

THE MINISTRY OF CHRIST IN THE STAGE OF INCARNATION

by John Campbell

According to the divine revelation in the New Testament, the full ministry of Christ is in three divine and mystical stages, or sections, incarnation, inclusion, and intensification. These three stages of Christ's ministry encapsulate the entire revelation of the teaching of the apostles concerning God's New Testament economy. In this article we will focus on the first stage of Christ's full ministry, the stage of His incarnation.

To Bring the Infinite God into the Finite Man

Christ's complete ministry in three stages must be understood in the context of the entire divine revelation. The central line of the divine revelation is that God dispenses Himself in Christ, with all His riches, into the men created by God and chosen by Him in eternity past. This divine dispensing causes God to become one with His chosen people, constituting them as the Body of Christ, which consummates in the New Jerusalem as the enlargement, expansion, and expression of the Triune God for eternity. This is according to the eternal purpose which God made in Christ Jesus (Eph. 3:11). In order to execute this plan, which He formed according to His heart's desire and will, God devised His economy (1:10; 1 Tim. 1:4). The work of Christ in His complete ministry is to carry out God's economy in full.

The first stage of Christ's full ministry began with His incarnation. Through His work in incarnation, Christ brought the infinite God into the finite man. Although it is traditional to think of the incarnation of Christ merely as an expedient means to produce a Savior for man, it is more accurate to view the incarnation as a marvelous and great work of Christ for the fulfillment of God's eternal economy. Through the incarnation of Christ, God dispensed Himself into humanity. By means of His conception and birth, Christ, though immutable in His intrinsic essence and perpetual, unchangeable, and

unchanging in His person, "entered upon a new stage of existence" as the Word became flesh (Murray 38), the Son of Man, the seed of woman, the seed of Abraham, and the seed of David (see "The Incarnation and Human Living of the All-inclusive Christ," *A&C*, Vol. II, No. 3, pp. 4-12). As such, He became the God-man, the issue of the dispensing of the infinite God into the finite man.

When Christ, the eternal Word, became flesh, the entire Triune God became flesh. This is made abundantly clear by Colossians 2:9, which says, "For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." The word *Godhead* here is θεότης, used uniquely in Colossians to refer to God personally as the essential and personal deity of Christ. Indisputably, the Godhead includes the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, and the fullness of the Godhead is the fullness of the Triune God. The fact that all the fullness of the Godhead dwells in Christ bodily means that the Triune God is fully embodied in Him. As the embodiment of the fullness of the Godhead, Christ is not only the Son of God but also the entire God. The word *bodily* in this verse implies the physical body which Christ put on in His humanity. The fullness of the Godhead dwells in Christ as the One who has a human body. "Before Christ's incarnation, the fullness of the Godhead dwelt in Him as the eternal Word, but not bodily. From the time that Christ became incarnate, clothed with a human body, the fullness of the Godhead began to dwell in Him in a bodily way; and in His glorified body (Phil. 3:21) now and forever it dwells" (Recovery Version, Col. 2:9, note 3). As Vincent confirms, "The *totality* of the divine dwells in Him," as an eternal and essential characteristic of His being, before His incarnation, during His incarnation, and in His glorified humanity in heaven (474, 487).

As the fullness of the Godhead—the entire Triune God—Christ is infinite and eternal. *Infinite* means "immeasurably

large or great, having no boundaries or limits, incapable of comparison in extent." As the infinite God, Christ is without bounds and free from all limitations. Furthermore, everything that belongs to His being is without measure or quantity, and He is unlimited in all His attributes. His love is measureless love, His mercy is illimitable mercy, and His riches are boundless riches. He is omnipresent, omnipotent, and omniscient. Since He is before all things, and all things cohere, subsist together, in Him (Col. 1:17), He is greater than all things.

As the infinite God, Christ is the great I Am. In John 8:58 He said, "Before Abraham came into being, I am" (as also in verses 24 and 28 and 18:5-6, where *He*, though supplied in many translations, is not supported in the Greek text). In so saying, He does not declare His then present state, but rather He declares His name; He is the I Am. *I Am* is the meaning of the name *Jehovah*. In Exodus 3:14 *Jehovah* reveals Himself to Moses: "And God said to Moses, 'I AM WHO I AM'; and He said, 'Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.'" In Hebrew the personified *I Am* is *Ehyeh*, from *hayah*, meaning *to be*. Here, in the imperfect form, it denotes the timeless state of being, thus referring not only to the present but also to the past and the future. The meaning of *Jehovah*, therefore, is "I Am That I Am, the One who is now in the present, who was in the past, and who will be in the future and eternity forever." As *Jehovah*, the I Am, Christ is the self-existing and ever-existing One. Having neither beginning of days nor end of life but abiding perpetually (Heb. 7:3), His deity has its source in no created matter; rather, He finds His self-existence in the Godhead, and out of Him, through Him, and to Him are all things.

