

“IN ADAM”—“IN CHRIST”

by J.H. Essex

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1 Corinthians 15:22

For even as, in Adam, all are dying, thus also, in Christ, shall all be vivified. (1 Corinthians 15:22)

THESE two terms—“in Adam” and “in Christ”—are presented in scripture as a contrast. Though “in Christ” appears many times, particularly in the Pauline letters, “in Adam” occurs only once, and therefore only in this one verse (quoted above) are the two terms brought into juxtaposition.

Adam himself is not always *contrasted* with Christ. In Romans 5:14, he is “a type of Him Who is about to be.” There is indeed a certain similarity, as well as a contrast, between Adam and Christ, as we shall hope to show presently. But when we place the preposition “in” before each name, the similarity gives way to a complete opposite.

That which is “in Adam” is related to the old humanity, while that which is “in Christ” concerns the new humanity. Likewise, the ends of the two states, or conditions, are equally opposed. Briefly, that which is “in Adam” has an expectancy of death, while that which is “in Christ” can look forward to a certainty of life. This much can be gathered from a quick consideration of our text.

Before we examine the passage in detail, let us clear away a couple of errors that have been formed in men's minds concerning it.

Firstly, many have been prone to read it as though it stated, "thus also shall *all in Christ* be vivified" (regarding the words "all in Christ" as a single phrase), thereby seeking to restrict the word "all" to believers during this present life, and implying that there will be some, if not many, who are outside of Christ, and will not therefore be vivified. But most, if not all, translations are consistent in placing the words "in Christ" before the word "all," which is the order in the original Greek, and in the CV rendering quoted here. This effectively removes such a restriction on the word "all," and this is vital to our correct understanding of the scripture.

Secondly, some are prepared to admit that all who have died will be brought back to life, to be given what they term a second chance. But this ignores the vital truth that there is no element of chance whatever in God's operations. Also it makes the scripture inconsistent, and hence unreliable, if the "making alive" has one meaning and value for Christ and those who are His at His presence, but a different meaning and value for the rest of those included in the word "all."

The meaning of the Greek word, *zōpōiēō*, here translated "made alive" (KJV) or "vivified" (CV), is defined in the KEYWORD CONCORDANCE as "giving life beyond the reach of death, conferring immortality," and this is surely confirmed by the fact that the next verse clearly applies it to Christ, as the *Fürstfrüüt*. If Christ receives this new status of life as the *Fürstfrüüt*, then the remainder must receive it in like manner later, for it is a principle

of scripture, and of nature, that the firstfruit determines the kind and quality of the rest. Romans 11:16, for example, reads, "Now if the firstfruit is holy, the kneading is also; and if the root is holy, the boughs are also."

That this word "vivify" implies more than just rousing from among the dead is made clear in its first scriptural usage, for in John 5:31 we read, "For even as the Father is rousing the dead *and* vivifying, thus the Son also is vivifying whom He will." Here it is rousing the dead *and* vivifying. Thus vivifying is an operation beyond rousing. Some, like Lazarus and the son of the widow of Nain, were roused from the dead by Jesus, but they were not vivified, hence they died again. But those who are vivified in Christ do not die again.

Then are the two "alls" in this passage identical? We have just seen how some, by altering the order of the words, have sought to limit the second "all." Others have suggested that, because there will be some alive and remaining to the presence of the Lord, they will not actually see death, but will nevertheless be vivified. So they deduce that the second "all" is more comprehensive than the first. But this is surely just a quibble, for even the living, who actually survive to the moment of the Lord's call, are in reality dying, and only miss the concluding period of total unconsciousness. The balance of the passage requires the two "alls" to be identical. Unless they are, the truth loses its force.

THE PASSAGE IN ITS CONTEXT

The context of this scripture under review, "For even as, in Adam, all are dying, thus also, in Christ, shall all be vivified," is

truly remarkable, for it is a section which begins with a profound truth and ends with an even more profound one. Verse 20 of this chapter reads, "Yet now Christ has been roused from among the dead," and verse 28 concludes with, "that God may be All in all." In these two statements we have both the beginning and the consummation of the vivifying process, and in between we have the fact of vivification most clearly proclaimed.

If we remember that the letters to the Corinthians were written before Romans, then this is the first mention by Paul of vivification, and it is brought to our notice here because it is the necessary state to which all must attain if God is to be All in all. God cannot be *All* in a creation which is still liable to death. Hence, the death factor is finally abolished (v.26) before God's ultimate is achieved.

