

# the incorporate person of christ

BY KERRY S. ROBICHAUX

## Introduction

In this journal we have published a number of issues devoted to various aspects of Christ's person and work. It appears to us that the greater majority of Christians consider Christ as solely an individual and historical person, and view His work primarily as deeds done in the past. Of course, these are true aspects of His person and work, but it has been our intention in these issues to speak of Christ in broader terms that encompass His identity in the Divine Trinity and His ongoing work in humankind. It is our firm conviction that Christ did not come separately from the Father and the Spirit to be a man and to accomplish mere redemption. Unfortunately, our conviction will strike many readers as highly unusual precisely because they believe that Christ is separate from the Father and the Spirit, and that the sole purpose of the incarnation was the accomplishment of redemption. We have certainly been burdened to present something more than this.

In keeping with our burden to broaden the perspectives on Christ, we come in this issue to the corporate Christ. We understand that not all theologians will concur with us that the corporate Christ is indeed a reality. By the term *the corporate Christ*, we refer to Christ the Head in His organic union with the many members of His Body. For many theologians, the Body of Christ is metaphorical and not a spiritual reality, and hence, for them, the corporate Christ can be no more than a fantasy. Here I will not attempt to validate the reality of the corporate Christ, or as Augustine labels Him, the whole Christ (*Christus totus*). Instead, taking the corporate Christ as a given, I wish to present an understanding of the person of Christ that accounts for His larger existence as the corporate Christ.

By long tradition in the Christian church, Christ has been

recognized as fully divine and fully human, the Son of God incarnate in humanity, God existing as a perfect and complete man. Nicea (AD 325) established His full deity in eternal distinction to the Father and the Spirit (against Arianism); Chalcedon (AD 451) confirmed His complete humanity without fracture of His one personal existence as the Son of God (against Nestorianism) and without loss of distinction to both His divinity and His humanity (against Eutychianism). These traditional and fundamental tenets of Christian faith focus primarily on the distinct hypostasis of the incarnate Son of God, and in this focus they are certainly true and worthy of all acceptance.

However, in their function to serve as bulwarks against the heresies of Arianism, Nestorianism, and Eutychianism, these tenets tend to view Christ as a separate individual and thereby obscure the equally valid truths concerning Christ in His interrelationship with the Father and the Spirit as the incarnated God-man and concerning His relationship to the whole of humankind. In a previous article I attempted to show that Christ is intrinsically related to the Spirit and referred to Him as a pneumatic person (see "The Pneumatic Person of Christ," in *A & C* II:4). He was conceived of the Holy Spirit (Matt. 1:20; Luke 1:35), was baptized in the Holy Spirit (Matt. 3:16), lived and worked by the Spirit (Matt. 4:1; 12:28), offered Himself up as a sacrifice for redemption through the Spirit (Heb. 9:14), and rose from the dead by the Spirit (1 Pet. 3:18; Rom. 8:11; 1:4). Eventually, so close was His relationship in resurrection to the Spirit that Paul could say of Him that He became the life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45), meaning not that He ceased to be the second of the Divine Trinity and became the third—a modalism—but that His existence as the second is fully communicated to the believers in the person of the third. Just as in Christ's earthly ministry, all the fullness of the Spirit was expressed in the human living of the Son, so in resurrection all the fullness

of the Son is expressed in the Spirit. Christ was in incarnation a pneumatic person and He is in resurrection a pneumatic person, and rightly so, because in the eternal Trinity He is a pneumatic person. This concerns His relationship to the Spirit, and an entirely different study could be devoted to demonstrating the intrinsic relationship of the Son with the Father, thus further proving that the Son is far from being an individual in the Divine Trinity.

**I**n this article I wish to continue our broadened approach to an understanding of the person of Christ that sees Him less in His personal and hypostatic identity and more in His relationship to all humankind. My intention is to present, more by way of suggestion than by way of argument, a view of God's work among humankind that depends on this relational identity of Christ, both in His divinity and in His humanity. Certainly we should not obscure the individual reality of Christ as a man dying for our sins, but on the other hand I feel it is imperative to consider Christ in His relational identity with humankind if we wish to better grasp the "mechanics" of God's operation in His economy with humankind.