As the infinite God, Christ is also eternal and immortal. *Eternal* means "uncreated, enduring forever without beginning or ending, existing by itself ever and unchangeably." To be eternal means to be perfect and complete in quality, quantity, time, space, and existence. In time, Christ is sempiternal, without beginning or end. Micah 5:2 says of the One born in Bethlehem, "His goings forth are from long ago, / From the days of eternity." In space He is all-extensive, and in quality He is complete and perfect. Moreover, Christ is immutable, unchangeable, and unchanging, not transient but everlasting in all His aspects. In His person He remains forever and His years will not fail (Heb. 1:11-12), in His essence He is incorruptible and indestructible, and in His character, intention, heart,

and divine attributes He is the same yesterday, today, and forever (13:8).

As the infinite God, Christ is also the effulgence of God's glory (Heb. 1:3). If God's glory may be compared to the light of the sun, Christ is the shining, or the brightness, of the light of the sun. Glory is God in His expression, and Christ is the shining, the brightness, of the Father's glory.

The shining, the rays, of the sun are the very element of the sun in their intense, burning, and enlightening transmission. Just as the shining of the sun cannot be separated from the rays of the sun, Christ as the effulgence of God's glory cannot be separated from the glory of God, which is God Himself in His bright expression. As the infinite God, Christ is God reaching us and coming to us to be one with us through His radiant dispensing.

If we truly see that Christ is the infinite God Himself, we will marvel at His work of incarnation, for through His birth in humanity, Christ brought the infinite God into a real, genuine, and finite man. This is impossible for man's limited mind to comprehend, but it is the very substance of the economy which God conceived in eternity past. Philippians 2:6-8 tells us that Christ, in eternity past,

existed in the form of God and was equal with God, but He emptied Himself, took the form of a slave, came in the likeness of men, and was found in fashion as a man. To be "found in fashion as a man" implies much about His incarnated state. It means that He had a true, complete, and entire human nature, in body and in soul, of the same substance as our own, which He joined to Himself willingly and without imperfection, containing "all the conditions, desires, powers, and faculties proper to and characteristic of human nature. This nature is pure, without sin, incorrupt and holy, yet in it are all the infirmities which have befallen our nature as the penalties of sin" (Chemnitz 64-65). The "infirmities" of our human nature, apart from sin, are the very limitations inherent to our finite state.

As a finite man, Christ in the flesh was limited in space. He was born in Bethlehem, hidden in Egypt, and raised in Nazareth. When He was in Judea, He was not in Galilee, and when He was in Jerusalem, He was not in Bethany. Christ, as a finite man, was also limited in time. According to the laws of creation, He was in a virgin's womb for nine months; according to the rule of human life, He grew and was strengthened for many years as a child; and according to God's sovereign preparation, He did not begin His ministry until He was thirty years old.

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In His ministry in the flesh, He was desirous, pressed, and constrained to accomplish His crucifixion, but He could not do it until His time had come (Luke 12:50; John 7:6). He ministered for three and a half years, He was examined for four days, He was crucified for six hours, and He was in the tomb for three days. Although Christ was the infinite God, as a man in the flesh He accepted the limitations of time and space in every way in order to partake of flesh and blood and be perfected through sufferings, touched with the feeling of our weaknesses, and tempted in all respects like us, yet without sin (Heb. 2:14, 10; 4:15). This is the miracle of God's economy to bring the infinite God into the finite man!

As a finite man, Christ in the flesh was neither omnipotent nor omnipresent, and He was limited in knowledge. Luke 2:40 and 52 tell us that the boy Jesus advanced in wisdom as He grew. Advancing implies a gradual attainment: the wisdom of His deity was revealed in proportion to the measure of His bodily growth. Even after entering into His ministry, the lowly man Jesus, though possessing the wisdom of His deity, appeared illiterate to those who examined Him (John 7:15; Mark 6:1-3). Moreover, in His standing in the position of the Son of Man, Christ did not know the day and hour of His coming back. In accepting this limitation in His humanity, He was in like manner with His disciples and joined with them in their weakness (Matt. 24:36; cf. 25:13).

As a finite man, Christ in the flesh had a natural, human life. In John 10:11, 15, and 17 He tells the disciples that as the good Shepherd He lays down His life for the sheep. *Life* here is ψυχή, the natural life of the human soul, as distinct from ζωή, the divine life, in verse 10. The ψυχή is the soul-life which the Lord charged His disciples to lose, for the most part equivalent to the self, which must be denied and put on the cross (Matt. 16:24-26), while the ζωή is the divine, uncreated, eternal life, which the Lord gives in abundance. In His incarnation, the Lord put on not only the physical life of humanity, the βίος, but also His soul, the ψυχή, and in His crucifixion, He brought both lives into death. We may marvel that, according to the omniscience of His deity, Christ could know the imperceptible in His spirit (Mark 2:8), but what a greater marvel it is that the thought, feeling, and will of God were fully manifested in the finite human soul of the God-man!

As a finite man, Christ in the flesh had a dependent existence. It was the hallmark of His human living that Christ depended on and lived by another One, the Father who sent Him and was with Him. He looked to the Father for all things (Matt. 14:19), and He drew His existence and living from the Father (John 6:57a). Moreover, as a finite man, Christ in the flesh could be wounded, crushed,

pierced, and put to death (Isa. 53:5; John 19:34; 1 Pet. 3:18). That Christ was put to death in His physical and soulful life was not only intrinsic to His work of redemption; it was also a testimony that the infinite God was accomplishing redemption in a finite man.

