clearly refer to the existence and work of the Son of God incarnate, are used in the present tense, while two verbs that have as subject the Father and Father-Son relationships are used in the aorist and perfect tenses. “The subject of the main clause of vs. 34a is Jesus Christ sent by God, Who was [is] subject of verses 34a.c. and 32a” (Kammler 1996: 173).

The wording of vs. 34, shows Kammler, receives first Christological dimensions from vss. 31a. c. and 32a, where it is said that Jesus Christ sent by God speaks the words of God.

It is observed that in vs. 34 it is not something undetermined that Jesus speaks ῥήματα τοῦ Θεοῦ. On the contrary, here it is the definite article τὰ ῥήματα τοῦ Θεοῦ; with this St. John expresses the absolute and unsurpassable character of the revelation of Christ. While about the Old Testament prophets one might say that they communicated ῥήματα τοῦ Θεοῦ about Jesus Christ, μονογενῆς Θεός it is said that in a unique and particular way He spoke ῥήματα τοῦ Θεοῦ and thus disclosed the Father (Kammler 1996: 176-177).

Thus

Jesus Christ is truly the eternally loved pre-existent Son, Who has from eternity the fullness of divine power (vs. 35); He is the Revealer of the Father sent from heaven, Who is above all ἐπάνω πάντων (vs. 31 ac, 34) He is the one Who testifies to what, as preexisting, He has seen and heard (vs. 32); He is the One and Only Who speaks the words of God and can give the Spirit in its entirety (vs. 34a,

b). In short: He is the Son, One and the same with the Father (Kammler 1996: 180).

Kammler observes that many interpreters find in the two texts, Jn. 1:32-34, concerning the Epiphany, and 3:34b, an affirmation of the fact that Jesus was to be characterized as the Son of God and the eschatological-messianic bearer of the Holy Spirit, which, unlike the Old Testament prophets, is given with the Spirit that remains over Him and only on the basis of this devotion that became part of Him, He may give the Spirit to others.

Against this interpretation Kammler shows that if we took this interpretation to its logical conclusion, it would necessarily result in the thesis that

by His receiving the Holy Spirit (that took place during His Baptism), Jesus would be established as the Son of God If this interpretation were right regarding the relevant texts, then one could hardly avoid the conclusion that they would stand diametrically opposed to the basic claims of Johannine Christology.

On the contrary, for Kammler, these basic statements of Johannine Christology “clearly and unequivocally emphasize that the Man named in the Gospel as Jesus is identical in person (*personidentisch*) with the One and Only Son of God, Who lives with His heavenly Father in eternal communion and mutual love and is actually God Himself.”

If those interpretations of the texts from St. John were accepted, shows Kammler, those texts would be in full contradiction with all pneumatological statements of the Fourth Gospel. On the contrary, “they agree in principle”. Regarding the text of Jn. 1:32-34 where the Epiphany is in view, Kammler shows that the aim of the Evangelist, essentially theological, by its inclusion is “to exclude the possibility that the Epiphany can be understood in the sense of an adoptionist Christology ‘as a Christological foundational event’” (Theobald 1990: 132).

Kammler says that

Such an understanding simply cannot be in accord with the fundamental facts of Johannine Christology: for this view understands the Epiphany as an event that has to do with Him as a personal being, so that once He receives the Holy Spirit He is what previously He was not: Messianic bearer of the Spirit, who will baptize others with the Holy Spirit. To exclude from the beginning such a misapprehension, the Evangelist lets the Baptist emphasize that the event

depicted in verse 32 was valid *only* for *him* as a *sign of recognition and identification* (Kammler 1996: 156).