What I wish to suggest can be briefly stated this way: God's economy is fully based upon, fully operates through, and is fully directed toward the incorporateness of Christ's person. In a very real sense, as seen from this perspective, God's economy operates to make manifest the incorporate person of Christ, who, as such, fully expresses all the Godhead (Col. 2:9; 1:19). Humankind exists solely to make the incorporate person of Christ known, i.e., to glorify the Son, for the Son exists solely to make the Father known, i.e., to glorify the Father. In the sections below I will "unpack" these suggestions and hopefully make them intelligible.

### God's Economy and the Goal Thereof

The first notion I wish to explore is that of God's economy. In *A & C* we have routinely made this topic a major focus of our discussions, but here I wish to align the understanding of it with my present task. In the first Epistle bearing his name, Timothy receives the exhortation not to heed myths and unending genealogies because these generate questions rather than further "God's economy" (οἰκονομίαν θεοῦ; 1:4). This simple term tantalizes, and now, after nearly 2,000 years of Christian history, itself genders questions. Assuming that the term is not trivial (for in 1 Timothy 1:4 it stands in contrast to the trivialities of both Greek and Jewish cultures), we will naturally

wonder, What is God's economy? The *Wörterbücher* simplifies things by defining the term as God's "plan of salvation," "administration of salvation," "order of salvation" (*TDNT* V:152), but this is far from adequate for two reasons. First, necessarily, such definitions will mean different things to persons of differing theological persuasions. For example, the Lutheran view of God's plan of salvation is sharply distinct from the Eastern Orthodox view. Second, such definitions view God's activity as solely remedial and limit it to that which benefits humankind primarily.

Perhaps Ephesians 1:9-10 can be of some help to us in understanding what God's economy is. Paul tells us that God made "known to us the mystery of His will according to His good pleasure, which He purposed in Himself, unto the economy of the fullness of the times, to head up all things in Christ, the things in the heavens and the things on the earth, in Him." The key phrase here is *the economy of the fullness of the times*. Far from being trivial,

the economy of God is spoken of here in a consummate way, referring to its ultimate goal, that is, "to head up all things in Christ" (ἀνακεφαλαιώσασθαι τὰ πάντα ἐν τῷ Χριστῷ).

There is certainly some controversy regarding the meaning of the phrase *to head up all things in Christ*. Notice the variety in the translations: to "gather together in one all things in Christ" (KJV); "to sum up all things in Christ" (ASV; cf. NASB); "to unite all things in him" (RSV); "to bring

all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ" (NIV); "to gather up all things in him" (NRSV). The variety derives from the difficulty of the Greek word ἀνακεφαλαιώσασθαι. The root of this Greek word is κεφάλαιον, which is best translated "summary" or "chief point." This explains why some translations steer clear of the notion of Christ as Head. However, as Heinrich Schlier points out, even though the term "is to be derived from κεφάλαιον rather than κεφαλή ['Head']...it is most likely that what is meant by the designation of Christ as the κεφαλή led the author of Eph. to choose this relatively infrequent but rich and varied term which agrees so well with his intention" (*TDNT* III:682). In a book such as Ephesians it is difficult to ignore the very obvious play on the word κεφαλή here in this verse and to overlook the allusion to Christ as Head. Yet, even in its weaker sense, that of "summing up" or "gathering into one," the Greek word ἀνακεφαλαιώσασθαι suggests to us that Christ is not merely an individual human being, unrelated, except by nature, to other

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human beings, but is rather a person who sums up in Himself humankind for the sake of God's economy. In its stronger sense—the sense, advanced by Schlier, of Christ as Head—the Greek word further implies exactly how Christ gathers all things into Himself for the sake of God's economy, that is, by being the Head of His mystical Body, the church. Again, Schlier is helpful in this regard:

The ἀνακεφαλαιώσασθαι τὰ πάντα ἐν τῷ Χριστῷ obviously consists in the διδόναι αὐτὸν κεφαλὴν ὑπὲρ πάντα τῆ ἐκκλησίας [‘giving Him to be Head over all things to the church’] ([Eph.] 1:22). The summing up of the totality takes place in its subjection to the Head. The subjection of the totality to the Head takes place in the co-ordinating of the Head and the Church. (TDNT III:682)

Seen from this angle, God's economy takes this as its goal: to incorporate all things into Christ chiefly through the crowning work of making Him the Head of His mystical Body. As much as the church as the Body is incorporated into Christ as the Head, so much is the “all” of the universe practically incorporated into Christ. But in order for the believers to be incorporated into Christ, Christ Himself must admit such incorporation; He must be an incorporate person, and as we shall see, in every aspect of His person and work He is indeed such.

### “Incorporation”

I should pause for a moment and specify the senses of the terms *incorporation* and *incorporate* that I wish to convey here. The first, *incorporation*, either refers to the process of bringing unjoined entities into union with something already in existence or refers to the result of that process. Common use of the term will point us in the right direction. Adjacent land areas are often incorporated into cities and through the process become part of those cities. One may incorporate someone else's words into his or her own writing and, by doing so, make those words appear as his or her own words. What is salient here is that through the process of incorporation what was formerly separate has now become part of that which incorporates it. This is not a mere union, however, for a union generally emphasizes the identities of the united parts and focuses more on the aspect of many things being brought together rather than on the aspect of oneness. Incorporated land areas and incorporated words need not lose their original identities, but certainly the incorporation so formed does not emphasize the original identities; rather, more than in a union, things that have been incorporated become in identity one entity with that into which they have been incorporated.

Common use sets us in the right direction but does not

completely define the term as needed for its use in expressing realities in the divine economy. As will be seen, incorporation in the divine economy is specifically an incorporation of persons, not of natures, attributes, virtues, or characteristics. At the risk of anticipating the main body of this article, allow me to say that *incorporation*, as I will apply it here, is specifically a reference to the persons involved in the divine economy: the distinct persons of the Trinity, the person of Christ, the persons of the human race, and the persons of God's redeemed, regenerated, transformed, and ultimately glorified elect. Other relationships exist in the divine economy, which are quite distinct from incorporation, and these should not be confused with it. *Mingling* can be used to describe the relationship of the two natures in Christ, the divine and the human, if we accept (as our lexicons tell us) that “*mingle* implies combination without loss of individual characteristics” (*American Heritage Dictionary*, “Synonyms” under “mix”). In Christ the divine nature and the human nature are brought together in such a way—a marvelous way—that the characteristics of the two natures are distinctly preserved without destroying His one personality, or hypostasis. *Union*, as mentioned above, can be used to describe the joining of persons in such a way that the plurality of the individuals is emphasized over the unity of the combination. For example, the joining of husband and wife can be described as a union since even in union two individuals remain. In the divine economy there can be found both mingling and union, but these are not the relationship I intend to examine. Instead, I will focus on the relationship of the person of Christ to the other persons in the divine economy—the persons of the Divine Trinity, the persons of humankind, and the persons of God's elect. In so doing, I hope to point to a particular quality of Christ's own person—the quality to incorporate into Himself the other persons involved in the divine economy. My most basic claim, then, is that the progressive process of incorporation that operates in God's economy, and is indeed God's economy itself, derives from the incorporate person of Christ.

While attempting precision for the terms *incorporation* and *incorporate*, I must at the same time admit a varied texture in my use of the terms. *Incorporation*, as shall be seen, is used variously in the sections below because necessarily the natures of the relationships vary. At one end of the spectrum is a relationship that corresponds to the radical definition of the term, which is derived from the Latin *corpus*, meaning “body.” The believers can be said to be incorporated into Christ as the members of His Body, and the relationship is quite similar to that of our human bodies. But corporeality is not a necessary component of meaning in the term, for I will contend that Christ incorporates the Father and the Spirit into Himself, and this relationship is in no wise corporeal. As I go through the sections below, portraying God's economy as an economy

of incorporation, the varied texture of the term will be obvious, but I ask my readers to remember that by the term I mean generally the various ways that Christ assumes into Himself the other persons in the divine economy for the ultimate expression of the Divine Trinity in eternity.