As a finite man, Christ in the flesh did not manifest the glory of His divinity but concealed it within the shell of His humanity. Christ had the divine glory with the Father from eternity (John 17:5), but in His incarnation, the flesh which He put on Himself became a shell to conceal His divinity, that is, His divine glory, just as the glory of blossoming wheat is concealed in the grain of wheat (12:23-24). Therefore, those who looked on Him outwardly did not esteem Him as the infinite God. Rather, they saw a tender shoot, a root out of parched ground with no stately form or majesty and no attractive appearance (Isa. 53:2). He was to the human eye a Nazarene, a son of a carpenter, a son of Mary, a son of David, a brother of His siblings, an unlearned man, a teacher, a companion of the despised, and a friend of sinners. Some even believed Him to be John the Baptist, Elijah, Jeremiah, or another of the prophets, and even a blasphemer and Beelzebul. No one, however, in the wisdom and perception of their flesh and blood recognized Him as the infinite and glorious God, although Peter, John, and James were allowed the revelation of Christ's concealed glory prior to His resurrection (Matt. 17:1-2; John 1:14; 2 Pet. 1:16-18). God is infinite and man is finite, yet in Christ the two became one. This truly is something wonderful and mysterious in the divine and mystical realm. All this is by the design of the Triune God, who planned in eternity past to dispense Himself into the finite man, and who Himself was incarnated, in the first stage of Christ's full ministry, to become the prototype God-man for the accomplishment of His economy.

To Unite, Mingle, and Incorporate the Triune God with the Tripartite Man

In the first stage of Christ's full ministry, He united, mingled, and incorporated the Triune God with the tripartite man. To unite is to join. In Christ, God, who is the eternal life, and man with his human life are joined. As the God-man, He possesses both the divine life and the human life. This joining of two lives forms an organic union.

Mingle is a more complex and profound term related to the divine economy. With regard to the joining of God and man, it refers to nature and essence. Essence is the intrinsic constituent of a certain substance. As the God-man, Christ was conceived not of a man but of the Holy Spirit with the divine essence, yet He was born of a human virgin and therefore also has the human essence. Therefore, He has two essences, the divine and the human,

which are mingled together in His one person. Concerning the conceiving of the God-man, Luke 1:35 says, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore also the holy thing which is born will be called the Son of God." According to this verse, it seems that the Holy Spirit would be only upon Mary as the power for her to conceive the holy child. However, Matthew 1 helps us in this regard. Verse 18 says, "Mary...was found to be with child of the Holy Spirit," and verse 20 says, "For that which has been begotten in her is of the Holy Spirit." In both passages, "of the Holy Spirit" may be translated "out of (ἐκ) the Holy Spirit." The utterance in the following note on Luke 1:35 in the Recovery Version is inimitable and worthy of reproduction here:

This indicates that the divine essence out of the Holy Spirit had been begotten in Mary's womb before she delivered the child Jesus. Such a conception of the Holy Spirit in the human virgin, accomplished with the divine and human essences, constituted a mingling of the divine nature with the human nature, which produced a God-man, One who is both the complete God and the perfect man, possessing the divine nature and the human nature distinctly, without a third nature being produced. This is the most wonderful and most excellent person of Jesus, who is Jehovah the Savior.

...The conception of the Savior was God's incarnation (John 1:14), constituted not only by the divine power but also of the divine essence added to the human essence, thus producing the God-man of two natures—divinity and humanity. Through this, God joined Himself to humanity that He might be manifested in the flesh (1 Tim. 3:16) and might be a Man-Savior (2:11). (note 2)

Webster's New International Dictionary gives the following definition of *mingle*: "To combine or join (one thing with another, or two or more things together), esp. so that the original elements are distinguishable in the combination" (1564). In Christ the divine and human natures are mingled, but in this mingling the characteristics of His divinity and His humanity remain and are not confused, "the distinction of the natures being in no wise abolished by their union, but the peculiarity of each nature being maintained, and both concurring in one person and hypostasis" (Council of Chalcedon, Schaff 746). This mingling did not produce a third nature, one that is neither

fully divine nor fully human; such a notion is heretical. Christ's divinity and humanity remain distinct and distinguishable, but they are blended and mingled together in one person.

The use of the word *mingled* was favored by many early church writers until it was perverted and spoiled by the Nestorian and Eutychian heresies of the fifth century.¹ The truth of the Bible, however, is neither spoiled nor subject to the winds and seasons of human thought. In the divine revelation, the word *mingle* is found in Leviticus 2:4, which says, "And when thou offerest an oblation of a meal-offering baken in the oven, it shall be unleavened cakes of fine flour mingled with oil, or unleavened wafers anointed with oil" (ASV).

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The Hebrew word in Leviticus 2:4, *bah-lal*, means mingle, mix, or suffuse, and is more intrinsic than and distinguished from *mahshagh*, meaning *anointed* (Darby 91). The distinction between *mingled* and *poured* is critical for the proper understanding of the dual natures of Christ. In Matthew 1:18-23, Christ was conceived by the essential Spirit (as the antitype of *mingled*) with the divine essence in the human essence, while in 3:16, He was baptized and

anointed by the economical Spirit (as the antitype of *poured*). The former was for His essence, constitution, and living, while the latter was for His work and ministry. The former accomplished the mingling, the intrinsic joining, of the divine and human natures, while the latter empowered and inaugurated the Lord for His earthly service.