The fifteenth chapter of 1 Corinthians is widely known as the resurrection chapter, as it begins by affirming, and confirming, the rousing of Christ from the dead, and goes on to develop the theme to include the rousing of others.

If we read through the chapter carefully (which, at this point, we suggest be done), we shall note that the section from verse 20 through to verse 28 is really an enclosure within the general argument. Indeed, in the CONCORDANT VERSION it is shown in parentheses to indicate this. Verse 29 runs on connectedly from verse 19, and we could omit verses 20-28 without destroying the continuity of the chapter. But what an omission this would be! For this section sums up, in the fewest words possible, the whole outworking of God's purpose, and shows beyond doubt that the impetus given to it by the rousing of Christ from among the dead does not expend itself, but rather grows in strength, until

It is only in the *risen* Christ (His rousing being evidence of His having settled, through His sacrifice, the question of sin to a finality), and in the establishment of a basis for peace with God through "the blood of His cross," that the uncertain hopes of both celestials and humanity become real expectations, and the reconciliation of all, "those on the earth and those in the heavens" becomes a certainty to them if they have the faith to believe it. In a figurative sense, then, the hopes and aspirations of the celestials are "vivified" in Christ, just as surely as the dying descendants of Adam are to be literally vivified in Him.

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Is there not a sense then, in which we can associate all creation first with Adam and then with Christ? Rebellion began among the celestials. If those celestials who had sung together and shouted for joy when the foundations of the earth were being laid (Job 38:6,7), and who then saw in the disruption and its attendant darkness (Gen.1:2) the unmistakable evidence of rebellion among their own kind—if they, indeed, perceived a hope that the situation would be rectified through this wonderful creation of humanity which God had made in His own image and according to His likeness, then that hope would quickly be shattered by the failure of Adam to obey God's command, and by the resultant blight which sin placed upon this creation. In Adam, all their hopes of reconciliation could be said to have died, just as humanity's own hopes of survival died in him. Neither Adam, nor Adam's seed, could provide the necessary Saviour, though God did make a somewhat vague promise regarding the seed of the woman bruising the serpent's head.

The announcement of the birth of Jesus as a Saviour was the signal for a spontaneous burst of applause from a multitude of the heavenly host (Luke 2:13), but hopes must again have given way to doubts, if not to despair, when He was seen to be hanging on a cross of shame and ignominy, and all was suddenly surrounded by unnatural darkness. A miniature of this despair is pictured for us in the attitude and conversation of the two disciples on the way to Emmaus, as related in the last chapter of Luke's account. Only when their eyes were opened to receive the truth that Christ was indeed risen were their hopes revived and their hearts made joyful.

all that God desires is accomplished, and He becomes All in all. Or, to put it another way, once Christ is roused from among the dead, nothing whatever can thwart the onward progress of God's purpose until all is accomplished. And this is the only scripture in the whole of God's Word which defines the goal of His purpose, though other scriptures, such as Philippians 2:10,11 and Colossians 1:20, come very close to this.

So this section of 1 Corinthians chapter 15 is of vital importance, and the truths it contains are of the first magnitude; and not least among them is the statement that "even as, in Adam, all are dying, thus also, in Christ, shall all be vivified."

A CLOSER ANALYSIS

At first sight, the important truth contained in this proclamation seems simple and plain. We perceive both a comparison and a contrast. The comparison is indicated by the "even as" . . . "thus also," and is between Adam and Christ as single individuals upon whom headship has been conferred. In this there is a point of resemblance. It is in this respect that Adam is "a type of Him Who is about to be." Later in the same chapter, Christ is referred to as "the last Adam" (v.45). Again in verse 45, we are reminded that Adam "became a living soul," but are told that the last Adam is a Vivifying Spirit. It is because of this basic difference that the one could only lead the race into death while the Other could guarantee life.

