

6

JESUS' EXAMPLE

Prototype of the Dependent, Spirit-Filled Life

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Chapter Summary

Our Lord Jesus Christ, in his common life with us, gave believers of all time a *genuine model* for how to live the Christian life beyond the limitations of an average human life. I argue specifically that Jesus Christ's supernaturally oriented life on this earth resulted from his predominant dependence on the divine resources of the Father and of the Holy Spirit, while employing his own divine powers infrequently, if at all. Without an appreciation of the dependence Jesus exercised in the Father and in the Holy Spirit, it is not possible to understand how Jesus can be our genuine example—this is a critical missing ingredient for a robust *imitatio Christi*.

Axioms for Christological Study

1. Jesus is an example for all Christians.
2. What is unexemplified in Jesus' life cannot be an example for Christians.
3. Much of Jesus' mission on Earth was unique to him as the Messiah-King, yet what Christians can share in common with Jesus is the *manner* in which he lived and in which he carried out his mission.

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KEY TERMS

imitation	example	emptied himself
veiling or concealment	occasionally dependent	predominantly dependent
exclusively dependent		
Latin terms	<i>imitatio Christi</i>	<i>conformitas</i>
Greek terms	<i>kenosis</i> <i>akoloutheo</i> <i>archegos</i>	<i>mimeomai</i> <i>pistis Christou</i>

. . . how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power; how he went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him.

—Acts 10:38

The Son is the prototype of those “who are led by the Spirit of God” (Rom 8:14) . . . It is the Spirit that gives Jesus his human equipoise, for considering the gigantic dimensions of what he says and does, such equipoise would be impossible apart from the Spirit.

—Hans Urs von Balthasar

We esteem Olympic athletes who reach their goal after struggling against severe obstacles. Is Jesus such a hero to Christians? Did Jesus genuinely struggle against the challenges of life just like us? Or, while he lived on Earth and engaged in ministry to others, did Jesus have access to something extra that is unique to him and unavailable to believers?

In this chapter, I examine the biblical teaching of Jesus’ authentic human experience in relation to the scriptural theme that Jesus is our example for living the Christian life. I argue specifically that Jesus Christ’s supernaturally oriented life on this earth resulted from his predominant dependence on the divine resources of the Father and the Holy Spirit, while living fully in his humanity, employing his own divine powers

¹ The epigraph from this chapter is drawn from Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Prayer* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1979), 163.

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infrequently, if at all. This claim is not a novel one. Thomas Oden, a theologian who specializes in advocating the consensus views of the Christian theological tradition, argues that “as a man, Jesus walked day by day in radical dependence upon God the Spirit, prayed, and spoke by the power of the Spirit. In portraying Jesus as constantly dependent upon the Spirit, the Gospels were not challenging or questioning his deity or divine Sonship. Rather, as eternal Son the theandric person already was truly God, while as a man, Jesus was truly human, bone of our bone, flesh of our flesh, seed of Abraham, whose humanity was continually replenished by the Spirit (Luke 4:14; Heb 2:14–17).”²

R. A. Torrey (1856–1928), likewise attempting to articulate only *What the Bible Teaches*, taught that Jesus “lived, thought, worked, taught, conquered sin and won victories for God in the power of that same Spirit whom we all may have.”³ In this chapter I articulate a more nuanced statement of this claim, bringing together the various lines of scriptural evidence.

First, this chapter will introduce the *imitatio Christi* theme and present the dependency thesis. Support for the proposal comes from two lines of evidence: (1) that Jesus depended on the Father (e.g., John 14:10–11) as a human who himself expressed faith in God (e.g., Heb 12:2), and (2) that Jesus depended on the Holy Spirit (e.g., Acts 10:38). Later, we will address some potential problems. Finally, after discussing Jesus’ childhood, we will explore a few implications for his childhood, using the proposal as a working hypothesis.

If a convergence of this evidence supports a pervasive theme of dependency in Jesus’ life and ministry, then we may infer that Jesus depended to a greater degree on the Father and the Spirit and much less upon his own divine power. The degree to which Jesus depended on the Father and the Spirit, instead of his own divine power, is the degree to which Jesus can be our genuine example.

The thrust of the project is to draw out implications of an orthodox Christology for practical Christian living. Our purpose is not to diminish

² Thomas Oden, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 3, *Life in the Spirit* (1992; repr., Peabody, MA: Prince, 1998), 47; for a more extensive comment see Michael Wilkins, *Matthew*, NIVAC (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 162–65.

³ R. A. Torrey, *What the Bible Teaches* (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming Revell, 1898), 289.

the doctrine of Christ's deity but rather to enrich our doctrine of sanctification and Christian living. By refining our understanding of Jesus Christ we can benefit from the Bible's teaching that Jesus is our genuine example. Yet as we delve into this mystery—to honor our Lord's full humanity—we must do so cautiously so as not to diminish his full deity.⁴

At a general level it is difficult to deny Jesus' humanity at the obvious points: he was embodied⁵ (e.g., he was thirsty, Matt 25:35; hungry, Matt 4:2; weary, John 4:6; and he died, John 19:30–34). He experienced a full range of emotions (e.g., weeping, Luke 19:41; compassion, Mark 6:34; righteous anger, Mark 3:5; frustration, Matt 17:17; and being troubled in spirit, Matt 26:37). Many who encountered him, especially the religious leaders, regarded Jesus as nothing more than human, not as some kind of alien or superhero from outer space. To paraphrase the Nazareth folk with whom he grew up, "It's just Jesus, no one special" (Mark 6:3). Furthermore, Jesus was tempted (Matt 4:1–11)—a characteristic which Scripture denies of God (Jas 1:13)—yet without sinning (Heb 4:15).

Orthodoxy affirms that Jesus' humanity was a critical factor for our salvation. Erickson notes: "If . . . Jesus was not really one of us, humanity has not been united with deity, and we cannot be saved. For the validity of the work accomplished in Christ's death, or at least its applicability to us as human beings, depends upon the reality of his humanity, just as the efficacy of it depends upon the genuineness of his deity."⁶ Regarding God's design of human nature, Bernard Ramm notes, "In the very act of the creation the possibility of a future incarnation was made possible. If humankind is produced in the image of God then there is some of that image in God. Hence God can become incarnate."⁷

Furthermore, Paul's comparison between Adam and Christ bears testimony to the humanity of Jesus (Rom 5:12–21; 1 Cor 15:20–22 and

⁴ The study works with the canonical New Testament texts and within the basic boundary conditions for orthodox theological inquiry as set down by the Chalcedonian Definition (AD 451).

⁵ I use the past tense, although Jesus still lives today with both divine and human natures.

⁶ Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1985), 706.

⁷ Bernard Ramm, *An Evangelical Christology* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1985), 53. Furthermore, Ramm explains, "In the humanity of Jesus Christ God has revealed what it is to be a true person. Hence a Christian anthropology can be constructed only from a Christology," 77.

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45–49).⁸ Through his experiences and suffering as a human, Jesus became our sympathetic high priest (Heb 2:10–17; 4:15–16; 5:8–10), one who now intercedes for us (Rom 8:34). Thus, Jesus is like us.

In becoming incarnate, our Lord Jesus Christ as one person is both fully divine and fully human. Although this study emphasizes what is commonly shared between Jesus Christ and all believers, there is no denial that Jesus is also unique and different from us; he is not *merely* human. For purposes of analysis in studying Jesus, three layers of focus are possible: studying Jesus as divine, as divine-human, and as human (see Table 6.1). The first two layers of analysis focus on aspects unique to Jesus. The final layer focuses exclusively on Jesus' humanity, what he shares in common with us, the primary emphasis of this chapter.

Table 6.1 Three Levels of Analysis in Christology

	Level of Analysis	Descriptive Biblical Terms
Unique	1. Jesus as Divine	The Son (Matt 11:27; 28:19) The Word (John 1:1) (Second Person of the Trinity)
	2. Jesus as Divine-Human	The Word became flesh (John 1:14) Messiah/Christ (John 4:25–26) King (John 18:33–37; Rev 17:14) Prophet (Acts 3:22; Luke 13:33; Deut 18:15) Savior (Mark 10:45; Rom 3:21–26) High Priest (Heb 7:17) Mediator (1 Tim 2:5; Heb 8:6)
Common	3. Jesus as Human	Last Adam (Rom 5:14; 1 Cor 15:45) Our Brother (Heb 2:11) Our Example (1 Pet 2:21)

As the unique “mediator between God and humankind” (1 Tim 2:5), Jesus can “show us the Father” (John 14:8–10) and also show us how to

⁸ Did Jesus fulfill a moral obligation by defeating Satan in his humanity as the Second Adam, since the First Adam surrendered his rightful role (e.g., Heb 2:14–15)?

live as humans by setting us “an example, that you also should do as I have done to you” (John 13:15). In his atoning work for us Jesus became our Savior, the unique mediator between God and humankind (1 Tim 2:5). Luke Johnson notes, “Jesus is not the mediator on the basis of his teachings or deeds, or even as an object of belief, but on the basis of his very humanity: Jesus is the representative human before the one God.”⁹

The Imitation of Jesus Christ (*imitatio Christi*)

The example of Jesus Christ has been an important and continuing theme throughout Church history, as evident in the popularity of two classic devotional books: *The Imitation of Christ* by Thomas à Kempis (1380–1471) and *In His Steps* by Charles Sheldon (1857–1946).¹⁰ This theme is currently evident in the abbreviation WWJD: “What would Jesus do?” Standard orthodox systematic texts frequently employ the term “Christlikeness” or “likeness to Christ” for the expectation that believers acquire the virtues displayed by Jesus.¹¹ In Christian ethics Jesus is presented as the ethical standard. For example, Richard Hays notes, “If God really did raise Jesus from the dead, everything that Jesus taught and exemplified is vindicated by a God more powerful than death. He must therefore be seen as the bearer of the truth and the definitive paradigm for obedience to God . . . For the church, it is perhaps important to know that the obedience of faith was lived out in history by the flesh-and-blood man Jesus, for his example teaches us that to trust in the power of God over history is not to trust in vain.”¹²

⁹ Luke T. Johnson, *Letters to Paul's Delegates* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity, 1996), 131, emphasis added.