Such a correct understanding of the Epiphany is found in St. John Chrysostom, who says:

So why is the day of the Baptism of the Lord called Apparition, and not the day of his birth? Because the Lord was not known by all when He was born, but when He was baptized. For the crowd did not know Him and did not know Who He was, listen to St. John the Baptist, who says: ‘*Among you stands the One you do not know*’ (Jn. 1:26) [...]. What is the reason of Christ's baptism according to John? To make Him known to the crowds [...] John said, ‘*And I knew him not.*’ If you did not know Him, how did you find out, John? ‘*The One Who sent me to baptize with water, says John, told me*’ (Jn. 1:33). What did he say? ‘*Upon the One you will see the Spirit descending like a dove, and remaining over Him, that is the One who baptizes with the Holy Spirit*’ (Jn. 1:33). As one can see, however, the Holy Spirit did not come down then for the first time over Christ but it came to show the One designated, to make Him known to all by His flight as if He showed him with His finger. This is why Christ came to baptism (St. John Chrysostom 2002: 36, 39, 40).

“This divine sign” shows Kammler, “allowed the Baptist, to identify Him [...] as Giver of the Holy Spirit and to proclaim Him as the pre-existent Son of God (v. 30; cf. v. 15, 34)” (Kammler 1996: 156-157). [1]

There is therefore a clear proof in the Gospel of St. John of Christ's affirmation as Holder and Giver of the Spirit, which excludes any adoptionist thinking. Adoptionism had its roots in Gnosticism. According to St. Hippolytus of Rome, in the adoptionist way that Theodotus the Tanner gave it, Jesus is depicted as an ordinary man who has received in Christ, the Divine Spirit,

Jesus is a man, who upon the Father's advice, was born by the Virgin Mary; He lived like ordinary people and became a worshiper of God; later, during His baptism in Jordan, he received Christ, who came down from heaven as a dove; this is why His powers were not activated before, until the Spirit, Whom he calls Christ came down and found Him. Some do not want Him to become God by the descent of the Spirit, but others after the resurrection of the dead (St. Hippolytus of Rome 1916: 222).

In the 3rd century Artemon presented adoptionist ideas. As can be seen in The Shepherd of Hermas, the “Son of God” is shown as God's

chosen servant in whom the Spirit of God lives and Who due to His faith is made partaker of the privileges of the Holy Spirit.

The Christology of the early Church stood strongly against such a concept, combating it. In this opposition stands its justification and permanent validity:

Classical Christology has its justification and permanent validity in that it clearly prevents classifying Jesus as a simple man among the prophets, among the religious geniuses [...] and states that by Jesus, God turned to us in a unique way that cannot be overcome, that He gave Himself without being represented by something else (Rahner 1972: 54).

In the patristic literature the one who strongly emphasized Christ in the act of the giving the Spirit, meaning the One Who shows Christ as Holder and Giver of the Holy Spirit while emphasizing the indissoluble link between Christ and the Holy Spirit is St. Athanasius the Great. He also fought against the adoptionist understanding of the anointing of Christ with the Holy Spirit represented by the Aryans, who spoke of an improvement of the Word by this anointing with the Holy Spirit. On the contrary, shows St. Athanasius, this has not been made to improve the Word,

but for our sanctification, and to share His anointing and to allow us to be told: 'Do you not know that you are the Church of God and that the Holy Spirit dwells in you?' (1 Cor. 3:16). For when the Lord washed in Jordan as a man, we washed in Him and by Him. And when He received the Holy Spirit, we would receive the Holy Spirit from Him (St. Athanasius the Great 1886: 88C).

To argue further against the adoptionist concept of the Aryans, St. Athanasius makes a comparison between the anointing of Christ with the Holy Spirit and the anointing of kings, like that of David or the priests, such as Aaron (Ex. 29:7). When in the flesh and baptized in the Jordan, the Holy Spirit descending upon Him, Christ was not anointed as Aaron and David

and as all the others with oil, but different from all that were made partakers of Him, with the oil of joy, which he himself interprets as the Holy Spirit. For the prophet says, 'the Spirit of the Lord upon me, because he has anointed me' (Isa. 61:1). And the apostle said, 'As God anointed Him through the Holy Spirit' (Ac. 10:38) (St. Athanasius the Great 1886: 108C).