That all humanity is at present dying is patently evident from all that is happening around us; we do not need any further proof. That all will be vivified in Christ is a sublime expectancy,

THE INTEREST OF THE CELESTIALS IN HUMANITY

The creation of humanity in the image of Elohim, and according to His likeness, was to inaugurate a permanent condition. What was temporary was God's forming humanity of the elements of the earth, soulish and soilish. This was so that it could later be "passed by"—to be superseded by a new humanity, created in Christ—spiritual rather than soulish, celestial rather than soilish. Once sin had entered the world, and death through sin, then the fate of the old humanity was sealed. In God's sight it was crucified on the cross, when the One not knowing sin was made to be Sin for our sakes; in human experience, it dies when each individual returns to the soil, the earth from which he was made. But the concept of humanity itself does not die. Rather, its prototype is changed; the first Adam gives way to the last Adam, the disobedient one to the obedient One; and while the first could only generate death, the second brings life.

The old humanity, in the person of Adam, soon provided evidence of its weakness when it failed to subdue the serpent which deceived Eve, but gave way to it, and thereby disobeyed God. (Though the voice behind the serpent was that of the Adversary, the animal itself was one from the inferior creation over which Adam had been given dominion). From that moment, Adam and the old humanity could not escape the consequences of death, for death is passed through to all mankind. Christ, on the other hand, is the personification of obedience, and righteousness, spirit and life are the consequences which are embodied in the new humanity.

for which we need faith to make our own.

But now let us look at our passage in relation to its near context. Beginning at verse 20, we read, "Yet now has Christ been roused from among the dead," and this should immediately banish the forlornness expressed in verse 19, particularly as Christ is declared to be "the Firstfruit of those who are reposing." Notice again the term "Firstfruit." Christ is not alone in being, or to be, roused; others are to enjoy this awakening, too, or the term "Firstfruit" would be meaningless. But now notice carefully the next point. "For since, in fact, through a man [human] came death, through a Man [Human] comes the resurrection of the dead."

The Greek word here twice translated "man" is *anthrōpos*, from which we get our English word "anthropoid," often applied to a class of apes because of their resemblance to humans. In the Greek, it refers to humans only, and includes all ages and both sexes—men, women and children. It is to be distinguished from another Greek word, *amēr*, meaning "man," and which is solely applied to one of the male sex. In this passage, we are not reading about two *men*, as distinct from women and children, but rather of two leading representatives of a special creation known as humanity.

Adam was created a *human*, and became the first head of *humanity*, but he lost his right to this headship when he disobeyed God. So quickly in fact did he lose the power and authority that go with this headship that he could not effectively control even his own firstborn, for Cain murdered Abel, his younger brother. Christ, because of His obedience, even unto death, and that the death of the cross, is made the Head of a new humanity which is

requirements, and that was the Son of God's love, for besides being the true Image of the invisible God, and consequently "the One not knowing sin," He was also the Firstborn of every creature. Humanity was created in the image, and after the likeness, of Elohim, yet in a form susceptible to death, so that this One, God's own Son, could assume this form and become subject to death. Moreover, as a result of its being created in God's image and according to His likeness, humanity received authority to exercise dominion. This was originally, through the first Adam, over the lower creation (animals), but later, through the last Adam, it will be over all, including the celestials.

At this point, let us go back for a moment to verse 5 of this second chapter of Hebrews. There we read, "For *not to messengers* does He subject the impending inhabited [earth], concerning which we are speaking. Yet somewhere someone certifies, saying, 'What is man that Thou art mindful of him? Thou makest him some bit inferior to the messengers, with glory and honor Thou wreathest him, and dost place him over the works of Thy hands. All dost Thou subject underneath his feet.'"

The word *earth*, in verse 5 is not in the original Greek, but is included to satisfy English idiom. Doubtless the writer of Hebrews was thinking only about the earth as he wrote, but the inspiration of the holy spirit evidently caused him to use the word "habitation" instead of "earth," since the passage is true of all habitations, whether on earth or elsewhere. All are to be made subject to the One Who is the Head of the new humanity, and God had this in mind when He first created humanity in His own image and according to His likeness.

to supersede the old. But the old had to come first, as we read in verses 46 and 47 of this same chapter of 1 Corinthians, "But not first the spiritual, but the soulish, thereupon the spiritual. The first man was out of the earth, soilish; the second Man is the Lord out of heaven."

Note here that all the intervening men between Adam and Christ are omitted, a clear indication that we are dealing with headship. Once Adam sinned, there was no future for the race until a new Head had been appointed, and that new Head must demonstrate His worthiness to be given that honor by His sustained obedience. This Christ did in every way. It is because of His obedience unto death, even the death of the cross, that God "highly exalts Him, and graces Him with the name that is above every name, that in the name of Jesus every knee should be bowing, celestial and terrestrial and subterranean, and every tongue should be acclaiming that Jesus Christ is Lord, for the glory of God, the Father" (Phil.2:9-11).