The deepest and most significant term with respect to the incarnation of Christ is *incorporation*. Although this term, like other notable theological terms, is not found as such in the text of the Bible, it denotes a great biblical truth, describing the ultimate goal of God's eternal economy. An incorporation is a matter of union and intimate mingling. To incorporate is to unite intimately, to blend, combine, or mingle thoroughly into a whole. In its denotation of a spiritual reality, it includes the notions of union and mingling, but builds upon them. Whereas *union* refers to the relationship of lives, and *mingling* refers to the blending of natures, or essences, *incorporation* refers to the mutual indwelling of persons. In the formulations of church history, this relationship among the persons of the Godhead has also been called coinherence, indwelling, immanence (inherent intra-existence), intercommunion, and interpenetration, about which too much has been written and debated to mention here.

In the physical realm there is no adequate example of incorporation, because there is no coinherence in the physical realm. Persons may have a union, but not a relationship of coinherence. Humanly speaking, no person can be in another person, but in the divine and mystical realm, the persons of the Triune God indwell one another in a relationship of coinherence. God in His Divine Trinity is an incorporation by coinhering mutually (Lee, *Issue* 19ff.). This can best be seen in John 14. Philip said to Jesus, “Lord, show us the Father and it is sufficient for us” (v. 8). Jesus, seemingly marveling at his lack of spiritual sight, responded, “Have I been so long a time with you, and you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; how is it that you say, Show us the Father? Do you not believe that *I am in the Father* and *the Father is in Me*?” (vv. 9-10a, emphasis added). The Son’s identity with the Father, which the disciples should have seen and known, is based upon the mutual indwelling of the Father and the Son. God in His Divine Trinity is also an incorporation by working together as one. In John 14 the Lord continued, “The words that I say to you I do not speak from Myself, but the Father who abides in Me does His works. Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me; but if not, believe because of the works themselves” (vv. 10b-11). According to the Lord’s reply, we may believe that the Triune God is an incorporation because when the Son speaks, the abiding Father works. The Divine Trinity works together, not as a partnership or corporation, but in an intimate, intrinsic union and a thorough co-mingling as one person.

To Tabernacle among Us

The Bible further reveals that it is God’s deep heart’s desire to enlarge and expand His incorporation into humanity, in the man created according to His image and after His likeness in order to receive Him and contain Him intrinsically. He has determined to bring man into the divine incorporation and, in Christ as the Spirit of reality, to bring His incorporation into man to produce a universal, enlarged, and expanded, divine and human incorporation. John 1:14 tells us that the eternal Word, as the definition, explanation, and expression of the divine incorporation, became flesh. When the Word became flesh, the divine incorporation entered into a new stage of existence and became, for the satisfaction of God’s desire and the fulfillment of His will, a divine and human incorporation. This was the unutterably profound work of Christ in the first stage of His ministry.

Verse 14 says, “And the Word became flesh and tabernacled among us.” *Tabernacled* (ἐσκήνωσεν, from σκηνή, a tent or tabernacle) is the illustrative verb the divine Spirit in the evangelist uses to describe the incarnation, human living, and ministry of the Word as the divine-human incorporation. The Old Testament tabernacle, therefore, is a

sign of the universal incorporation. The tabernacle is rich with the typology of the Christ of two natures. Although there are very many things we can say here about the tabernacle as a type of Christ and our experience of Christ, we will mention two aspects, or items, which point to the incorporation of God and man. The first aspect is perhaps the most readily observable feature of the tabernacle: It is a dwelling with an entrance. The tabernacle was the dwelling place of God with men, signifying that the mingling of divinity with humanity becomes God’s abode. Moreover, men could enter this abode, signifying that through the enlargement of His incorporation, God became enterable. Paul told the Corinthians, “But of Him you are *in Christ Jesus*” (1 Cor. 1:30, emphasis added), indicating that the Corinthians had entered into the enterable tabernacling God to enjoy the riches contained in God. As the mingling of divinity with humanity Christ becomes the mutual abode of God and man: God dwells in Him, and we enter into Him to meet God, worship God, and unite, mingle, and incorporate with God.

The second item upon which we focus is the most striking and significant furnishing in the tabernacle, the ark of the testimony. The ark is a great type of Christ as the embodiment of God’s testimony—the portrayal, definition, and explanation of God in a bodily form. The ark as a type of Christ indicates that God’s redeemed people can contact God and enjoy Him in Christ and through Christ, who is the center of God’s dwelling place and the contents of the house of God. The ark was composed of acacia wood overlaid with gold. Exodus 25:10-11 says, “And they shall construct an ark of acacia wood....And you shall overlay it with pure gold, inside and out you shall overlay it.” Acacia wood signifies Christ’s humanity, strong in character and high in standard, as the basic substance for expressing God. Pure gold signifies Christ’s divinity, which is universally precious, absolutely incorruptible, and eternally unchanging. That the acacia wood was overlaid with gold, inside and out, signifies that in Christ the divine nature is mingled with the human nature. The divine nature penetrates the human nature and also rests on the human nature so that it may be expressed through the human nature. Moreover, because the acacia wood of the ark was overlaid both within and without with gold, the gold was in the acacia wood, and the acacia wood was in the gold, signifying that in His incarnation Christ became the enlarged, divine and human incorporation, in whom God and man mutually indwell one another in a relationship of coinherence. All believers realize that Christ is the Lamb of God who died for us on the cross, but what a loss we suffer if we do not also realize and appreciate that the Christ who entered into us through regeneration is the indwelling ark of the testimony with many marvelous aspects! The embodiment of God as the enlarged, divine-human incorporation of divinity with humanity lives in us to bring us into this incorporation.