¹⁰ Thomas à Kempis, *The Imitation of Christ*, trans. Leo Sherley-Price (London: Penguin, 1952). Charles Sheldon, *In His Steps* (1897; repr. Grand Rapids: Revell/Chosen, 1984).

¹¹ See, for example, Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1985), 970, and Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 542.

¹² Richard Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament* (San Francisco: HarperSan Francisco, 1996), 166–67. Linda Zagzebski has proposed a virtue ethics model in which the incarnation is a central feature: “The Incarnation and Virtue Ethics,” in *The Incarnation*, ed. Stephen T. Davis, Daniel Kendall, and Gerald O’Collins (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 313–31. One distinctive feature of Christianity in contrast to all other religions or ideologies is that in Jesus Christ we actually have a perfect ethical human exemplar, a claim no other religion or ideology can make.

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Within spiritual formation, Dallas Willard claims that Jesus Christ demonstrates how believers can live the Christian life. “Jesus came among us to show and teach the life for which we were made . . . Indeed, by taking the title Son of man, he staked his claim to be all that the human being was originally supposed to be—and surely much more. Colloquially we might describe him as humanity’s ‘fair-haired boy,’ the one who expresses its deepest nature and on whom its hopes rest.”¹³

Biblical Basis for Imitating Jesus

The biblical evidence that believers should imitate the example of Jesus is culled from various approaches.¹⁴ First, the main New Testament passages explicitly teaching the imitation of Jesus Christ are these:

1. from Jesus’ own lips in John 13:15,¹⁵
2. from Paul in Philippians 2:4–11 (see further comments below),
3. from Peter in 1 Peter 2:21–23, and
4. from the author of Hebrews 12:1–6.

Second, various commands to believers identify Jesus’ life and specific character traits as the standard to follow, using the connectives “just as/as” (e.g., *hōsper*, *kathōs*) or “also/too” (Matt 20:28;¹⁶ John 13:14,15,34; 15:12; Rom 6:11; 15:3,7; 2 Cor 1:5; Eph 5:2,25,29; Heb 4:15; 1 Pet 4:1; 1 John 2:6; 3:3,16; see also Eph 4:32; Col 3:13; 1 Tim 1:16). Additionally, a few passages indicate a mutuality of shared experience—suffering is mentioned most often—between Jesus Christ and

¹³ Dallas Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy* (San Francisco: HarperSan Francisco, 1998), 27.

¹⁴ Some of the major studies of this theme in English include E. J. Tinsley, *The Imitation of God in Christ* (London: SCM, 1960) and Tinsley, “Some Principles for Reconstructing a Doctrine of the Imitation of Christ,” *SJT* 1 (1972): 45–57; Kevin Giles, “‘*Imitatio Christi*’ in the New Testament,” *RTR* 38 (1979): 65–73; Gerald F. Hawthorne, “The Imitation of Christ: Discipleship in Philippians,” in Richard Longenecker, ed., *Patterns of Discipleship in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1966), 63–79; and Marguerite Shuster, “The Use and Misuse of the Idea of the Imitation of Christ,” *Ex Auditu* 14 (1998): 70–81.

¹⁵ Matthew 11:29 (*manthanō*, “learn from Me”) could fit here.

¹⁶ In discussing the parallel verse in Mark 10:45, R. T. France states, “But we must not forget that this crucial verse, however great its soteriological implications, occurs in the context as a model for Jesus’ disciples to follow. . . . They, too, must serve rather than be served” (*The Gospel of Mark*, NIGTC [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002], 421).

believers (John 17:14,16; 20:21; Rom 8:17,29; 2 Cor 8:9; 10:1; Phil 3:10–11; Col 1:24; 1 John 1:7; 3:3).

Third, Paul urged believers to imitate his own example (1 Cor 4:16; 11:1; Phil 3:17; 1 Thess 1:6; 2 Thess 3:7–9; and 1 Tim 1:16) just as he imitated the example of Jesus (1 Cor 11:1; cp. 1 Thess 1:6). Peter exhorted elders to serve as examples (1 Pet 5:3), alluding implicitly to Jesus' teaching that he was an example of servanthood (e.g., Matt 20:25–28; Luke 22:27; John 13:15).

Concerns about Imitating Jesus

Some scholars are not convinced that the New Testament writers actually present Jesus' life on Earth as an example for believers and argue that instead of imitation the New Testament always stresses allegiance and obedience to the *risen* Lord. For example, Wilhelm Michaelis claimed of the verb "to imitate": "There is thus no thought of an imitation, whether outward or inward, of the earthly life of Jesus in either individual features or total impress. The call for an *imitatio Christi* finds no support in the statements of Paul."¹⁷ Others claim that Jesus' command to follow him (e.g., John 8:12; 10:27) cannot be a call to imitation, but rather a call to be a loyal disciple of the Lord Jesus. An alleged distinction must be made between the word "to follow" (*akoloutheo*), which occurs only in the Gospels and Acts, and "to imitate" (*mimeomai*), occurring only in the Epistles. Yet Kevin Giles notes, "The contrast between the Gospels and the Epistles in relation to imitating Christ is therefore, in essence, not one of emphasis or theme but only one of terminology."¹⁸

Some reluctance regarding the imitation of Christ among Protestants may stem from Martin Luther's own suspicion of the concept, particularly that it may imply works and moral endeavor rather than God's grace. Rather than *imitatio*, Luther preferred to speak of *conformitas* to Christ,

¹⁷ Wilhelm Michaelis, "*mimeomai*," *TDNT*, 4:672. In a footnote, Michaelis quotes Martin Dibelius, "The qualities to be imitated are not the virtues of a human person but the properties of the divine person."

¹⁸ Kevin Giles, "*Imitatio Christi*," 69. Based on his reading of the two standard German monographs on the subject, Giles explains that "H. D. Betz [*Nachfolge und Nachahmung Jesu Christi im Neuen Testament*, Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1967] and A. Schulz [*Nachfolgen und Nachahmen*. Munich: Koesel-Verlag, 1962] carefully study these two motifs and after having analyzed each independently come to the conclusion that in substance the meaning of both is the same" (69, note 22).

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a process of conformation to Christ through the work of the Spirit. Yet, Tinsley notes, imitation must remain as a legitimate theological concept: "In a fully developed theology of the Christian life as imitation of Christ both the terms *conformitas* and *imitatio* would need to be used. The imitative life of the Christian involves both God's activity, through the Spirit, in conforming man to his image in Christ (*conformitas*), and man's focusing of his moral and spiritual attention on the exemplary, Christ (*imitatio*)."¹⁹

Marguerite Shuster raises legitimate concerns about studying Jesus as our example: "My fundamental point is that what we need, and what the New Testament offers us, is first and foremost, not an example, but a Savior. My major caveat with respect to imitation themes is that they tend to obscure that fundamental point."²⁰ Any exclusive focus on the example of Jesus effectively truncates the genuine gospel. Sanctification must never be reduced to our own moral effort. It is a process in which God the Spirit works, and in which we cooperate, attending to what is in our power to do, sustained by God's power (e.g., Eph 4:17–24; Phil 2:12–13). Yet once Jesus is affirmed as our Savior and our high priest, can Jesus also serve as our example to imitate?

We must approach this exemplar teaching with humility, even though it seems audacious that we can follow Jesus' example. As Shuster notes, "Even the thought that we could actually do as Jesus would do is a rather heady idea . . . we shall surely fail utterly at our best efforts to follow in Jesus' footsteps except insofar as the Spirit enables us."²¹ Despite various concerns, Shuster affirms that the New Testament presents Jesus as our example. "It would seem evident that, even if some qualifications may sometimes be required, the thought of Jesus as model is not lacking in the New Testament, and insofar as it is present, surely it commends

¹⁹ E. J. Tinsley, "Some Principles," 45. For further study of Luther's understanding of *imitatio* and *conformitas*, see Dietmar Lage, *Martin Luther's Christology and Ethics* (New York: Edwin Mellen, 1990).

²⁰ Shuster, "Use and Misuse," 74. Yet focusing on Jesus as a moral exemplar need not lead us doctrinally astray to affirm a moral influence atonement theory. For a survey of moral example atonement theories, see Alister McGrath, *Christian Theology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), 407–12.

²¹ Shuster, "Use and Misuse," 76–77.

itself to us . . . the exemplary strain does exist and should not just be ignored.”²²

Special Case of Philippians 2

One final qualification is based on the interpretation of the classic passage of Philippians 2:5–11, centered on the exhortation, “Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus.” Is this a text about imitating Christ? In his often-cited study, Ralph Martin claims that the focus of Paul’s exhortation appears in the last three verses emphasizing the exaltation of Christ. Thus Jesus’ earthly life is *not* the central feature of this passage: “The Apostolic summons is not: Follow Jesus by doing as He did—an impossible feat in any case, for who can be a ‘second Christ’ who quits His heavenly glory and dies in shame and is taken up into the throne of the universe? The appeal and injunction to the Philippians in their pride and selfishness are rather: Become in your conduct and church relationships the type of persons who, by that kenosis, death and exaltation of the Lord of glory, have a place in His body, the Church.”²³ Martin seems to confuse the tasks of Jesus’ vocation, which are unique, with the manner in which he lived to carry out his vocation. We do not emulate his mission, and callings will vary among us, but we can emulate Jesus’ manner of living.

Yet other New Testament scholars affirm the traditional view that Paul uses the example of the earthly Jesus as an encouragement to follow in his footsteps.²⁴ Moreover, Joseph Hellerman has argued that Paul intentionally turns upside down the normal Roman honor motif in Philippi, which highlighted an upward movement toward success.

I maintain that Paul, in his portrayal of Jesus in [Philippians 2] verses 6–8, has taken Rome’s *cursum*

²² Ibid., 73, 77. Two other helpful points raised by Shuster regard (1) the misuse of the concept of imitation, particularly the selectivity of what is considered for imitation and what is ignored, and (2) that we exclude from consideration the distinctive cultural forms of that day that Jesus practiced (p. 74).

²³ Ralph Martin, *A Hymn of Christ: Philippians 2:5–11 in Recent Interpretation and in the Setting of Early Christian Worship* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1997), 290–91.

²⁴ See Morna Hooker, “Philippians 2:6–11,” in *Jesus und Paulus (Festschrift for W. G. Kummel)*, ed. E. E. Ellis and E. Grasser (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1975), 151–64; and Gerald Hawthorne, “The Imitation of Christ,” 63–79.