Compared to the kings of Israel such as David, Hezekiah, Josiah, and others “who became kings when anointed, not being kings before” (St. Athanasius the Great 1886: 108C), the Savior, although He is God and “reigns over the kingdom of the Father and is the Giver of the Holy Spirit” (St. Athanasius the Great 1886: 108C), is said to be anointed. “By saying that he is anointed as man with the Holy Spirit” He gives us, “once with the ascension and resurrection, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit and familiarity with Him” (St. Athanasius the Great 1886: 108C). Referring to the words of Jn. 17:18f “For them I sanctify Myself, for them to be sanctified in truth”, St. Athanasius shows that He is not the one who is sanctified, but “He is the Sanctifier. For He is not sanctified by another, but he sanctifies Himself, in order to be sanctified in truth. And the One who sanctifies Himself is the Lord of the sanctifying work. How does this happen? Who does this if not the One Who says: ‘I being the Word of the Father, I give myself, made man, the Holy Spirit and I sanctify Myself made man, so as through Me, the truth [And Your word is the truth]’ (Jn. 17:17), all to be sanctified” (St. Athanasius the Great 1886: 108C). By the fact that Christ sanctifies Himself, shows Him to be Master and the active Subject of sanctification.

Aryans took as a starting point Phil. 2:9 and Ps. 44:7, saying that the Son would have a changeable nature. For when it is said that the Son “for this” was ascended and received the grace and “for this” He was anointed, He received a reward for a decision of the will. If he acted with will, it is with changing nature (St. Athanasius the Great 1886: 88B). Over time the Son would have received the ascension and growth of grace as a reward for a virtuous transformation. On the contrary, shows St. Athanasius the Great, the Son is and remains the same and unchanged as the Father, because He is born from the Father and His nature is His own. Compared to this quality of Christ as Son, the lineage of people is a gift and not characteristic to their own nature (St. Athanasius the Great 1886: 88B).

If said about the Son of God, the pre-existence of the Son would be canceled. The place of Phil. 2:9 does not show an improvement because it would be received as a reward: the name of “Son” and “God”: “So one cannot say that as a man He became God. But as God He became man so that we receive deification” (St. Athanasius the Great 1886: 92C).

For the Son is consubstantial with the Father and one cannot say that this necessitates the ascension: “When they say that ‘He raised Him’ they do not mean the raising of the Word. For He was eternal and co-equal to the Father. Ascension is of the humanity” (St. Athanasius the Great 1886: 96 C).

If not God, He would become God and if not a King, He would be made king, your word would have some shadow of truth. But if He is God and if the throne of His Kingdom is eternal where could God advance? Or what was the One who sat on the throne of the Father missing? (St. Athanasius the Great 1886: 108C).

For St. Athanasius, the ascension and anointing of the human nature of Christ is important not only for Him but for all people. Therefore he stresses that Christ ascended to heaven for us (St. Athanasius the Great 1886: 97A). “From Him,” says St. Athanasius, “we started to take the anointing and the seal” (St. Athanasius the Great 1886: 108C). This is also valid for Ps. 44:8, where by anointing with the oil of happiness it is meant the anointing with the Holy Spirit, thus referring to the descent of the Holy Spirit upon Him at Jordan. In the interpretation of Ps. 44:8, St. Athanasius emphasizes two important aspects: first, that the Word as God Himself is the Giver of the Holy Spirit and that the Word is not anointed with the Holy Spirit: “And if, as the Lord himself said, the Spirit is His and He takes from Him and sends Him; no, the word as Word and wisdom is anointed by the Spirit given by Him” (St. Athanasius the Great 1886: 108C).

The second aspect emphasized by St. Athanasius is that the anointing is of the human nature of Christ being made by Him and for all men and passing by Him to them. So the word is not anointed “but His body, which is anointed in Him and by Him as the Lord's sanctification made as to the One who became man to belong through him to everyone. For the Spirit does not say, speak of Himself, but the word is given to those worthy (Jn. 16:3)” (St. Athanasius the Great 1886: 108C).