Full of Grace and Reality

John 1:14 says, "And the Word became flesh and tabernacled among us...full of grace and reality." As the divine-human God, Christ is full of grace and full of reality. Grace (χάρις, akin to χαίρω, to rejoice, to be glad) is primarily that which bestows or occasions joy, pleasure, or enjoyment. Although practical definitions of grace abound, too many of them are shallow, natural, materially-oriented, and without consideration of God's eternal economy in Christ. God's economy is to dispense Himself into man. Therefore, that which God gives freely and with favor must ultimately be Himself, who is embodied in Christ. Grace, then, is God in the Son to be received, experienced, and partaken of; it is God in Christ as our enjoyment.

The entire New Testament reveals that Christ is grace to us in each stage of His ministry. As the visible and touchable Word, Christ was incarnated grace to the disciples. He came to declare God to them not in the way of teachings but in the way of presenting Himself as a sweet enjoyment. The disciples not only saw and touched Him, but they also enjoyed Him. God is a God of enjoyment, and Jesus is the very embodiment of all the enjoyment of God. By simply looking at people He could captivate them, and by a single word He could draw them. His presence with the disciples was enjoyable and charming. To partake of such a Christ is to receive of His fullness. Verse 16 says, "For of His fullness we have all received, and grace upon grace." As the fullness of God, Christ is the overflowing expression of God, of whom we partake as grace upon grace. In the incarnated Christ there is abundant fullness, for the fullness of God dwells in Him (Col. 2:9). Moreover, because the grace of Christ is according to His fullness, our enjoyment of Him is without limit on His part; only our capacity determines the measure of our experience of God as grace. John 1:17 continues, "For the law was given through Moses; grace and reality came through Jesus Christ." As an inanimate item, an adjunct to God's purpose with man, the law merely "was given," but in its personification in Christ, grace "came." Concerning grace and reality, footnote 1 of verse 17 in the Recovery Version says,

The law makes demands on man according to what God is; grace supplies man with what God is to meet what God demands. The law, at most, was only a testimony of what God is (Exo. 25:21), but reality is the realization of

what God is. No man can partake of God through the law, but grace enables man to enjoy God. Reality is God realized by man, and grace is God enjoyed by man.

After Christ, the incarnate Word as the divine-human incorporation, passed through death, He entered into resurrection, in which He, as the last Adam in the flesh, became a life-giving Spirit (πνεῦμα, 1 Cor. 15:45b). As such, in the second stage of His full ministry, Christ became pneumatic grace. As grace in the second stage of His ministry, He became more enjoyable, enterable, and subjective. Such a dispensing of pneumatic grace was what the apostle Paul ministered to the saints and the churches, greeting them and blessing them with grace in each of his Epistles.

In the third stage of Christ's full ministry, Christ reacted to the degradation of the churches by becoming intensified sevenfold as the seven Spirits in Revelation (1:4; 3:1; 4:5; 5:6). In this final stage of His ministry, in which He produces the overcomers in the churches, builds His Body in reality, and consummates the New Jerusalem for eternity, Christ's operation is through His dispensing of Himself as sevenfold intensified pneumatic grace

(1:4), especially to those who answer His call for overcomers. Only the grace of the Lord Jesus can enable us to live and walk according to the visions and prophecies in Revelation.

To Express God in His Humanity

In the first stage of Christ's full ministry, He expressed in His humanity the bountiful God in His rich attributes through His aromatic virtues (Lee, *Co-worker* 17). Our attributes are the characteristics of what we are; God's rich attributes are the unsearchable riches of what God is. God's attributes are rich because He is great and bountiful. His attributes are forever new, never become old, and are everlasting and unfading. To fully appreciate the ministry of Christ in His incarnation, we must recall a governing thesis of our current consideration: The central line of the divine revelation is that God dispenses Himself into man, according to His eternal purpose, to become one with man for the enlargement, expansion, and expression of the Triune God for eternity. His desire is that all His divine attributes would be mingled with man's virtues and become the reality of man's human virtues to be expressed through them. In the incarnation of Christ, God's eternal purpose began to be fulfilled.

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God's divine attributes include love, light, holiness, and righteousness. These rich attributes were expressed by the Lord Jesus in His humanity to become His aromatic virtues. God is love, and the love of God is seen in the man Jesus. Jesus was moved with love (Mark 10:21), He loved as the Father loved (John 15:9), and He loved to the uttermost (13:1). Paul even declared that the love of Christ is immeasurable and knowledge-surpassing (Eph. 3:19). Moreover, God in Himself is light, and light is expressed in Christ. In Christ is light (John 1:4); He is the light of the world and the light of life, whom if any man follows he shall by no means walk in darkness (8:12). God is holy, and Christ in His incarnation was the "holy thing" even from His conception (Luke 1:35). As the holy One (Acts 3:14) Christ was absolutely unto God, for God, and one with God. Likewise, God is righteous, and as the righteous One Christ was right with God, with everyone, and with everything. When Jesus was tried, Pilate could only declare, "I have examined Him before you and found no fault in this man" (Luke 23:14). Christ's aromatic virtues also include His mercy, compassion, meekness, forbearance, lowliness, obedience, faithfulness, and truthfulness.