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ideology and turned it on its head, so to speak, as he presents Christ descending a *cursus pudorum* (“a succession or race of ignominies”) from equality with God, to the status of a slave, to the physical and social death of public crucifixion . . . The presentation, I suggest, was intended by Paul . . . to encourage persons in the church who possessed some degree of honor or status in the broader social world of the colony to utilize their status, after the analogy of Jesus, in the service of others.²⁵

Thus, Philippians 2:5–11 offers a strong case for Jesus as our example. Jesus’ human life accomplished much more than being our example, yet his example for believers cannot be ignored.

Jesus’ Divine Dependency

Having affirmed the biblical support for Jesus as our example, let us explore how that is possible since Jesus has two natures. In this section I present the problem, identify some options, and then defend my proposal that Jesus predominantly lived a dependent, Spirit-filled life on this earth as our example.

The Problem and Possible Options

In studying Jesus’ state of humiliation on this earth (i.e., his unglorified human nature), we must account for the *apparent* incompatibility between his human nature (e.g., human “weaknesses” of temptability, weariness, death), and his divine nature (especially the three “omni” attributes).²⁶ For example, Leon Morris notes that in his humanity Jesus was to some extent ignorant. “Ignorance is an inevitable accompaniment of the only human life that we know . . . Sometimes one meets people who overlook this aspect of Jesus’ life. They picture him going on a serene way, knowing the thoughts of everyone about him, knowing the

²⁵ Joseph H. Hellerman, *Reconstructing Honor in Roman Philippi: Carmen Christi as Cursus Pudorum*, SNTSMS 132 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 1–2.

²⁶ E.g., Scripture gives evidence of Jesus’ ignorance (e.g., Matt 24:36 = Mark 13:32), yet God is omniscient; Jesus is physically weary (John 19:17, carried cross for a while; then Simon had to carry it for Jesus, Mark 15:21), yet God is omnipotent; Jesus was subject to temptation (Heb 2:18; 4:15) yet God cannot be tempted; and he died, yet God cannot die.

outcome of every course of action in which he or they were engaging. If this was the manner of it, then the life Jesus lived was not a human life, even human life at its highest level.”²⁷

How, then, was it possible for Jesus to express human powers in light of his divine powers, since the use of certain divine attributes would seem to override the use of corresponding human attributes? The orthodox explanation is that, during Jesus’ state of humiliation, the incarnation involved not only the *addition* of human nature but also some form of *veiling or concealment* of his divine glory (e.g., John 17:5). John Calvin notes that Jesus “took the image of a servant, and content with such lowness, allowed his divinity to be hidden by a ‘veil of flesh.’”²⁸

The concept of veiling is developed in several key passages (e.g., John 17:5; 2 Cor 8:9; Eph 4:10; Phil 2:7; Heb 5:7–9). According to Ben Witherington, the verb “emptied himself” [*ekenōsen*²⁹] in Philippians 2:7 “must have some content to it, and it is not adequate to say Christ did not subtract anything since in fact he added a human nature. The latter is true enough, but the text says that he did empty himself or strip himself. What it does not tell us explicitly is of what he emptied himself. The contrast between verses 6b and 7a is very suggestive; that is, Christ set aside his rightful divine prerogatives or status. This does not mean he set aside his divine nature, but it does indicate some sort of self-limitation, some sort

²⁷ Leon Morris, *The Lord from Heaven* (London: InterVarsity, 1958), 46–47. Note that in Mark 11:13 Jesus saw the fig tree in leaf, walked up to the fig tree, and then was surprised to learn no figs were available.

²⁸ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeil, trans. Ford Lewis Battles, LCC (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960), 1:476 (*Institutes* 2.13.2).

²⁹ The term *kenōsis* has often been associated with theological proposals describing the hypostatic union during the time of Jesus’ state of humiliation. Unfortunately, the biblical term itself became associated with radical proposals in which Jesus divested himself of some or all of his divine attributes. Grudem admits that the word can be used in a weaker sense not referring to the radical kenotic theories but meaning “simply that Jesus gave up his glory and privilege for a time while he was on earth. (This is essentially the view we have advocated in this text)” (*Systematic Theology* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994], 551, n. 28). Yet Grudem prefers to avoid the term due to potential confusion. William Lane Craig, “The Incarnation” (chap. 30 in *Philosophical Foundations for a Christian*, ed. J. P. Moreland and William Lane Craig [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2003]) is in basic agreement with Grudem, yet Millard Erickson is willing to use the term: the “view we have been introducing is a species of kenotic theology” (551) or, specifically a “kenosis by addition” (*The Word Became Flesh* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1991], 555).

For a summary of major criticisms of kenotic theories see Donald Macleod, *The Person of Christ* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1998), 209–12.

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of setting aside of divine rights or privileges.”³⁰ Although Jesus was God, he veiled his deity, permitting himself to experience a normal human life with its attendant weaknesses (Heb 2:17).

Some prefer to leave the mystery of the incarnation as is, not explaining but simply reasserting the two natures. For example, some rely on a reduplicative strategy as the sole means of explaining the apparent incompatibility of the two natures.³¹ They argue, for example, that Jesus *as God* is omniscient, but that Jesus *as man* is not; that Jesus *as God* is upholding the universe with his omnipotence, but Jesus *as man* can get weary.³² Yet others think it worthwhile to explain the matter further, although at some point we must all bow to this divine mystery.

What is at issue is the overpowering nature of the three “omni” attributes—omnipotence, omnipresence, and omniscience—in relation to the corresponding and finite human attributes. To clarify differences among incarnational views, A. H. Strong outlined five general categories (with his own view, identified as the True View, “midway between two pairs of erroneous views”):

- (1) Gess: The Logos gave up all divine attributes;
- (2) Thomasius: The Logos gave up relative attributes only;
- (3) True View: The Logos gave up the independent exercise of divine attributes;
- (4) Old Orthodoxy: Christ gave up the use of divine attributes;
- (5) Anselm: Christ acted as if he did not possess divine attributes.³³

Contemporary orthodox views would fit within the third and fourth categories, yet these particular groupings are too broad.

³⁰ Ben Witherington, *Friendship and Finances in Philippi* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1994), 66.

³¹ See p. 166. Among New Testament scholars, I. Howard Marshall notes the apparent inconsistency and leaves it there: “There might seem to be some tension between the concept of Jesus as a person who needs the Spirit to accomplish his mission (like a human agent of God) and as the Son of God who has all the insight and power that he needs for his task.” *New Testament Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004), 199.

³² Thomas Morris notes, “Some traditional theologians may have been guilty of this sort of strategy, relying too heavily on a mere distinction between the two natures and on a reduplicative form of statement about Christ—Christ *as God* had this property, *as man* its complement—in the attempt to avoid contradiction.” *The Logic of God Incarnate* (1986; repr., Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2001), 38. But ultimately for Morris this strategy is not convincing (cf. 48–55).

³³ Augustus H. Strong, *Systematic Theology* (Philadelphia: Judson, 1907), 704.

Perhaps a focus on one divine attribute, *omnipotence*, offers a way to explore further both the apparent incompatibility of Jesus' divine and human attributes and the role of the Father and of the Holy Spirit in Jesus' life and ministry. By what supernatural or divine power did Jesus live his life on Earth? Jesus had access to two possible sources of divine power: either (1) his own divine power, or (2) the divine resources of the Father and the Holy Spirit. Three logical positions are possible along this spectrum:

1. *Occasionally Dependent*. At times, Jesus used his own divine power, while at other times he relied on the divine resources of the Father and the Holy Spirit. John Walvoord seems to hold this view:

On two specific occasions Christ is revealed to have performed His miracles in the power of the Holy Spirit (Matt 12:28; Luke 4:14–18). In these instances Christ chose voluntarily to be dependent upon the power of the Father and the Holy Spirit to perform His miracles. In view of the fact that this is mentioned only twice and hundreds of miracles were performed, it would seem clear that Christ exercised His own [divine] power when He chose to do so as, for instance, when He commanded the waves to be still and caused Lazarus to come forth from the tomb at His command. The anointing of the Holy Spirit (cp. Lk 4:18) would support the conclusion that many of Christ's miracles were performed in the power of the Holy Spirit, but his deity still included omnipotence which was not surrendered in the kenosis.³⁴

2. *Predominantly Dependent*. Jesus lived normally within his own human power, relying predominantly on the divine resources of the Father and the Holy Spirit, while using his own divine power infrequently, if at all. Paul Feinberg notes, "The kenosis required that Jesus depend on the Holy Spirit. This is simply the other side of his voluntary setting aside

³⁴ John Walvoord, *Jesus Christ Our Lord* (Chicago: Moody, 1969), 144. This argument from silence can swing either way. Jesus explicitly claims that he casts out demons by the Spirit's power in Matt 12:28, yet Scripture never records any cases when Jesus himself actually invokes the Spirit's name before casting out a demon. Would not Jesus' explicit claim hold more weight than Walvoord's argument from silence?

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of his position. As true man, he walked in dependence on the Spirit (e.g., Matt 12:28, Luke 4:14–18).³⁵

3. *Exclusively Dependent.* Jesus lived exclusively within his own human power without any recourse to his own divine power, but relied exclusively on the divine resources of the Father and the Holy Spirit. Gerald Hawthorne, who seems to hold this view, explains that “without denying the reality of the incarnation, or that God became a man, it is the purpose of this book, nevertheless, to argue for the reality of Jesus’ humanness and that as such he was not aided to rise above and conquer temptations *as God*, but rather as a man whose will was set to do the will of God. His sinlessness was nothing other than the continued obedience to the Father and to the Father’s will.”³⁶

Some might wonder, Why worry about the source of Jesus’ supernatural power? Does it really matter? If we hold to supernatural theism, then Jesus’ supernatural life and his ministry of miracles actually occurred and touched the lives of many in his day, whether he used his own divine power or relied on the supernatural power of the Father and the Holy Spirit. Yet the critical issue raised in this chapter is whether Jesus can be our example in his supernaturally oriented lifestyle. Christians cannot emulate his example if he relied on his own divine power to live and minister to others. As William Barry argues, “If Jesus is superhuman, then I can admire him, but I do not have to take seriously his call to emulate him. I can never be a superhuman being.”³⁷ To the extent Jesus lived within his humanity and relied on the divine power of the Father and the Son, to that extent, Jesus can genuinely be an example we can emulate.³⁸

³⁵ Paul Feinberg, “The Kenosis and Christology: An Exegetical-Theological Analysis of Phil 2:6–11,” *TJ* 1 NS (1980): 46. In stating options 1 and 2, I assume there is no need for Jesus to rely on the Holy Spirit’s divine power while at the same time he is *himself* using his own divine power, as implied in the mutually exclusive option 1 from Walvoord above.