Verses 48 and 49 (1 Cor.15) continue this theme, and are very important. "Such as the soilish one is, such are those who are soilish, and such as the Celestial One, such are those who are celestials. And according as we wear the image of the soilish, we should be wearing the image also of the Celestial." Note the contrast in terms: soilish or spiritual, soilish or celestial.

And let us note too, that each of us must wear the image of both in turn. The statement, "not first the spiritual, but the soulish, thereupon the spiritual," is true of us all. We wear the image of the soilish first, for we were born into it as descendants of Adam. For us to acquire the image of the celestial, there has to be a new creation. We find this in 2 Corinthians 5:17,

“If anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: the primitive passed by. Lo! there has come new!” And whenever we read this passage, we should add the next few words, “*Yet all is of God, Who reconciles us to Himself through Christ, and is giving us the dispensation of the conciliation,*” so that we have the honor and privilege of being able to pass this sublime truth on to others.

It is truly a comforting thought for us, while in the midst of all the tribulations accompanying this body of flesh, to realize that we wear the image of the soiled first in order that God may be able to display His grace in us. Grace has two aspects: an act producing happiness, and a benefit bestowed on one who deserves the opposite. The first is exemplified in Christ, Whom God graces with the name which is above every name (Phil.2:9). The second is demonstrated in us, members of the ecclesia which is the body of Christ. Ephesians 2 tells us plainly that we once were “in our nature, children of indignation, even as the rest,” but now God “vivifies us together in Christ (in grace are you saved!) and rouses us together and seats us together among the celestials, in Christ, that, in the oncoming eons, He should be displaying the transcendent riches of His grace in His kindness to us in Christ Jesus.”

What a wonderful scripture this is! Truly the present “momentary lightness of our afflictions is producing for us a transiently transcendent eonian burden of glory” (2 Cor.4:17). We are truly God’s achievement, being created in Christ Jesus for good works, and in us and in Christ Jesus He is to find glory for all the generations of the eon of the eons! Amen! (Eph.2:10; 3:21).

CHRIST’S DEATH IS FOR ALL

The word here translated “everyone” is the same (though in the genitive form) as that translated “all” in verse 8 and verse 10, “*all* dost Thou subject under His feet” and “because of Whom *all* is, and through Whom *all* is.” It is certain from Colossians 1:20 that Christ tasted death for the sake of all in the universe, and not just for the sake of every *man*, as the King James Version renders this passage in Hebrews.

This scripture is really showing us that humanity was not in any way a haphazard creation of God, nor was it created for itself alone, but rather it was a creation *pre-determined* by God, and brought into being to meet a *foreknown crisis*, and to be used in a *specific way* in the development of His purpose.

Those celestials who had rebelled against the headship of Christ in the first eon, had left themselves without a means of rectifying the position. Sovereignities and authorities had arisen among them; they are referred to in Ephesians 1:21; 3:10; and 6:12. That they are usurping factors is made abundantly clear in the last of these passages, for they are coupled with such phrases as “the stratagems of the Adversary,” “the world-mights of this darkness” and “the spiritual forces of wickedness among the celestials.” They are the forces against which we are being called upon to withstand.

For reconciliation to be made between God and any of His erring creatures, it was first necessary for a basis of peace to be established, and this could only be done by one who was without sin, and of such a rank and standing as to be able to represent them all. Only one Being in the universe could comply with these

WHAT IS HUMANITY?

LET us ask ourselves the question, “What is humanity, and what is the reason for its existence?”

Humanity is a special creation of God, the only one (apart from His beloved Son) described as being in His own image and according to His likeness. This is very significant.

Many believers have been puzzled to understand how man could be in the image and according to the likeness of Elohim, and yet do the things he does. And let it be noted that, even after God has destroyed the whole race, apart from Noah and his family, in the deluge, He still speaks of humanity as having been made in His image (Gen.9:6).