As a man in His humanity Christ expressed the bountiful God through His aromatic virtues by which He captivated and attracted people. The sense of smell is the most subjective and subtle of man's senses. Sight gives clear knowledge, and hearing results in learning, but smell often evokes feelings, sentiments, and memories which are below the threshold of conscious perception. Fragrances are often intended not to produce a conscious awareness but to evoke a response. In the Bible, a sweet fragrance signifies God's acceptance through His satisfaction (Ezek. 20:41; Eph. 5:2) and attractive virtues which draw forth man's admiration and love (S. S. 1:3-4). In the New Testament ministry, it signifies the nature and efficacy of the knowledge of Christ (2 Cor. 2:14) and the constitution of Christ exhaled by the New Testament ministers in their life and work to God (v. 15). It is in every case deep, evocative, inexplicable, and appealing to the inward parts. Christ's virtues were sweet and full of fragrance. The human living of the Lord Jesus, as portrayed in the four Gospels, was extraordinary, unexplainable, and indescribable, because in His human living the rich attributes of the bountiful God were expressed in the aromatic virtues of Christ the God-man. This made all His virtues aromatic, sweet, and fragrant.

Because Christ expressed God's attributes in His human virtues, He attracted, captivated, and charmed those who saw and heard Him by the indescribable sweetness and aroma which emanated from His humanity. By the Sea of Galilee He saw Peter and Andrew casting their nets. He said, "Come after Me," and they immediately left their nets and followed Him. Likewise, He saw John and

James mending their nets, and He called them; they also immediately left their boat and their father and followed Him. At the Lord's simple call—"Come after Me"—the disciples forsook everything to follow Him. A number of noble women also followed Him continually for three and a half years, ministering to Him out of their possessions (Luke 8:1-3). The Lord Jesus must have displayed an aromatic power in His countenance and His voice which could strongly attract and captivate people. The Spirit in the evangelist compares the Lord's countenance and its attracting power to a great light which rose upon those who sat in darkness and death (Matt. 4:16), and the Lord Himself said that He would draw all men to Himself (John 12:32) like a great universal magnet. Christ's drawing power was in His humanity through which He lived out His divinity.

To Accomplish His All-inclusive Judicial Redemption

In the first stage of Christ's full ministry, He accomplished His all-inclusive judicial redemption. The complete salvation of God has two aspects, the judicial aspect and the organic aspect (Lee, *Organic* 9). The judicial aspect is related to God's righteousness, while the organic aspect is related to God's life. God's salvation in His divine life comprises regeneration, sanctification in nature, renewing of the mind, transformation of the soul, conformation to the image of Christ, and glorification. Such a complete organic salvation accomplishes God's purpose with man according to His eternal economy, and it is being carried out by Christ in His heavenly ministry in the second and third stages of His complete salvation. On the way to accomplish God's eternal purpose, however, man sinned and fell by following Satan. In so doing, man violated God's righteousness. God's righteousness is God's principle of doing things. Whatever God does is righteous, and His righteousness as the foundation of His throne is the strictest righteousness (Psa. 89:14). Therefore, in order for God's eternal purpose to be accomplished, God's righteousness first had to be satisfied. All that God wants to do for man organically according to His life requires that God redeem the fallen sinners back judicially according to His righteous requirement.

At a certain time after God's creation of man and man's fall, God came in to give man His law. The law of God was written and enacted according to His righteousness. Since God is righteous, every item of the law enacted by Him is righteous, and every item is a righteous requirement. The law of righteousness, therefore, became the standard for God's acceptance of man. Besides the law of God, the Bible reveals that there is yet another observer in the universe. God was willing to allow the highest angel created by Him to rebel against Him with a group of angels and be His opposer. As the opposer of God, Satan

is at large in the universe to scrutinize everything God does. God allows Satan to be His "opposition party" in order to prove His perfection and to prove that whatever God says and does are in accord with His righteous law. Hence, all that God wants to do for man through His life organically must take care both of the righteous requirement of His law and the surveillance and criticisms of His opposer, Satan. This requires that the salvation which God wants to accomplish for man first meet the judicial requirement of God's righteousness.

The judicial redemption of Christ is of five aspects. In the first aspect, Christ as the Firstborn of all creation terminated the old creation on the cross. When man, as the head and chief item of creation, fell to Satan's temptation, he became the old man, and at the same time, the entire creation became the old creation. Thus, all things became old, fallen, corrupted, and under the sentence of death. Romans 8:20-21 tells us that "the creation was made subject to vanity, not of its own will, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will also be freed from the slavery of corruption." Paul here alludes to Ecclesiastes: "Vanity of vanities! All is vanity" (1:2). In his poetic lament, Solomon names some of the constituents of the corrupt, enslaved, and vain universe: the earth, the sun, the wind, the rivers, the sea, all that the eye sees, all that the ear hears, what has been, what will be, what has been done, what will be done, those who were before, those who will come afterward, and everything under the sun (vv. 4-11). "Is there anything of which one might say, / 'See this, it is new?'" Solomon asks, and in so asking, he testifies that all creation has become old.