³⁶ Gerald Hawthorne, *The Presence and the Power: The Significance of the Holy Spirit in the Life and Ministry of Jesus* (Dallas: Word, 1991; repr., Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock 2003), 96, n. 94. Hawthorne’s book is the sole academic monograph given wholly to discussing the relationship of the Spirit in the life of Jesus, while others devote only a portion of their book on this topic (e.g., James Dunn, *Jesus and the Spirit* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975]).

³⁷ William Barry, *Letting God Come Close* (Chicago: Loyol, 2001), 111.

³⁸ What of the expectation for believers to emulate God? We are not expected to be like God in every way, but only in specific ways that are possible for us to emulate, being created in

This study will argue for option 2, against option 1, that rather than occasional dependence, Jesus predominantly depended on the Father and the Holy Spirit for his life and ministry on earth.³⁹ Defending the thesis that Jesus was predominantly dependent on the Father and Spirit requires some sort of accounting for the occasions on which Jesus apparently did make use of his own divine power. These occasions are infrequent but are part of the evidence pool and cannot be simply disregarded. Advocates of exclusive dependence on the Father and Spirit (option 3) would have to explain these divine manifestations as the Father's or the Spirit's action through the humanity of Jesus. But my claim is that Jesus was predominantly, though not exclusively, dependent on the Father and Spirit. Therefore, the following special cases can be acknowledged:

1. Jesus forgave sins. Exclusivists argue that he was declaring God's forgiveness as God's agent and representative.
2. Jesus was transfigured. Exclusivists argue that this was the display of his messianic, not divine, glory.
3. Jesus displayed his glory at his first miracle at Cana (John 2:11). Exclusivists claim this too as a display of messianic glory.
4. Jesus responded to the soldiers' question with "I am" and they fell down (John 18:6; Beasley-Murray argues that this reflects their shock at Jesus' direct self-disclosure and claim to be God⁴⁰).
5. Jesus yearned for his preexistent glory with the Father (John 17:5). Exclusivists could view this as a prayer based on inference, not necessarily his current experience.

If these are genuine cases of Jesus' using his own divine powers, the proposal I am defending in this chapter (option 2) permits this. In my view,

God's image and now being conformed to the image of his Son (Rom 8:29); for example: (1) holiness and righteousness (Lev 19:2; Eph 4:24; 1 Pet 1:15–16), (2) love (Matt 5:43–48; Eph 5:1), and (3) being merciful (Luke 6:36). Similarly, we are not expected to emulate Jesus in every way, but in ways that regenerated humans can become more Christlike, the manner of his lifestyle, which we will manifest perfectly as glorified Christians (e.g., Rev 21:4,27).

³⁹ The preponderance of evidence supports my proposal as one legitimate option, compatible with orthodox Christianity. Those I cite in this section are included to indicate the plausibility of these points (when I cite a scholar, it does not necessarily indicate his or her agreement with the larger proposal, only for that specific point). Although I may be wrong on a point here or there, the proposal does not fail if one point must be conceded.

⁴⁰ George Beasley-Murray, *John* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1999), 322.

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Jesus' normal course of action was to depend on the Father and Spirit working through his humanity, but this does not exclude exceptional manifestations of the divine nature which, after all, orthodox Christology affirms him to possess.

The argument is developed along two broad themes, presenting evidence for Jesus' dependence on the Father and on the Holy Spirit. Further, his dependence on the Father can be subdivided into his explicit dependence and his implicit dependence (especially seen in his personal faith).

Jesus' Dependence on the Father's Resources

Jesus depended explicitly on the Father. There are multiple occurrences of Jesus' own declaration of his complete dependence on the Father in the Gospel of John. "Very truly, I tell you, the Son can do nothing on his own, but only what he sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, the Son does likewise" (John 5:19). Similar declarations appear also in John 5:30; 7:28–29; 8:28–29,42; 12:49–50; 14:10,26,31; 15:9–10,15; 16:32; and 17:8,18.

Later in John's Gospel, Jesus develops a parallel between his dependency on the Father as the analogy for how his disciples will depend on him. For example we can compare John 5:19, quoted above with John 15:5: "I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing." Jesus offers himself as an example of dependency for believers.⁴¹

Jesus depended implicitly on the Father. Evidence of his faith in God the Father is found in (1) a study of Hebrews 12:2, (2) his claims about having faith, and (3) the phrase "*pistis Christou*." That Jesus himself expressed faith during his earthly sojourn did not cross the minds of some translators of Hebrews 12:2, so they inserted an "our" in the text, making it read "looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith" (NRSV; so also, KJV, NIV, and NET Bible). We can trace that view at least as far back as Aquinas, who believed Jesus had the full beatific vision of God in the cradle as a new infant, eliminating any need for faith in God.

⁴¹ Believers are to abide *in* Christ as subsequent New Testament teaching emphasizes (e.g., Col 3:15–17). Yet we still direct our prayer requests to the Father in the name of Jesus (e.g., John 14:14; 15:7,16; 16:23; Matt 6:9; Eph 3:14).

Gerald O'Collins notes: "Aquinas and the subsequent Catholic theological tradition held that in his human mind Jesus enjoyed the beatific vision and hence lived by sight, not by faith. Aquinas expressed classically this thesis: 'When the divine reality is not hidden from sight, there is no point in faith. From the first moment of his conception Christ had the full vision of God in his essence . . . Therefore he could not have had faith' (*Summa theologiae*, 3a. 7. 3 *resp.*)"⁴²

The New American Standard Bible translates Hebrews 12:2 "Fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith." Many recent commentators take this approach. Lane explains: "The poignant description as a whole points to Jesus as the perfect embodiment of faith, who exercised faith heroically. By bringing faith to complete expression, he enabled others to follow his example. The phrase reiterates and makes explicit what was affirmed with a quotation from Scripture in [Hebrews] 2:13, that Jesus in his earthly life was the perfect exemplar of trust in God."⁴³

Donald Hagner adds, "[Jesus] is not only the basis, means, and fulfillment of faith, but in his life he also exemplifies the same principle of faith that we saw in the paragons of [Hebrews] chapter 11."⁴⁴

The writer to the Hebrews twice uses the distinctive term *archēgos* for Jesus (Heb 2:8; 12:2, [cf. Acts 3:15], translated by NRSV and NIV as "pioneer" and by NASB as "author;" or could also be translated as "initiator" or "forerunner"). In light of the athletic imagery, Lane suggests the use of "champion" as appropriate, with some connection to the Greek tradition of Hercules: Jesus is "the champion in the exercise of faith and the one who brought faith to complete expression."⁴⁵ Harold Attridge notes: "Of equal importance is the fact that [Jesus] provides a perfectly adequate model of what life under that covenant involves. Thus the 'faith' (*pisteōs*) that Christ inaugurates and brings to perfect expression is not the content of Christian belief, but the fidelity and trust that he himself exhibited in a fully adequate way and that his followers are called upon to share . . . It is precisely as the one who perfectly embodies

⁴² Gerald O'Collins, *Christology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 254–55.

⁴³ William L. Lane, *Hebrews 9–13*, WBC 47B. (Dallas: Word, 1991), 412.

⁴⁴ Donald Hagner, *Hebrews*, NIBC (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1990), 212.

⁴⁵ Lane, *Hebrews 9–13*, 397.

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faith that he serves as the ground of its possibility in others (*archēgos-aitios* ["source"]) and the model they are to follow (*archēgos-prodromos* ["forerunner," Heb 6:20])."⁴⁶

Furthermore, in the Gospel account of the healing of the demonized son, some commentators suggest that Jesus' reply to the father's request in Mark 9:23 is both a challenge to the father, and also a testimony of his own life of faith, "And Jesus said to him, "If You can!" All things are possible to him who believes" (NASB). Sharyn Dowd explains, "Jesus is not merely an example to be imitated, but a leader to be followed. It is likely, then, that 'the one who believes' in 9:23 is deliberately ambiguous. Jesus has faith and he calls the father to have faith."⁴⁷ Ian Wallis notes, "The disciples may have been ineffectual . . . owing to their *oligopistia* ['little faith'], but Jesus was successful because he demonstrated that faith . . . a faith which all who intend to fulfill Christ's commission must demonstrate."⁴⁸ O'Collins agrees, "[Jesus] speaks about faith as an insider, one who knows personally what the life of faith is and wants to share it with others (see 2 Cor 4:13)."⁴⁹ If Jesus was such an insider as a man of faith himself, then when he criticizes the disciples for their lack of faith (e.g., Matt 6:30; 8:26; 16:8 *oligopistoi*, "little faiths"), he speaks as one who experientially knows what he is talking about.

Finally, support for Jesus' faith also comes from reconsidering the Greek phrase *pistis Christou*, which appears in seven verses of Paul (Rom 3:22,26; Gal 2:16 [twice]; 2:20; 3:22; Eph 3:12; Phil 3:9) as well as in Acts 3:16 and Revelation 14:12. The traditional translation has been as an objective genitive ("faith in Christ"). There is general agreement that believers must place their faith *in* Jesus, as taught in other New

⁴⁶ Harold Attridge, *Hebrews*, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1989), 357–58.

⁴⁷ Sharyn Dowd, *Prayer, Power, and the Problem of Suffering: Mark 11:22–25 in the Context of Markan Theology*, SBLDS 105 (Atlanta, GA: Scholars' Press, 1986), 111.

⁴⁸ Ian Wallis, *The Faith of Jesus Christ in Early Christian Traditions*, SNTSMS 84 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 36. Wallis concludes, "It is the conviction of the present author that interest in Jesus' faith was an unfortunate and unnecessary casualty of early Christological controversy, in which its significance was determined more in terms of what it conceded to rival positions rather than of what it contributed to our knowledge of God and humanity of Jesus Christ . . . Certainly, Jesus' faith does seem to provide a point of departure for Christology which is rooted in common human experience and which explores his theological significance through reflection upon his human being in relation to God" (221).