Christ being the same and unchanged over time is “The One Who gives and receives Him, giving Him as the Word of God and receiving Him as a man” (St. Athanasius the Great 1886: 112C). This way does not cancel the quality of Giver, or Recipient. As the word of God, He gives the Holy Spirit as his own and sanctifies all after the incarnation through the Holy Spirit (St. Athanasius the Great 1886: 112C). Therefore the

expression of Ps. 44:8 “for that” just as in Phil. 2:9 does not mean a reward of virtue or of the acts of the Word,

but the reason of His descent to us and His anointing for us by the Holy Spirit. For he did not say ‘For this He anointed You, to become God or King, or Son or Word. For you were these before descending and you are eternal [...] but strongly because you are God and King, this is why you were anointed. Because no one can unite God with the Holy Spirit, but you, Father, we have been made from the beginning. For yours is the Spirit (St. Athanasius the Great 1886: 113B).

When in front of those who claimed taking out the demons with the Holy Spirit was by Beelzebub (Mt. 12:24), Christ says that any blasphemy against the Son of the Man will be forgiven, but not blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. He considers the Holy Spirit to be above Him as regards His human nature. But in front of the disciples, “by showing them His deity and His glory, He has not appeared to be less than the Spirit, but equal to Him, giving them the Holy Spirit and saying, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit’ (Jn. 20:22); and ‘I send Him’ (Jn. 16:7; 13:14)” (St. Athanasius the Great 1886: 116B).

In the second speech against the Aryans St. Athanasius refers to Ac. 2:36: “this Jesus, Whom you have crucified, was made both Lord and Christ.” For St. Athanasius, the Father has not made the Word a simple man, but made him a man to be made “Lord and King of all” (St. Athanasius the Great 1886: 176C), to rule over all, and to bless all by anointing “the Word, Lord made man by nature and as a servant, was made Lord of all and Christ, to bless all in the Spirit” (St. Athanasius the Great 1886: 176C).

This statement is related to the interpretation of Ps. 44:8. St. Athanasius shows here that the nature of the Word hasn’t changed when “made”. This can be understood from reading Ps. 44:8 that the Word has bestowed upon us the Spirit (Ac. 2:17):

Giving the Spirit with power is not owned by the creature or creation, but it is the gift of God. For creatures are sanctified by the Holy Spirit. But the Son is not sanctified by the Holy Spirit, but He himself gives Him to all, showing that He is no creature, but the true Son of the Father. However it is said about the One giving the Holy Spirit that He was made. For the Lord has become what we are according to His humanity. But He gives it, because He is the Word of God. For He was always and still is, and, as He is Son, so he is Lord and King of all, being in all things like the Father and having all of the Father, as He Himself said (St. Athanasius the Great 1886: 184B).

Compared to the tropics so named because of their “figurative” interpretation of the Scripture which stated that the Holy Spirit stands in a relationship of origination with the Son, St. Athanasius comes in *Epistle I to Serapion* with an argument from the Scripture: “In the Holy Scriptures the Holy Spirit is not called Son, in order not to be considered brother or son of the Son, the Father not to be understood as grandparent. But the Son was called Son of the Father. And the Spirit, the Spirit of the Father” (St. Athanasius the Great 1886: 569B). The tropics meditate wrongly concerning the Spirit, they meditate wrongly about the Son. Because “if they meditated correctly about the Word, they would have meditated correctly about the Spirit, who proceeds from the Father and belongs to the Son and is given by the latter to His disciples and to all who believe in Him” (St. Athanasius the Great 1886: 569B).

St. Athanasius uses images that appear in the Scripture about the spring and river and about the light and brilliance that he used in sermons against the Aryans on the relationship of the Son with the Father and extends them to the third person. According to Jer. 2:13 the Father is called the river: “I, the river of living waters have been abandoned” and Baruch 3:12: “You have abandoned the fountain of wisdom.” According to Ps. 64:10 in relation to the river, the Son is called the river “the river of God is full of water.” According to 1 Cor. 12:13, the Holy Spirit is the water we drink, “We all drank from one Spirit.” According to 1 Cor. 10:4 if we drink the Spirit we drink Christ Himself: “All [...] drink from the spiritual rock that followed them. And the rock was Christ” (St. Athanasius the Great 1886: 573B – 576A).