The fact is that the concept of humanity, as originally determined by God, never varies. Humanity was created for a purpose, and was described by God (in conjunction with all that He had made) as “very good” (Gen.1:31), meaning that it was ideal for the use for which it had been created. In spite of it quickly becoming marred and ruined, its form remained ideal for the purpose for which it had been conceived; so much so, indeed, that several thousand years after Adam’s initial transgression, the Lord Jesus could come to earth in the form of the same humanity, and in that form still be recognized as the Son of God. Two witnesses, Peter and Nathaniel, gave testimony to this fact (Matt.16:16; John 1:49).

We have elsewhere drawn attention to the two accounts of the coming into being of humanity (Gen.1:26,27 and 2:7) and how that, in the former, there is no suggestion of soulfulness

and still be recognized as “the Son of the living God.” And a third reason is that the ecclesia, which is the body of Christ, might be chosen out of the ranks of humanity, and be capable of being “conformed to the image of His Son” (Rom.8:29), and, indeed, of being so renewed as to be in “accord with the Image of the One Who creates it,” namely, God Himself.

THE SUBJECTION OF ALL TO HUMANITY

In Genesis 1:28, we read that all the lower animal creation was made subject to man, and this is confirmed in Psalm 8:6-8. But in Hebrews 2 we find this control by humanity greatly widened. In quoting from Psalm 8, the writer of Hebrews carefully omits all reference to the lower creation, and leaves the word “all” without any qualification. Indeed, he is so emphatic on this point that he declares (v.8), that God leaves *nothing unsubject* to man (humanity), but adds that “we are not as yet seeing all subject to him.”

Let us note particularly that, up to this point of the argument in Hebrews 2, which commenced in verse 5, there is no mention of Christ. In verses 6 to 8, the pronoun “him” occurs eight times, and “his” once, and each time it refers to man as a human being. *It is to humanity that the subjection is given.* But the earlier part of the epistle is dealing specifically with Christ, as God’s Son and enjoyer of the allotment of all (Heb.1:2), and so it is not surprising that He becomes the subject of verse 9 of chapter 2, where it is made clear that He became human “so that, in the grace of God, He should be tasting death for the sake of *everyone.*”

or sin.¹ Adam's sin did not invalidate the original concept of humanity as the medium through which God would rectify the estrangement which had arisen because of a rebellion among the celestials during the first eon.

It was against the background of that estrangement that humanity was created. We have made this point before, and stress it again, for we are convinced that it was this estrangement which provided the reason for the creation of a new order of beings, inferior in stature to the celestials, yet wreathed in glory and honor in that they were created in the image, and according to the likeness, of their Creator. We quote in part from the earlier article in order that we may enlarge upon it:

The sinning hosts among the celestials had no means of delivering themselves from the consequences of their rebellion, and thus restoring the state of harmony and peace with God. Before any reconciliation could be effected, the question of sin itself had to be dealt with, and only the One sinned against, namely God, could adequately see to this. Hence His decision to bring into being a fresh creation (i.e., humanity), unique, apart from His Son, being in the image and according to the likeness of Himself, so that the One in the form of humanity could give Himself up, and suffer death, for the sake of all. In suffering death, such a One would take sin with Him into death, thereupon accomplishing its own destruction.

As the Firstborn of every creature, and as the One in God's universe Who was intrinsically without sin—the "One not know-

¹See "The Vessel of Humanity," *Unsearchable Riches*, Vol.73, p.75, March 1982

THE OLD HUMANITY AND THE NEW

IN THE passage, "For even as, in Adam, all are dying, thus also, in Christ, shall all be vivified" (1 Cor.15:22), we are seeing the development of humanity through two stages—an old humanity in Adam and a new humanity in Christ. These are quite distinct; that is to say, the one does not grow out of the other, for each one is described elsewhere as a *creation* (Gen.1:27; 2 Cor.5:17), and the first is said to be "passed by," as though it no longer existed, when the second is brought into being. Yet, separate though they are, they are connected by the one genetic term, "humanity." What are we to understand by this term, "humanity"?

WHAT IS HUMANITY?

Are we to look upon it as simply referring to Adam and his descendants, as inhabitants, cultivators and subduers of the earth? This is the way the majority of believers see it, assuming, of course, that they accept the Genesis account of the beginning of the race; but surely the term carries much more meaning than this. We are told that humanity was created in the image, and according to the likeness, of God. Moreover, the term "new humanity" finds its place in the prison epistles of Paul, which have their settings "among the celestials."