⁴⁹ O'Collins, *Christology*, 261.

Testament passages (e.g., John 3:16; Acts 20:21; Col 1:4; 1 John 3:23). The debate concerns whether the genitive noun (Jesus, or Son of God) is either objective or subjective. More commentators are recognizing the phrase as a subjective genitive, that is, “faith [or faithfulness] *of* Jesus,” that Jesus himself experienced faith in God.⁵⁰ Thus, that Jesus depended on the Father is both explicitly and implicitly evident in Scripture.

Jesus’ Dependence on the Divine Resources of the Holy Spirit

Is the role of the Spirit superfluous or necessary in Jesus’ life and ministry? As the Anointed One, Jesus was the unique bearer of the Spirit (Luke 4:16–21) given without measure (John 3:34). Old Testament prophecies⁵¹ and the Gospels portray the Holy Spirit as being associated with the Messiah. Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit (Matt 1:20; Luke 1:35); was full of the Spirit and led by the Holy Spirit (e.g., Luke 4:1); was empowered by the Spirit (e.g., Luke 4:16); cast out demons by the Holy Spirit (Matt 12:28 = Luke 11:20); and gave instructions by the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:2).

Although the quantity of Gospel passages mentioning the Spirit is less than what might be expected,⁵² the Gospels do give important emphasis to the role of the Spirit in the life of Jesus. G. R. Beasley-Murray explains, “Prominence is given to narratives associated with the Spirit’s action in the life of Jesus through occurring at a prominent point in the Gospels, namely at their beginning.”⁵³ In Mark 1:8–13 the Spirit is mentioned three times in relation to Jesus’ baptism and temptation.⁵⁴

⁵⁰ Daniel Wallace summarizes the grammatical options in *An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 115–16. For further treatment on this important issue, see Richard B. Hays, *The Faith of Jesus*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001). Compare the discussion of Romans 3:22–26 by Douglas Moo, who opts for the objective genitive view (“in Christ”) (*The Epistle to the Romans* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996], 224–43), and Richard Hays, who opts for the subjective genitive view (“of Christ”) (“*Pistis* in Romans 3.25: Neglected Evidence for the ‘Faithfulness of Christ?’” *NTS* 39 [1993]: 22–26).

⁵¹ Various passages in Isaiah note the role of the Spirit in Messiah’s life and ministry (e.g., 11:1–2; 42:1; and 61:1–3).

⁵² Quantity of references is not always a decisive criterion. For instance, the doctrine of Jesus’ virgin birth (or rather, virgin conception) is based solely on two passages, Matthew 1:18–25 and Luke 1:36–38.

⁵³ G. R. Beasley-Murray, “Jesus and the Spirit,” in *Melanges Bibliques en homage au R. P. Beda Rigaux*, ed. A. Deschamps and A. de Halleux (Gembloux: Duculot, 1970), 463.

⁵⁴ Craig Keener explains, “The Holy Spirit appears rarely in Mark’s Gospel, primarily in the introduction (1:8,10,12) and in references to power for exorcism (3:29) and prophetic

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Matthew indicates the Spirit's involvement six times, the first three in the announcement related to Jesus' conception (1:18,20 twice), and the other three in relating his baptism and temptation (3:1,16; 4:1). The Spirit is mentioned twelve times in Luke chapters 1–4; three times in John 1, and three more times in John 3. Thus, regarding prominence at the beginning of their narratives, all four gospels emphasize the role of the Holy Spirit in Jesus' life.

Regarding Jesus' teaching on the Spirit, Beasley-Murray explains, "Inasmuch as he rarely made his vocation [as bearer of the Spirit] a subject of his instruction, there is as much instruction on the Spirit in the recorded teaching of Jesus as the situation warranted."⁵⁵ Furthermore, the disciples as convinced Jewish monotheists (Deut 6:4) perhaps were not ready to receive instruction on the third person of the Trinity. For in his teaching, Jesus—in the progress of revelation—offers the clearest presentation to date that God is a trinitarian Being. Must not Jesus then teach the concept to his disciples in a careful and progressive manner, first distinguishing the Father from the Son, and then at some later point teaching about the third person, the Holy Spirit? Gregory of Nazianzus clarifies: "For the matter stands thus: the Old Testament proclaimed the Father openly, and the Son more obscurely. The New manifested the Son, and suggested the deity of the Spirit. Now the Spirit himself dwells among us, and supplies us with a clearer demonstration of himself. For it was not safe, when the Godhead of the Father was not yet acknowledged, plainly to proclaim the Son: nor when that of the Son was not yet received, to burden us further (if I may use so bold an expression) with the Holy Spirit."⁵⁶

inspiration, both in the Old Testament (12:36) and among disciples (13:11). This suggests two important points for the interpreter: Mark views the Spirit as the source of empowerment for the church's mission, and Mark gives his primary lesson on pneumatology up front, in the introduction, one of the most critical sections of his Gospel. Because a proem typically introduced a writer's main themes, and because Mark has tightened the tradition we have from Q into a concise summary of John's [the Baptist] announcement and Jesus' baptism and testing, the Spirit plays a far greater role in Mark's Gospel than a mere concordance survey might suggest." *The Spirit in the Gospels and Acts* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1997), 50.

⁵⁵ Beasley-Murray, "Jesus and the Spirit," 476.

⁵⁶ Gregory of Nazianzus, *Orations* 5.26, cited by Gary Badcock, *Light of Truth and Fire of Love: A Theology of the Holy Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 58. Another reason might be that, as the divine author of Scripture, the "shy" and humble Spirit, who points to Christ, is reluctant to mention his own name in the scriptural text very often.

During the upper room discourse, Jesus presented more systematic teaching about the Spirit, yet the disciples, who did not comprehend that Jesus would be leaving them shortly to return to the Father, did not seem to pay much attention. No follow-up questions about the Spirit are recorded (as sometimes occurred with other teachings that puzzled them, e.g., Matt 13:36; 17:19).

Table 6.2 lists the main references to the Spirit’s participation in Jesus’ life in the Gospels (passages marked with * will receive further comment below).

Table 6.2 Jesus and the Spirit in the Gospels

<i>Explicit:</i>	
Spirit without measure— John 3:34	Rejoice in the Spirit— Luke 10:21
Baptism—Matt 3:16, Mark 1:10, Luke 3:22	*Spirit is willing—Matt 26:41, Mark 14:38
Temptation—Matt 4:1, Mark 1:12, Luke 4:1	Give commands through the Spirit Acts 1:2
*Exorcism—Matt 12:28, Luke 11:20	*[Offered through the eternal Spirit—Heb 9:14]
<i>Implicit:</i>	
*Power to heal—Luke 5:17b, Mark 5:30	

Matthew 12:28 attributes Jesus’ exorcisms to the divine resources of the Holy Spirit: “But if it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come to you” (Matt 12:28; “finger of God” Luke 11:20⁵⁷). Beasley-Murray notes that this saying “gives Jesus’ own explanation of his exorcisms: they are performed not by his own power but by the power of God, i.e., by the Spirit of God, and since the defeat of the evil power is a feature of the end time, they show that the kingdom of God has appeared in his activity.”⁵⁸ Furthermore Jesus’ follow-up reference to the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit (Matt 12:32) also

⁵⁷ D. A. Carson states, “Luke 11:20 has ‘the finger of God’ instead of ‘the Spirit of God.’ Possibly the latter is original . . . , but the matter is of little consequence since they both refer to the same thing (cf. Exod 8:19; Deut 9:10; Ps 8:3).” *Matthew, EBC* 9 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981), 289.

⁵⁸ G. R. Beasley-Murray, “Jesus and the Spirit,” 471.

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indicates how important Jesus viewed the ministry of the Holy Spirit as being. Donald Hagner explains:

Given Matthew's Christological interests and the unique and central position held by Jesus throughout the Gospel, one may understandably be surprised that Matthew has not said the reverse of what stands in the text, i.e., that blasphemy against the Spirit is forgivable but not that against the Son of Man. The gravity of the blasphemy against the Spirit, however, depends upon the Holy Spirit as the fundamental dynamic that stands behind and makes possible the entire messianic ministry of Jesus itself. . . . The failure to understand Jesus is yet forgivable but not the outright rejection of the saving power of God through the Spirit exhibited in the direct overthrow of the kingdom of Satan.⁵⁹

Luke 5:17b and Mark 5:30, two implicit references, indicate Jesus as an agent of the Father's power. According to Luke 5:17b, "the power of the Lord was with him to heal." Nolland explains, "The reference to 'power' (*dynamis*) links back to [Luke] 4:14 and prepares the way for the coming references to tangible power proceeding from Jesus (6:19, 8:44): the power that flows out of Jesus and brings healing is the power of God himself . . . It is more likely that Luke is continuing to clarify what it means for Jesus to have become through the descent of the Spirit the repository of the power of God (3:22; 4:1,14,18-19; 6:19; 8:44)."⁶⁰

According to Mark 5:30, "Immediately aware that power had gone forth from him, Jesus turned about in the crowd and said, 'Who touched my clothes?'" Lane notes: "Jesus possesses the power of God as the representative of the Father. Nevertheless, the Father remains in control of his own power. The healing of the woman occurred through God's free and gracious decision to bestow upon her the power which was active in Jesus. By an act of sovereign will God determined to honor the woman's faith in spite of the fact that it was tinged with ideas which bordered on magic."⁶¹

⁵⁹ Donald Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, WBC 33A (Dallas: Word, 1993), 348.

⁶⁰ John Nolland, *Luke 9:21-18:34*, WBC (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1993), 234.

⁶¹ William Lane, *The Gospel of Mark*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 192-93.