God's way of dealing with the problem of the old creation is not to renew it directly but to terminate it and bring forth out of it a new creation. Colossians 1:15-20 is central to the understanding of this aspect of God's judicial redemption. It says that Christ, the One in whom we have redemption is

the image of the invisible God, the Firstborn of all creation, because in Him all things were created, in the heavens and on the earth, the visible and the invisible, whether thrones or lordships or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through Him and unto Him. And He is before all things, and all things cohere in Him; and He is the Head of the Body, the church; He is the beginning, the Firstborn from the dead, that He Himself might have the first place in all things; for in Him all the

fullness was pleased to dwell and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross—through Him, whether the things on the earth or the things in the heavens.

According to His divinity, Christ is the Creator, the Originator of the creation of God. This is abundantly clear in the above passage: "In Him all things were created...all things have been created through Him and unto Him." All creation was formed in the power of Christ's person, in the power of what Christ is. Therefore, all creation bears the characteristics of Christ's intrinsic power. *Through Him* in verse 16 indicates that Christ is the active instrument through which the creation of all things was accomplished in sequence. Moreover, in Christ as the eternal pre-existing One, all creation subsists, that is, exists together by Christ as the holding center. *Firstborn of all creation* points to Christ in His incarnation. Christ put on created humanity and shared the created blood and flesh (Heb. 2:14). As a man in the flesh, He became part of the creation. Moreover, since Christ must have the first place in all things, He must, by the mandate of that immutable principle of God's economy, have the first place in God's creation. To be sure, this indicates that

in His divinity and in His humanity, Christ is all-inclusive and gloriously preeminent. As the Firstborn of creation, Christ was qualified to terminate the old creation and reconcile all things to Himself. The humanity Christ put upon Himself was not the humanity of the new creation but the humanity of the old creation. Therefore, Christ as the Firstborn of creation was the first and leading item of the old creation. With the old creation upon Him and representing the old creation, Christ went to the cross and was crucified, and in God's eyes, when Christ was crucified, the entire old creation was also crucified with Him.

First Corinthians 15:45 tells us that Christ is the last Adam. Adam, the head of all mankind, made himself with his descendants a fallen man in God's old creation through his fall. Thus, the created man became the old man. As the last Adam, Christ is the conclusion of the old man. Because the Lord Jesus died as a man in the old creation, our old man was dealt with through His death (Rom. 6:6). The marvelous death of Christ was all-inclusive. We were put into Christ by God, and we were included in Him when He was crucified.

In the second aspect of His judicial redemption, Christ redeemed all the things created by God and fallen in sin,

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that is, all the things of the old creation which He terminated. As we have seen, Colossians 1:20 tells us that Christ reconciled all things to Himself through the blood of the cross. The *all things* (τὰ πάντα) reconciled in verse 20 are not merely all people but all items of creation, the *all things* created in verse 16 and cohering in Christ in verse 17. They comprise “*the whole universe, material and spiritual*” (Vincent 475), “*all creation as a whole, including angelic as well as human beings, unreasoning and lifeless things, as well as organized and intelligent*” (Alford 206). Not only human beings but also all creatures, which were created in Christ and now subsist in Him, were terminated with Him in His crucifixion and are now redeemed by Him. All things also includes not only the things “on the earth” but also the things “in the heavens.” The things in the heavens also became wrong with God because of the rebellion of Satan, the archangel, and the angels who followed him. Satan’s rebellion contaminated the heavens, causing the things in the heavens to be in need of redemption (Heb. 9:23). To be sure, the universal nature of Christ’s redemption revealed here points “to a larger purpose of God in redemption than is commonly conceived” (Vincent 475). In the same vein, παντός in Hebrews 2:9, as a continuation of Paul’s discourse in verse 8, can also be translated as *everything*: “But we see Jesus, who was made a little inferior to the angels because of the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor, so that by the grace of God He might taste death on behalf of everything.” Christ’s redemption of all things is clearly typified by the redemption accomplished through Noah’s ark, in which not only eight persons but all living things created by God were saved (Gen. 7:13-23).

As the third aspect of His judicial redemption, Christ created the new man on the cross with His divine element. God’s work throughout all the ages of the old creation has been to bring into being a new creation out of the old creation. Ephesians 2:14-15 says, “For He Himself is our peace, He who has made both one and has broken down the middle wall of partition, the enmity, abolishing in His flesh the law of the commandments in ordinances, that He might create the two in Himself into one new man, so making peace.” The creation of the new man has a negative and a positive side. On the negative side, in His crucifixion Christ broke down the middle wall of partition, the enmity caused by the law of the commandments in ordinances. Due to man’s fall, among mankind there are many ordinances, many customs, habits, ways to live, and ways to worship. The greatest codification of ordinances is the law of Moses, which contains many ritual commandments, such as the commandments concerning circumcision, the keeping of the Sabbath, and dietary regulations. The ritual law became a great wall of partition between Jews and Gentiles. All the ordinances, codes, and differences among peoples have divided, scattered, and confused mankind. When Christ as our peace

and Peacemaker died on the cross, His death abolished, annulled, the different ordinances of human life and religion, wiping out the handwriting in ordinances and nailing them to the cross (Col. 2:14). Having accomplished full redemption for both Jewish and Gentile believers, He Himself is our peace and harmony for the producing of the corporate new man in God’s new creation.