It was clearly indicated from the outset that humanity was to exercise some form of sway, or dominion, over others. That was one reason why it had to be in the image and according to the likeness of God (Elohim). Another reason was that it should be a suitable form in which God's own Son might later appear,

ing sin”—He was “made to be sin,” and suffer the terrible consequences thereof, which included temporary, yet total, estrangement from God, and the shameful death of the cross, in order that sin itself could be regarded as being crucified for ever. Sin is “missing the mark,” or falling short of God’s standard of righteousness. No longer would it be the unsurmountable barrier to salvation, or to God’s desire for the total reconciliation of all to Himself. God is able to make peace through the blood of Christ’s cross, and the rousing of Christ from among the dead, and the subsequent subjecting of all to Him, means that nothing will now prevent God being ultimately All in all.

SIN AND DEATH, OR JUSTIFICATION AND LIFE

Though, as we have seen, One coming in the form of humanity would eventually solve the problem of sin, humanity could not of itself provide the remedy. On the contrary, it became the vehicle by which sin entered the world, as we read in Romans 5:12, “Therefore, even as through one man sin entered into the world, and through sin death, and thus death passed through into all mankind, on which all sinned...”

We notice again the “even as,” which indicates a comparison, but we have to go down the chapter as far as verse 18 to find the corresponding “thus also,” after the “even as” has been repeated with a different phraseology. “Consequently, then, as it was through one offense for all mankind for condemnation, thus also it is through one just award for all mankind for life’s justifying. For even as, through the disobedience of the one man, the many were constituted sinners, thus also, through the obedience of the

One, the many shall be constituted just.”

Verse 12 shows the hopelessness of being in Adam, with its consequences of sin and death; verses 18 and 19 show the blessedness of being “in Christ,” with its assurance of justification and life.

Throughout these verses in Romans chapter 5, the superiority of that which is being effected through Christ over that which was brought about through Adam is repeatedly emphasized by the use of such words as “superabounds” (v.15), “superabundance” (v.17) and “superexceeds” (v.20), and also by the contrast between “one” and “many” in verse 16. The vital point is that the grace of God, which provided the way of deliverance through Christ, is more than sufficient to deal with all offenses, be they great or small, and not just that of Adam.

WIDER IMPLICATIONS OF THE WORD “ALL”

Reverting to 1 Corinthians 15:22 we can see how the passage, “For even as, in Adam, all are dying, thus also, in Christ, shall all be vivified” applies to mankind. Further details are given in the Roman epistle, which show how the deliverance that is in Christ Jesus results in justification and reconciliation. From being once enemies of God, we are transformed into sons, with the privilege of addressing Him as “Abba, Father” (Rom.5:10; 8:15). This is something which is the lot of the saints now, but will be the lot of all eventually (Rom.5:18,19). Believing this, we can say, as Paul said to Timothy, “We rely on the living God, Who is the Saviour of *all mankind*, especially of believers” (1 Tim.4:10).

(Gen.1:1; Job 38:4-7). But when reconciliation is in view, the order is reversed, for reconciliation begins on earth with the ecclesia, and spreads to the heavens later.

SUMMARY

While, therefore, it is true that in Adam, all men died (literally) and in Christ will be vivified (literally), it is also true that the hopes and aspirations of creation as a whole died (figuratively) in Adam, and will be vivified (figuratively) in Christ. For though humanity was created to be the vehicle through which the Saviour should come, Adam could not fulfill this function. He could only head a race which would breed sinners and ultimately crucify the Lord of glory. Christ, on the other hand, becomes Head of a new humanity which is being created in righteousness and benignity of the truth. Nothing is now condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus. Hopes that died in Adam are revived in Christ, in Whom the whole universe is to be headed up, and through Whom the reconciliation of all to God will be finally effected.

and wreathed Him with greater glories than ever He had before (Phil.2:9-11; Eph.1:20-23). He is made “Head over all” and as such is given to the ecclesia which is His body, the complement by which He is completing *the all in all*.