Hebrews 9:14 offers a distinctive comment regarding Jesus' experience of the passion and his death: "How much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience." Lane explains, "The fact that his offering was made *dia pneumatos aiōniou*, 'through the eternal Spirit,' implies that he had been divinely empowered and sustained in his office. The formulation does not occur elsewhere in the New Testament or early Christian literature, but it may be understood as a designation for the Holy Spirit. A reference to the Spirit is appropriate in a section under the influence of Isaiah, where the Servant of the Lord is qualified for his task by the Spirit of God (Isa 42:1; 61:1)."⁶²

Finally, Jesus taught that "the Spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak" (Matt 26:41; Mark 14:38). The common view of Jesus' statement to the three sleeping disciples in Gethsemane is that it refers to the continuing internal struggle within human nature between the human spirit against the weak physical body. If this were so, Jesus' preceding words ("Stay awake and pray that you may not come into the time of trial") would then be a challenge to muster more human effort to override their bodily weakness so they could pray. Another interpretation considers the contrast as one between relying on divine power of the Holy "Spirit," rather than solely relying on human resources ("flesh"), which can never stand alone against the assaults of Satan. Jesus made similar contrasts between the divine sphere and human sphere elsewhere (John 3:6; 6:63), which have Old Testament precedent in Isaiah 31:1, contrasting an Egyptian alliance ("flesh") against relying on the Lord God ("spirit"; see also Ps 51:11–12). Is not Jesus giving the three disciples the secret to his own victory in the garden? William Lane comments on Mark 14:38, "Spiritual wakefulness and prayer in full dependence upon divine help provide the only adequate preparation for crisis . . . Jesus prepared for his own intense trial through vigilance and prayer, and thus gave to the disciples and to the Church the model for the proper resistance of eschatological temptation."⁶³ Jesus' comment then furnishes the most explicit reference to his own dependence

⁶² Lane, *Hebrews 9–13*, 240.

⁶³ Lane, *Mark*, 520–21.

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on the Holy Spirit and its implications as a teaching for all believers for all times.

Any understanding of Jesus' earthly pilgrimage must account for the numerous references to the Holy Spirit regarding Jesus' life and ministry.⁶⁴ If he planned to live as a human just like us then, once the Son voluntarily decided to add on human nature, he would need to veil his divine glory and predominantly rely on divine resources outside of his own divine power. Scripture gives sufficient evidence to affirm that, without the filling and empowering ministry of the Spirit in Jesus' life, Jesus would not have lived an exemplary human life nor accomplished his messianic mission.

In sum, the pervasiveness of the scriptural evidence presented above—of dependence on the Father, of expressing his own faith in God, and of dependence on the Holy Spirit—supports a lifestyle for Jesus as *predominantly* dependent on the divine resources of the Father and the Spirit (option 2) rather than only occasional dependence (option 1).⁶⁵

Differences Between Jesus and Us and Potential Objections

Jesus shares a common humanity since believers, having been re-generated, now share the same human nature as Jesus does and as Adam and Eve did at creation. Also, believers have access to the same divine resources that Jesus did. Let us consider differences.

Uniqueness of Jesus and the Spirit. Is the Holy Spirit's ministry unique

⁶⁴ Hawthorne groups a number of implicit references to Jesus and the Spirit around four particular themes; (1) acting with authority (*exousia*): Mark 1:22/Matt 7:29/Luke 4:32; Mark 1:27/Luke 4:36; Mark 2:10/Matt 9:6/Luke 4:36; Mark 2:12/Matt 9:6/Luke 5:24; Mark 11:28–29,33/Matt 21:23–34,27/Luke 20:2,8; (2) performing his miracles with power (*dynameis, dynamei*): Mark 5:30/Luke 8:46; Mark 6:2/Matt 13:54; Matt 11:20–22; 14:2; Luke 4:14,36; 5:17; (3) being perceived by the people as a prophet: Mark 6:15–16/Luke 9:8–9; Mark 8:28/Matt 16:14/Luke 9:19; Mark 14:65/Matt 26:68; see also Matt 21:11,46; Luke 7:16,39; 24:19; (4) perceiving himself as a prophet [and also more than a prophet]: Mark 6:4/Matt 13:57/Luke 4:24; 13:33; cf. Matt 23:31–38; Luke 11:47–51 (*The Presence*, 115).

⁶⁵ John McKinley explores the role of the Spirit in the life and ministry of Jesus, evaluating five proposals: Gerald Hawthorne (American Evangelical), James Dunn (British Evangelical), Roger Stronstad and Robert Menzies (Pentecostal), Max Turner (Charismatic), and Ralph Del Colle (Catholic). McKinley then offers his own proposal in an unpublished manuscript (2003), "Why Did Jesus Have the Holy Spirit When He Was Already Divine?"

to Jesus as the Anointed One/Messiah, or does the Holy Spirit empower Jesus to live his earthly life in a manner similar to how the Spirit works with believers? One consequence of Jesus' departure to the Father is that it would permit the Spirit to come (John 7:39; 16:7). Believers have been designed to be indwelt by the Spirit forever (John 14:16). That is, God has so fashioned humankind that both a human person and a divine person can occupy together the cockpit of one's life in which the believer can be formed, informed, empowered by the Spirit, in a fashion similar to Jesus. Jesus showcases the possibilities of a human life completely filled by the Spirit. One significant implication for Christian living today becomes very clear: Jesus walked by the Spirit, and so it is possible for us to do so as we yield in dependence on God.

Although the same Spirit that indwelt Jesus indwells all believers, John 3:34 indicates that Jesus had a greater measure of the Spirit. This may have been due to Jesus' unique role as the divine-human messiah (level 2 in Table 6.1) which required the full measure of the Spirit's ministry (John 3:36). Or this greater measure may also have been the consequence of Jesus' complete dependence on the Father and his life of holiness, which permitted a full measure of the Spirit in Jesus' life and ministry. Sadly, our faith and life in holiness are limited, being hindered by doubt and unbelief as we are still in the process of being conformed to the image of the Son. Our honest prayer can be that of the man in Mark 9: "I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!" (Mark 9:24). Jesus teaches that it is possible to grow in greater dependence on God so we can emulate more and more of his life and ministry (e.g., Mark 11:22–25; John 13:12–17; 14:12–14).

Supernatural Elements in Jesus' Life. If Jesus did not predominantly use his own divine powers, then how can one give an account for the various supernaturally oriented aspects of Jesus' life that go beyond the limits of human powers? Note that most of the supernaturally oriented activities of Jesus were not unique to him alone but are also performed by "mere" humans, which supplies additional evidence for the dependency proposal.

1. *Miracles.* Both the Old Testament and New Testament record miracles done by mere humans—not in their own human power, but sourced

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in the power of God—that were similar to those Jesus performed; for example: (1) raising the dead (2 Kings 4:8–37; Acts 9:36–42); (2) curing a leper (2 Kings 5:1–15); (3) healing the lame (Acts 3:1–10); (4) making an ax head float on water (2 Kings 6:4–7); (5) multiplying food (2 Kings 4:42–44); (6) walking on water for a brief time (Matt 14:28–30); and (7) healing the sick and casting out demons by means of Paul's handkerchief and clothes (cp. Acts 19:11–12).⁶⁶

2. *Jesus' knowledge.* This includes his knowledge of God's authoritative message and Jesus' knowledge of the thoughts of others (e.g., Matt 12:25; Luke 11:17). Daniel reported and interpreted the dream of King Nebuchadnezzar (Dan 2:1–49), and Peter knew the secret sin of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1–11).

3. *Jesus' temptability and impeccability.* Jesus is human, but also uniquely divine. Scripture explicitly teaches that Jesus was tempted (didactic material, e.g., Heb 2:18; 4:15; life examples narrated in the Gospels, e.g., Matt 4:1–11; 16:23; 26:38–46). Yet James teaches that God cannot be tempted by evil (Jas 1:13). The teaching about Jesus' impeccability claims that either he *could* not sin or that he *would* not sin (Scripture only explicitly teaches that Jesus *did* not sin).

No matter which incarnational model one holds, all must address this seeming paradox. That Jesus fought against temptation is obvious, particularly in Gethsemane (even sweating blood, Luke 22:44; Heb 12:4). We infer that Jesus thought it was possible for him to sin, and thus he struggled to resist; otherwise we must interpret Jesus' dramatic performance as an actor to be worthy of an Academy Award. Resolving the temptability issue requires more space than can be allotted here, but suffice it to suggest one possible resolution, as O'Collins notes: "Jesus

⁶⁶ If option 2 is affirmed, what evidence in the Gospels can be marshaled to support Jesus' deity? Although the proposal affirms that each miracle is done by the power of the Spirit, the cumulative effect of the miracles, in combination with the other evidences, still point to Jesus' deity as well as his unique and distinctive Messianic mission (e.g., Matt 11:3–5). Various standard evidences can be cited for his deity, as mentioned at the beginning of the chapter: Jesus received worship (e.g., Matt 28:9,16; John 20:28); his self-claims (e.g., Matt 22:42–45; John 8:58–59); use of *Lord* (e.g., Luke 2:11; John 20:28); and the testimony of Gospel writers (John 1:1,18). Also, evidence of Jesus' messianic mission as the Christ proves that Jesus is more than just a prophet (e.g., Luke 4:16–21; Matt 16:16; Mark 10:45; Luke 4:41). Thus, despite the veiling of Jesus' deity during the incarnation, there is sufficient manifestation of his divine person that still shines through clearly; for, as Jesus teaches, "Whoever has seen me has seen the Father" (John 14:9).

could be truly tempted and tested, provided that he did not know that he could not sin. If he had known that he could not sin, it would be difficult, if not impossible, to make sense of genuine temptations; they would be reduced to make-believe, a performance put on for the edification of others. It was quite a different situation to be incapable of sin but not to know that.”⁶⁷

We can affirm that Jesus could not actually sin—that it was not a *metaphysical* possibility—if we also can affirm that it was an *epistemic* possibility.⁶⁸ That is, within Jesus’ own understanding and perception of reality during his state of humiliation, he *thought* it was possible that he could still sin. Furthermore, due to his formed heart of holiness, Jesus was much more painfully aware of the evil attacking him than we are. And he resisted every temptation, requiring greater intentionality in effort and reliance on divine help; believers are usually more clueless and less intentional (e.g., Heb 12:3–4).