According to 1 Jn. 1:5, the Father is called light: “God is light”. According to the Heb. 1:3 in the relationship with the light, the Son is called brightness “who is the brightness of glory and seal of His hypostasis.” That we are enlightened by the Spirit in the Son can be seen in Eph. 1:17f: “To give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, for his full knowledge and to enlighten your heart’s eyes.” We are enlightened by the Spirit; Christ is the one who shines in Him. “It was, he says, the true light that enlightens every man that comes into the world” (Jn. 1:9).

The Holy Spirit is called by St. Athanasius in several places of his writings anointing and seal (St. Athanasius the Great 1886: 584C-585B), as for example in the *First epistle to Serapion*. The union of these two

titles already is in the *First speech against the Aryans* (St. Athanasius the Great 1886: 109B) and is repeated in the *Third epistle to Serapion* (St. Athanasius the Great 1886: 628B/C). St. Basil the Great (St. Basil the Great 1857: 185 C) and St. Gregory of Nyssa (St. Gregory of Nyssa 1863: 540 C) use the term “seal” for the Son. Likewise St. Athanasius uses the expression “seal” for the Son in the work *In illud: omnia mihi tradita sunt a Patre* (St. Athanasius the Great 1886: 217B).

As regards naming the Spirit as anointing and seal, St. Athanasius brings first as evidence 1 Jn. 2:27, where the expression “His anointing teaches you all” is rendered by “His Spirit” meaning thereby the anointing. The second scripture is Isa. 61:1: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me because he anointed Me.” This reference is understood in the three sermons against the Aryans as Christ’s anointing with the Holy Spirit (St. Athanasius the Great 1886: 109A). Here St. Athanasius shows that the Spirit is the anointing. The third passage is Eph. 1:13: “Believing in Him you were sealed.” And again: “Do not grieve the Holy Spirit, in Whom you were sealed for the day of redemption” (Eph. 4:30).

Regarding these scriptures from Ephesians, St. Athanasius shows that creatures are sealed and anointed and taught in the Spirit:

But if the Spirit is the anointing and seal in which the Word anoints and seals all, what similarity is between anointing and seal and those that are anointed and sealed? So here we can see that it is not one of all. Because the seal is not one of the sealed, or the anointing is of the anointed ones. But this is the Word that anoints and seals (St. Athanasius the Great 1886: 584C-585B).

The statement that anointing and sealing are specific to the Word is based according to St. Athanasius on the Holy Scripture. According to 2 Cor. 2:15 “anointing has in itself the good fragrance of the One who anoints” (St. Athanasius the Great 1886: 584C-585B). “Therefore about those who communicate it is said that ‘We are the good fragrance of Christ’ (2 Cor. 2:15)” (St. Athanasius the Great 1886: 584C-585B).

This shows how unjust is the assertion of the modern exegete I. De la Potterie, who states that “the patristic and theological tradition considers the hypostatic union a consecration of humanity of Jesus by divinity, but this view is not found in the neo testamentary authors” (De la Potter 1958: 250). This statement is taken over by H. Mühlen in his theological works (Mühlen 1963: 181).