On the positive side, the creation of the new man on the cross was a conception. Any conception requires an element of a new life. That Christ conceived the new man in Himself indicates that He was the very element for the conceiving of the new man. Christ created the one new man, the church, by working God’s divine nature into humanity to make His divine nature one entity with humanity.

As the fourth aspect of Christ’s judicial redemption, Christ died as the grain of wheat to release His divine life from the shell of His humanity. In John 12:24 the Lord Jesus said, “Truly, truly, I say to you, Unless the grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it abides alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.” According to verse 23, the process of dying and bringing forth much fruit was the glorification of the Son of Man. Christ as the second of the Triune God possessed the divine glory from eternity past (17:5). Through His incarnation, the glory of Christ’s divinity was concealed in Him, that is, in His humanity, His flesh, as in a grain of wheat. Although Christ expressed the attributes of God in His human living as His virtues in His humanity, the glory of His divinity was mostly concealed by the shell of His humanity. Because of this, it was necessary for the shell of His humanity to be broken through His crucifixion. When His humanity as a shell was broken, all the elements of His divinity—His divine life and His divine glory—were released. In this way, Christ’s all-inclusive death was a life-releasing death for the producing of many grains, the believers, who are blended together as a loaf to be offered to God. As the corporate fulfillment of the meal offering, this loaf is the church, the Body of Christ (1 Cor. 10:17). The release of Christ’s life in His crucifixion is also signified in John 19:34, which says, “But one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately there came out blood and water.” Fallen man had two problems with God: he had become sinful, having the sinful nature and committing sinful deeds, and he had become dead in his offenses and trespasses. The blood and water which flowed from the Lord constitute the double cure for man’s condition: The blood that issued from His side is for redemption, to deal with sins for the purchasing of the church, and the water is for imparting life in order to deal with death for the producing of the church. The Lord’s death, on the negative side, takes away our sins, and on the positive side, imparts life into us. *The Conclusion of the New Testament* sums up this aspect of the Lord’s redemption as follows:

Through His death on the cross Christ's divine life was released. Hence, His death was a life-releasing death. Because His divine life has not only been released out of Him but also imparted into us, His death was a life-imparting death. On His side it was the life-releasing death; on our side it is the life-imparting death. Moreover, it is the life-propagating death, for by it life is spread in many directions. Furthermore, it is the life-multiplying death, causing the multiplication of life.

It is also the life-producing death, for the one grain has been reproduced in the many grains. We need to be deeply impressed with the wonderful life-releasing aspect of Christ's all-inclusive death. (782)

To Attain His Ministry in Its Subsequent Stages

As the fifth aspect of His judicial redemption, and based upon the foregoing aspects, Christ in His redemptive work in the flesh laid a foundation for His organic salvation and set up the procedure to attain His ministry in the following stage of His full ministry. The judicial aspect of Christ's ministry is the procedure of God's complete salvation, while the organic aspect is the goal of God's complete salvation. The judicial aspect as the procedure is for the organic aspect as the goal. The judicial aspect is according to the righteousness of God to satisfy the requirements of God's righteous law on the sinners. The archetype of Christ in His judicial, redemptive work is the Lamb of God. In John 1:29, John the Baptist declared of Christ, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" Christ who was incarnated to be the living tabernacle is also the Lamb of God. The Lamb of God is the aggregate, the totality, of all the offerings at the bronze altar in the tabernacle. Just as the offerings at the altar prepared the way for the priests to enter into the tabernacle, Christ as the Lamb of God accomplished redemption in order to prepare the way for us to enter into God and for God to enter into us, thus fulfilling the purpose of God's complete salvation.

The full redemption accomplished by Christ includes the forgiveness of sins before God (Luke 24:47) and the purification of sins (Heb. 1:3). It also includes justification (Rom. 3:24-25). The righteousness of God is what God is with respect to justice and righteousness, and justification is God's action in approving us according to His standard of righteousness. Now as those who have been justified by God, we have Christ as our righteousness (1 Cor. 1:30). Furthermore, as fallen men we became not

only sinners but enemies of God. Sinners need propitiation, but enemies need reconciliation. To solve the problem of our enmity with God, Christ reconciled us to God based upon His redemption and through His justification (Rom. 5:10). Finally, Christ, in His full redemption, also sanctified us unto God positionally (1 Cor. 1:2; Heb. 13:12), making us holy in our position and standing and separated unto God for His purpose. By participating in all the foregoing items of Christ's redemption, we enter into the grace of God for the accomplishment of the purpose of God's salvation, which is fully carried out in the resurrection of Christ in the subsequent stages of His full ministry. AFC

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Notes

¹For a brief history and defense of the term *mingling*, see "'Mingling'—Was There Ever a Better Word?", *A&C*, Vol. I, No. 3, pp. 31, 62.

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