4. *Jesus’ sinless life.* Was this *solely* the result of his deity, or is it possible for a human person to live without sinning? First, human nature is not essentially corrupt or sinful (e.g., Gen 1:31). Sinful propensities are a feature added on since the fall. For a brief period of time Adam and Eve lived without sinning. Also, the Bible promises that all believers in the future eternal state, although still being human, will live continuously without sin (Rom 8:17,28–30; 1 Cor 15:50–57; Rev 21:4,27), sustained by the Spirit who indwells us forever (John 14:16). Being regenerated, believers now have a new heart (Ezek 36:25–27) and have been freed from the power of sin (Rom 6:6–7,11–12,18). Yet believers take with them into their new life in God’s family all of their sinful habits and propensities, and sadly we may continue to maintain and learn new sin

⁶⁷ O’Collins, *Christology*, 271. One practical implication is worthy of note. By walking in the power of the Spirit, we do not need to yield to any temptation. In fact, 1 Corinthians 10:13 offers the promise that there is always a sinless way out of each temptation. In other words, at any given moment, a believer *need not sin*. More to the point, in light of the promise of 1 Corinthians 10:13, can it be proposed that Jesus, in living a sinless life, is the first human being ever who fully actualized the theoretical possibility of 1 Corinthians 10:13 throughout his whole life—that there is always a sinless way out of temptation?

⁶⁸ Thomas Morris notes, “We have said that it seems to be a conceptual truth that, in some sense, temptation requires the possibility of sinning. On reflection, we can see that it is the *epistemic* possibility of sinning rather than a broadly logical, or metaphysical, or even physical possibility that is conceptually linked to temptation . . . Jesus could be tempted to sin just in case it was epistemically possible for him that he sin,” *Logic*, 147–48.

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patterns even as Christians. But we are commanded to walk in Christlike ways through the power of God's grace working in us—ought implies *can* in God's grace. Jesus demonstrated the possibility for regenerated humans to live sinlessly, becoming another "Adam" of a new God-oriented human race (1 Cor 15:45–49). Jesus' life makes the point that living sinlessly is theoretically possible for humans through God's power (e.g., Gal 5:16; 1 Cor 10:13).⁶⁹

Role of the Spirit in Jesus' Childhood

Some theories about the incarnation seem to imply that Jesus was basically on his own during his childhood and young adult years prior to his public ministry, yet two lines of evidence suggest otherwise.

Parallels between the Forerunner and the Messiah

If the forerunner of Messiah was filled with the Spirit while in the womb (Luke 1:15,17), would not the Messiah himself be also (Matt 1:20; Luke 1:35)? Luke moves back and forth between the accounts of the birth and childhood of John the Baptist on the one hand and Jesus on the other, indicating the close association between the two, although

⁶⁹ Regarding the common notion that believers have a "sin nature" and Jesus did not, although a full discussion is beyond the scope of the chapter, a brief comment is needed. First, the term "sin nature" is problematic. We always will only have one nature; we have a human nature (see Garrett J. DeWeese's chapter 4 for clarification); the NIV adds to the confusion by usually translating the Greek word "flesh" [*sarx*] as "sin nature." "Sinful propensity" is a preferable term. Second, often Romans 7:14–25 is used as evidence for indwelling sin in the believer. Yet some New Testament scholars, and I am in agreement, understand Paul's argument in Romans 7 as rendering 7:14–25 irrelevant to the topic of a believer's sinful propensity (see Douglas Moo, *The Epistles to the Romans* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996], 442–51 for a discussion of the issues involved and his reasons for this interpretation). Two biblical teachings need to be kept in mind. First, because of regeneration, believers are free from the power of sin, so that sinning is never a necessity (e.g., Rom 6:6,10–12,18; 1 Cor 10:13; Gal 5:16). Second, this side of heaven, living completely sinlessly is not actually possible in this life (e.g., 1 John 1:8–9), due to the depth of our sinful compulsions acquired since birth, with the constant pressure of living in a world system antagonistic to God (1 John 2:15–17) that is constantly assaulted by Satanic forces (Eph 6:12). What we hold in common with Jesus is that we never need to sin. Furthermore, facing temptations for Jesus was much more difficult than what we experience. Jesus always felt the full brunt of the temptation and suffering he faced as a sinless person, yet without yielding, struggling once to the point of sweating profusely (Luke 22:44; cf. Heb 12:3–4).

each had distinctly different origins and roles (on John the Baptist: Luke 1:5–25, 57–80; on Jesus: Luke 1:26–56; 2:1–52).

An implied parallel is made between John's growth (Luke 1:80) and Jesus' growth (Luke 2:40) in that both verses begin the same way: "The child grew and became strong . . ." (cp. Samuel as a child, 1 Sam 2:26). Bock notes, "The verse parallels what was said of John the Baptist (1:80), but what is said about Jesus is more extensive. John is said simply to grow in his human spirit, but Jesus grows in the wisdom of God."⁷⁰ There is a connection between Isaiah 11:2 ("The Spirit of the LORD will rest on him, The spirit of wisdom and understanding [LXX *pneuma sophias kai suneseōs*], The spirit of counsel and strength, The spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD.") with Luke 2:40 ("increasing in wisdom" [*plēroumenon sophia*] and "the favor of God was upon him;" cp. Acts 4:33). Dunn comments, "It is quite probable, though not certain, that Luke means us to understand that Jesus was every bit as full of the Holy Spirit as John was (1:15), and that Jesus' growth in wisdom and grace was due to his possession of the Spirit (2:40,52); the link between the Spirit and divine sonship (and filial consciousness) would also be a pointer in this direction (1:35; 2:49; 3:22; cp. Rom. 8:15–16; Gal. 4:6)."⁷¹

Twelve-Year-Old Temple Visit

Regarding the matter of wisdom, Jesus' encounter at age twelve with the religious teachers offers evidence of unusual wisdom at a young age (Luke 2:46–47). Earle Ellis notes that Luke 2:47, in which the teachers "were amazed at his understanding (*synesis*) and his answers" is not intended "just as a tribute to Jesus' intelligence but as a witness to his relationship to God . . . The same 'Holy Spirit' power, later to be manifested in Jesus' ministry, even now is at work. Jesus interprets the Scripture not

⁷⁰ Darrell L. Bock, *Luke 1:1–9:50* BEC (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), 254. Bock continues, "The extent of this growth, especially in respect to wisdom, will be demonstrated by Jesus' wise perception in 2:41–52."

⁷¹ James D. G. Dunn, *Baptism in the Spirit* (London: SCM, 1970), 24. Max Turner observes, "If the Baptist's own experience of the Spirit was itself an eschatological novum, Jesus' surpasses it. Gerd Schneider explains: 'Jesus is not merely filled with the Spirit, like John, rather his very being is attributed to the Spirit'" (Max Turner, *The Holy Spirit and Spiritual Gifts in the New Testament and Church Today* [Peabody, MA: Hendrikson, 1996], 25).

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from the knowledge gained in rabbinic training but from the 'wisdom' given by God."⁷²

Gerald Hawthorne explains, "Here is a glimpse into what Jesus would be like in years to come, about whom it could well be said, 'The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom [*sophia*] and understanding [*synesis*]' (Isa 11:2 [LXX]; cp. Isa 42:1; Luke 4:18; 11:31)."⁷³ Note Luke's use of the phrase in Luke 2:40 ("the favor of God was upon him") along with Acts 4:33 ("and with great power the apostles gave their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all").

Regarding this temple visit in Luke 2:41–51, Bock notes, "This is the only account in Luke where Jesus takes instruction from Jewish teachers."⁷⁴ Hawthorne adds, "On special occasions, such as the seven-day feast of Passover, the Temple Sanhedrin sat in the Temple area and informally received questions and stated their traditions (Sanh. 88b) . . . [On this first temple visit] possibly numbered among [the Jewish teachers] were Symeon, Gamaliel (cp. Acts 22:3), Annas, Caiaphas, Nicodemus, Joseph of Arimathea . . ."⁷⁵ Perhaps this kind of special learning experience for Jesus was the first of many such encounters to which he looked forward during his subsequent annual temple visits to learn from these Jewish teachers, until he left home around age thirty.⁷⁶

Though these verses are few, it is possible to infer the active role of the Spirit in Jesus' early years. Sinclair Ferguson explains: "There is a continuing ministry of the Spirit in the life of Jesus ('filled,' *plēroumenon*, in Luke 2:40 indicates experience which was progressive as well as pas-

⁷² E. Earle Ellis, *The Gospel of Luke* (London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1966), 85; cf. Jas 3:15,17 (cited in Hawthorne, *The Presence*, 108).

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 107. Regarding Jesus' early schooling Hawthorne suggests that "Jesus remains in the circle of his Galilean family. This would appear to suggest that the Holy Spirit, in filling Jesus with wisdom, did not work in this instance independently of social structures but through them. That is to say, the Holy Spirit took advantage of every educational instrument that was thus readily available—home, parents, school, Scriptures, life and worship of the synagogue, and so on—to mold the intellectual and spiritual dimensions of this developing personality" (100–1).

⁷⁴ Bock, *Luke 1:1–9:50*, 267; cf. Ellis, *Luke*, 85.

⁷⁵ Hawthorne, *The Presence*, 104.

⁷⁶ Some understand the phrase by John the Baptist "come/follow after" (John 1:15,27,30; Matt 3:11, and Mark 1:7) as the technical term used to designate a follower or disciple, thus John would be identifying the future Messiah as a current disciple of John's (Lane, *Mark*, 52; Kendrick Grobel, "He That Cometh After Me," *JBL* 60 [1941]: 397–401).

sive). We may assume, from Luke's comment that Jesus 'increased in wisdom and in stature, and in favor with God and man' (Luke 2:52, RSV), that he gave expression to the appropriate fruit of the Spirit at each period of his human development."⁷⁷

Implications of Jesus' Limited Knowledge during His Childhood

Assuming the proposal argued above is compatible with Scripture, what implications can be drawn regarding Jesus' childhood? Would it not be the case that Jesus' teaching, "Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it" (Luke 18:17), is based on his reflections of being a child himself? Jesus could have made his initial appearance on Earth as an adult, as Adam and Eve were created. By being born as a baby, Jesus affirms the human development process from birth onward. Biblical evidence about Jesus' childhood is limited, but Scripture teaches that Jesus grew as a normal human person (e.g., Luke 2:40,52). Can we not infer that his adult character is in some way connected with a normal human development process, as it is for all humans (though not limited to it)?

Furthermore, if we affirm a full experience of normal child development for Jesus (e.g., Luke 2:40,52), we must assert that, although Jesus was fully God, during his early years on this earth Jesus was not fully aware of all the knowledge he has during adult public ministry. That is, at one month old, the baby Jesus would have been ignorant of his deity. Yet it seems reasonable to conclude that Jesus' conceptual understanding of his identity, mission, and teaching, and his virtuous character were all mainly formed during his obscure years prior to beginning his public ministry.