CREATION SUBJECTED TO VANITY, BUT NOT FOR EVER

In Romans 8:20, we read that the whole creation has been subjected to vanity, not voluntarily, but because of Him Who subjects it. This reaches its climax at the cross, when the extinction of creation’s Firstborn, in Whom all had its cohesion, at the hands of some of the basest members of that creation, would have meant the ultimate extinction of all as a result of chaos and confusion if it had been beyond God’s power to raise Him from the dead. As far as creation was concerned, the impaling of God’s Son on the cross was a final crime of heinous proportions, but from the Creator’s point of view it was a predetermined act of sacrifice which would make an Offering that would settle the question of sin to a finality. Hence the subjecting to vanity was not to be the ultimate end. Rather, it is declared to be “in expectation that the creation itself, also, shall be freed from the slavery of corruption into the glorious freedom of the children of God.” And, again, it is through the blood of Christ’s cross that all in earth *and in heaven* are to be reconciled to God (Col.1:20).

We note, in passing, that when the act of creation is being considered, the order is “that in the heavens and that on the earth,” for the heavens were created first and the earth afterwards

We know that Christ emptied Himself of all His pristine glory to come to earth “in the form of a slave, . . . in the likeness of humanity,” and was “found in fashion as a man” (Phil.2:7,8). In Romans 8:3, we read of “God sending His own Son in the likeness of sins flesh,” and in Galatians 4:4, we learn that “God delegates His Son, come of a woman . . .”

These passages prove beyond doubt that Christ did indeed become flesh in the likeness of humanity— indeed, in the same form as that in which Adam was created. Therefore we can see that all members of the human family are included in the two parts of the scripture we are considering. In Adam all are dying; in Christ shall all be vivified. But does this fact open the way to wider applications?

Let us remember that Christ is the “Firstborn of *every* creature” and therefore every creature has an interest in His death as well as in His subsequent resurrection and vivification. Indeed, in Colossians 1:12-20, the two notable phrases, “Firstborn of every creature” and “Firstborn from among the dead,” are both expanded to show that they include all in earth and all in heaven.

THE UNIQUE POSITION OF CHRIST

Let us examine this passage in Colossians in more detail, for here we have a most beautiful sevenfold description of Christ. The seven parts are divided into two sets of three, with an intermediate connecting detail thus:

1. The Son of God's love
2. The Image of the invisible God
3. Firstborn of every creature
4. Before all, and all has its cohesion in Him
5. The Head of the body, the ecclesia
6. Sovereign
7. Firstborn from among the dead

We note the wonderful balance between the first three and the last three statements. "The Son of God's love," which expresses the beauty of the relationship between God and His complement, Christ, is balanced by "the Head of the body," which expresses the closeness of the relationship between Christ and His complement, the ecclesia. "The Image of the invisible God," in which Christ reveals His Father to creation, is balanced by "Sovereign," in which He is authorized by His Father to accept the homage of all creation prior to His handing back the kingdom to God. "Firstborn of every creature" is balanced by "Firstborn from among the dead."

We may note, too, that Christ is declared to be the Son of God's love first, and then the Image of the invisible God, for only the Son of God's love can rightly portray His image, since God Himself is love. Similarly, Christ is placed Head of the body before He is declared to be Sovereign, since it is through the ecclesia that He will exercise His sovereignty and bring all in all to completion (Eph.1:23).

But the balance between the third section and the seventh is made apparent by the use of the word "Firstborn" in each case, and also by including an emphatic and comprehensive "all," thus:

3. "Firstborn of every creature, for in Him is *all* created, *that in the heavens and that on the earth*, the visible and the invisible, whether thrones or lordships, or sovereignties, or authorities, *all* is created through Him and for Him."
7. "Firstborn from among the dead, that in *all* He may be becoming first, for in Him the *entire complement* delights to dwell, and through Him to reconcile *all* to Him (making peace through the blood of His cross), through Him, whether *those on the earth or those in the heavens*."

On each side of the scales the whole of creation is placed, and comparison of the two sides makes it clear that the whole of creation benefits from the peace made through the blood of Christ's cross.

The first three items in the above list describe Christ's glory prior to the cross; the last three His added glories as a result of the cross. The middle item is a connecting one, which to the undiscerning eye seemed to be annulled during the time of the crucifixion and entombment, yet because of God's power and wisdom it was not. At the cross, He Who was before all, was made lowest of all, and He in Whom all has its cohesion was so violated that He became dead, and God's purpose itself seemed to be disrupted while He lay in the tomb. But this was not so, for God's purpose demanded such a hiatus, and the break was bridged by "the might of His strength," which, in the exact fullness of time, roused our Lord from among the dead,