First, both at St. Athanasius the Great and all Eastern Fathers, the anointing and sealing specific to the Word as active subject of the humanity assumed by Him as God the Word, Himself as a man, joined hypostatically with the assumed humanity, as seen in the place cited above in *First Word against the Aryans*, 46 (St. Athanasius the Great 1886: 108B), referring to Jn. 17:18f. But what St. Athanasius says and with him all Eastern Fathers is that this anointing and sealing of His human nature is made by Christ as Holder and Giver of the Holy Spirit, the anointing meaning His offering as Word of the Father, to Himself made man, of the Holy Spirit, thus sanctifying Himself, in order for all of us to be sanctified in truth (Jn. 17:18f) (St. Athanasius the Great 1886: 108B). This quality of Christ as Holder and Giver of the Holy Spirit is not stated by I. De la Potterie nor H. Mühlen, the Holy Spirit being seen more as an external person of the Son and the anointing with the Holy Spirit as an external work of Christ, understood by I. De la Potterie as a prophetic (De la Potterie 1958: 231) one and the anointing stated by him as taking place during Christ's ascension being seen only as a metaphor (De la Potterie 1958: 231). The Holy Spirit when spoken of by St. Matthew as Pneuma without article is seen by I. De la Potterie "as an impersonal divine force" (De la Potterie 1958: 231).

Compared to De la Potterie who states that in the New Testament there is "no doctrine of double anointment of Christ during his earthly life, the first at the Incarnation and the second one in the Jordan" (De la Potterie 1958: 231), St. Athanasius sees on scriptural basis an inextricable link between the anointing of Christ as God and Son of the Father upon him as a man, shown in the doctrine about the hypostatic union and its consequences, such as the deification of human nature in the person of Christ and His anointing as Holder and Giver of the Holy Spirit upon Him, Himself as man, a relation where Christ and the Holy Spirit are shown as active subjects in communion.

Therefore St. Athanasius links anointing and sealing showing them as specific to the Word, as proper to Christ is the Holy Spirit that he possesses and gives Him to Himself as man and through Him to all men. Thus for St. Athanasius the "seal has the form of Christ, and those who communicate are sealed, taking its shape. For the Apostle says, 'My little children, I create you once again, until Christ will take shape in you' (Gal.

4:19)” (St. Athanasius the Great 1886: 584C-585B), St. Athanasius concludes this truth showing the sealing action “sealed so, we become partakers of the divine nature, as St. Peter said (2 Pet. 1:4). So all creatures are participating in the Holy Word” (St. Athanasius the Great 1886: 584C-585B).

According to 1 Cor. 3:16f, we all participate through the Holy Spirit in the Word: “Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you?” This would be impossible if the Spirit were not God, but He belongs to creatures. Then we would be alienated from God and none of us would have any participation in God:

But now, because we are told that we are partakers of Christ and partakers of God, it is shown that the anointing and sealing of us does not have to do with the nature of those created, but with the Son, the Spirit who unites us with the Spirit that is in Him with the Father (St. Athanasius the Great 1886: 585C).

The profound connection between Christ and the Holy Spirit emphasized by St. Athanasius drew admiration of modern Western theologians. One of them, Dietrich Ritschl has rendered this link of St. Athanasius as follows:

This profound understanding of co-ownership of the action of the Word and the Holy Spirit is for Athanasius impossible to develop a separate pneumatology. Western criticism leading to an error of pneumatology in the theology of Athanasius is actually based on a misapprehension. He wanted to separate the deification from the Incarnation; Athanasius could not separate or treat separately [...] Christology and pneumatology. Athanasius cannot be taken as a basis underlying the main issues of Western theology. [...] Athanasius did not know a Christ devoid of the Spirit, meaning a Christ incarnated about Whom we can talk without the Holy Spirit and Whom we could follow in worship without Him; and vice versa, he does not know any Spirit without Christ, whom we could receive without the One who became incarnated for men (Ritschl 1964: 53-54).

Notes

[1] Unfortunately for this theologian who has the merit of being the first commentator who asserts and protects the quality of the active subject of Christ in the act of giving the Spirit, as shown by St. John the Evangelist in chapter 3:34, and who quotes from Church Fathers such as St. Cyril of Alexandria, recognizing his theological precision in the exegesis, saying “The ontological difference that exists between Jesus Christ and the prophets of the Old Testament [...] was made precisely in the theological understanding of Cyril of Alexandria” (Commentarius in Ioannis Evangelium, PG

73:289B)” it is enough to make a statement that has no argument either in Scripture or in Tradition, meaning the *filioque*.

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