Accordingly, not only did the Spirit participate in the conception and birth of Jesus, but he would also be involved in the drastic limitation of the Son's preexistent conscious life to that of a baby boy.⁷⁸ Since Jesus

⁷⁷ Sinclair B. Ferguson, *The Holy Spirit* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1996), 44. In his discussion Ferguson includes references to Isaiah 11:1–3 and 42:1 and 50:4–5 as offering hints regarding how the Spirit might have worked with Jesus during his growing years.

⁷⁸ Donald Macleod complains that this is an unbelievable "degree of amnesia to which there can be no parallel" (*The Person of Christ* [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1998], 210). Of course, the whole matter of the incarnation itself is vastly incredible and mysterious from a human point of view—of joining finite human nature to infinite divine nature—so it

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continues to be divine during his temporal humiliation, he retains his omniscience and remains sinless. Yet how can this be reconciled with the normal human development process of learning?

Perhaps the Holy Spirit who indwelt and filled Jesus provided some kind of “fire wall” to Jesus’ divine mind, or otherwise enabled his divine knowledge and abilities to remain in his subconscious mind.⁷⁹ Accordingly, the Spirit would then permit Jesus’ increasing awareness within his limited human consciousness in a way that would be appropriate at each stage of Jesus’ growing years. Just as the Spirit walked with the child Samuel in the Old Testament (1 Sam 3:1–21), so the Spirit walked with the child Jesus to be his inner divine tutor, helping him avoid the development of fallible beliefs in literary and historical matters as well as spiritual and moral matters.⁸⁰

Furthermore, Jesus could fully sympathize and identify with infants and children through his own experience as the sympathetic high priest for all humans, regardless of their developmental stage (Heb 4:15). Once Jesus developed his adult abilities of reflection, the Spirit could then bring to Jesus’ mature consciousness his own experience of being an infant.⁸¹ Yet, even during those early years, Jesus would have had a

would follow that certain facets of the incarnation would also be incredible, but when God is involved, the seemingly impossible can become possible (Mark 10:27).

⁷⁹ Discussion of Jesus’ consciousness is beyond the scope of this chapter. Regardless of which view one takes, a similar functional outcome results.

⁸⁰ That Jesus would not develop fallible beliefs in these important matters is crucial for maintaining his sinlessness. Philosopher Dallas Willard explains, “We always live up to our beliefs—or down to them, as the case may be” (*The Divine Conspiracy* [San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1998], 307). Due to the nature of beliefs, the Spirit would need to guide the child Jesus into true beliefs about these important aspects of reality. Perhaps the teaching about an age of accountability would also apply in Jesus’ case. For a defense of the age of accountability for children, see Klaus Issler, “Biblical Perspectives on Developmental Grace for Nurturing Children’s Spirituality,” in *Children’s Spirituality: Christian Perspectives, Research, and Application*, ed. Donald Ratcliff (Eugene, OR: Cascade/Wipf & Stock, 2004), chap. 4.

⁸¹ This suggestion of the Spirit’s bringing to mind Jesus’ experience of childhood responds to A. B. Bruce’s critique that though Jesus had been a child, he would not have remembered those early years: “A mighty impulse of free self-conscious love constrained the eternal Son to descend into humanity, and in the descent that love lost itself for years; till at length the man Jesus found out the secret of His birth . . . [Yet] on this view, the Logos had no acquaintance with some of the most interesting stages in the experience of Christ . . . Therefore with infants, children, and youths He has not learned to sympathise; only with full-grown tempted men has His experience fitted Him to have a fellow-feeling” (*The Humiliation of Christ* [1881; repr., Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995], 175–76).

heightened consciousness, beyond what we typically have as children, in that the Spirit was his divine tutor, his inner teacher.⁸² Millard Erickson, though focusing on Jesus' dependence on the Father, makes the same point: "The infinite knowledge possessed by [Jesus'] deity was accessible to him, not when his divine nature permitted access, as [Thomas] Morris suggests, but when the Father permitted access. The Son had chosen to live in dependence or subordination. Presumably the access the Father allowed was selective; that is to say, the whole divine knowledge did not come pouring in during moments of illumination. This particular model has the advantage of tying the persons of the Trinity together more closely than do some other views."⁸³

Scripture affirms the Spirit's role of supervision and supervenience not only in Jesus' adult life and ministry, but also during his childhood. Jesus was formed and informed by the Spirit throughout his development as a child and young adult to prepare him for his future ministry, relying on the Spirit as his private tutor and source of power so that he could transcend average human limitations.⁸⁴

Conclusion: Jesus, Our Genuine Example

In this chapter a case has been made that our Lord Jesus Christ, in his common life with us, gave to believers of all time a *genuine model* for how to live beyond the limitations of an average human life. Contemporary Christians tend to give greater attention to Jesus' deity than his full humanity, thus tending toward a functionally docetic Christology. Without an appreciation of the predominant role of the Father and the Holy Spirit in Jesus' life, it is impossible to make sense of how Jesus can be our genuine example.

Specifically, I defended the view (called option 2 above) that Jesus predominantly depended on divine resources other than his own. Prior to his incarnation, Jesus voluntarily agreed to conceal to a great extent his

⁸² Early in his life, Jesus developed a conversational relationship with the Spirit. For further guidance on what this can look like, see Klaus Issler, *Wasting Time with God: A Christian Spirituality of Friendship with God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2001), chap. 6.

⁸³ Erickson, *The Word*, 559.

⁸⁴ As has been proposed, both the Father and the Spirit are involved in Jesus' life, yet in a unique role, the Holy Spirit working as the agent of the Father.

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divine nature and powers to live mainly within his human powers and to rely predominantly on the tutelage and power of the Father and the Holy Spirit. Jesus was indwelt by and filled with the Spirit from his conception and birth onward, not just from his baptism.

The work of the Holy Spirit in Jesus' birth, growth, life, ministry, and death was significant, without which Jesus would not have succeeded and accomplished his mission. At the beginning of his sojourn Jesus, as a human infant, was unaware of his divine nature, as the consciousness of it was locked up in his divine mind or subconscious. He grew and learned as would any human of that day. Yet Jesus was formed and informed by the Father and the Spirit throughout his growth as a child and as a young adult in order to prepare him for his future ministry. Jesus relied on the Father and the Spirit as his private tutor and source of power in order to exceed average human limitations. Guided by the Father and the Spirit from his birth onward, during his childhood and young adult years and prior to his baptism Jesus became fully aware of his identity, unique Sonship with the Father, and his messianic mission. During Jesus' public ministry, he depended on the Father through the agency of the Holy Spirit and exercised a delegated authority from him for word and deed in his life and ministry.

Jesus lived within his humanity, remaining sinless, thereby qualifying himself to be our atoning sacrifice, and our sympathetic high priest. He performed miracles, knew the thoughts of others, and lived a sinless life by the power of the Holy Spirit. In a sermon to the Gentile Cornelius and his household, the apostle Peter offered a summary statement of the ministry of Jesus: "how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power; how he went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him" (Acts 10:38).

More work is required to tackle various remaining issues, yet the hope is that, if sufficient evidence has been marshaled to offer legitimacy to the proposal, it will serve as a catalyst for further discussion of these important matters, both for greater theological clarity and for greater empowerment in the church's life and ministry.⁸⁵ For, if Jesus is

⁸⁵ Shuster comments, "It will probably be evident that I do not hold anything resembling a thoroughly kenotic Christology. Obviously, the degree to which one does hold such a Christology will bear upon the extent to which one can reasonably take Jesus as a model.

our genuine example, then we are not limited to the current quality of our life and ministry—much more is possible! “This is how we know we are in him: Whoever claims to live in [God] must walk as Jesus did” (1 John 2:5b–6, NIV).⁸⁶

For Further Reading

The following two studies provide a helpful introduction to the theme of the imitation of Christ. Tinsley offers a book-length treatment and is positively sympathetic to the subject. Also sympathetic, Hawthorne presents an analysis based on Philippians 2. Shuster’s study offers a good overview of key issues, though is more cautious about the subject.

Tinsley, E. J. *The Imitation of God in Christ: An Essay on the Biblical Basis of Christian Spirituality*. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960.

Hawthorne, Gerald. “The Imitation of Christ: Discipleship in Philippians.” In *Patterns of Discipleship in the New Testament*, ed. Richard Longenecker. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996.

Shuster, Marguerite. “The Use and Misuse of the Idea of the Imitation of Christ.” *Ex Auditu* 14 (1998): 70–81.

The following studies focus primarily on the human experience of Jesus himself. Ramsay’s scope is the broadest, arguing that Jesus’ own experience is the key to his teachings. Hawthorne and Smail look at Jesus’ dependence on the Spirit. Wallis addresses Jesus’ own experience of faith from the Gospels and includes a lengthy discussion of Paul’s term *pistis Christou*.

Michaels, J. Ramsay. *Servant and Son: Jesus in Parable and Gospel*. Atlanta: John Knox, 1981.

But so will how one construes the relationship between the divine and the human in the incarnate Lord, including views of his sinlessness, divine consciousness, subjective experience of temptation, emotional life, and so on” (Shuster, “Use and Misuse,” 80, n. 11). Because these matters are foundational to the concept of Jesus as our example, it is precisely these topics that need to be addressed, and a few have been treated in the present chapter.

⁸⁶ A preliminary study was presented at the 2003 annual meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society. I am grateful for comments in preparing that presentation and for those received in preparing this chapter.

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- Hawthorne, Gerald. *The Presence and the Power: The Significance of the Holy Spirit in the Life and Ministry of Jesus*. Dallas: Word, 1991; reprint, Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2003.
- Smail, Thomas. *Reflected Glory: The Spirit in Christ and Christians*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975.
- Wallis, Ian. *The Faith of Jesus Christ in Early Christian Traditions*, SNTS 84. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.

Study Questions

1. What biblical evidence is offered to support
 - a. Jesus' full humanity?
 - b. Jesus' full deity?
 - c. Jesus is the Christian's example?
 - d. Jesus' uniqueness from Christians, and Jesus' commonality with Christians?
2. How does the author resolve the tension expressed in "emptied himself"?
3. What are the major options for explaining Jesus' dependent life-style? What is the evidence for each view? What are the main objections for each view?
4. Summarize the argument and evidence for the author's claim that Jesus lived a predominantly dependent life on earth.