### Eternally Christ Coinheres with the Father and the Spirit as an “Incorporation”

I would like to suggest that Christ does not simply become an incorporate person in the divine economy but is eternally incorporate, based upon His existence in the Divine Trinity. By this I mean that He incorporates the Father and the Spirit in Himself, that He is the “embodiment” of the entire Trinity. Human words certainly fail us here, as virtually all terms we can find to express the mystery of the Trinity smack of physical connotations in some way, even though the Trinity in Himself is anything but physical. For this reason, I am inclined to use the term *incorporation* in quotation marks, for it is an incorporation that is unlike that seen in the divine economy and is unique to His eternal existence. Nevertheless, Scripture indicates that the three of the Divine Trinity incorporate one another within themselves eternally, and hence, I feel justified to apply the term to Their eternal existence. Each is an incorporate person, which fact points to the mystery of coinherence, whereby the three of the Divine Trinity mutually indwell one another and mutually exist by virtue of one another. In His prayer to the Father in John 17, the Lord prayed, “That they all may be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us; that the world may believe that You have sent Me” (v. 21). The oneness of the Trinity is here defined as a oneness that obtains by the mutual indwelling and mutual interpenetration (*perichoresis*) of the three in one another. Certainly, the three are distinct, but when we view each distinctly we find that within each the other two are incorporated. Elsewhere, in the Gospel of John the Lord reveals this mystery as it relates to the Father and Himself. “But if I do [the works of My Father], even if you do not believe Me, believe the works so that you may come to know and continue to know that the Father is in Me and I am in the Father” (10:38). “Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me? 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” (14:10-11). The Lord speaks of this relationship as it manifests itself in

His work on the earth. It is not merely an economical relationship, however, but one founded in the eternal existence of the Divine Trinity. Eternally the Father is in the Son and the Son is in the Father; eternally the Father makes Himself known in the Son and the Son makes manifest the Father; eternally the Father operates within the Son’s operation and the Son’s operation is the Father’s operation. The Son is never separate from the Father but eternally incorporates the Father within Himself and thereby manifests the Father. Even when He was on the earth in incarnation, the Father was within Him. We must not consider, as many do today, that the Son was separate from the Father, but must hold to the eternal truth that the Father was in the Son. This mysterious fact is, I believe, well expressed by the term *incorporation*.

The scriptural texts favor the relationship of the Father and the Son, but certainly the Spirit is to be understood as participating in the same relationship. What we do find textually, however, is an abundance of titles for the Spirit that indicate that He too incorporates the Father and the Son within Himself: “the Spirit of God” (Matt. 3:16), “the Spirit of your Father” (Matt. 10:20), “the Spirit of the LORD [YHWH]” (Luke 4:18), “the Spirit of the Lord” (Acts 8:39), “the Spirit of Jesus” (16:7), “the Spirit of Christ” (Rom. 8:9), “the Spirit of the One who raised Jesus from the dead” (v. 11), “the Spirit of His Son” (Gal. 4:6), and “the Spirit of Jesus Christ” (Phil. 1:19). Contrary to popular understanding, the Spirit does not represent the Father and the Son, for that would erroneously imply that He is separate from the Father and the Son. Rather, He incorporates the Father and the Son in Himself, and in this way bears the Father in the Son to the believers for their experience of the entire Trinity.

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The persons of the Trinity are incorporate persons, but the incorporation they enjoy is unlike that which we will see elsewhere in the divine economy. Their incorporation is highly mystical and purely divine. As I mentioned earlier, it is an incorporation without corporeality, for the Divine Trinity is non-substantial and above physical nature. Further, the incorporation that exists in the Divine Trinity is an eternal process that has no beginning and no ending and implies no change. Such a notion goes against our common sense of processes, as generally processes begin, cause change, and ultimately end. But in the God-head process refers to eternal relationship. For example, the Son is the eternally only begotten, meaning not that there was a time before which He was not and after

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which He was, but that eternally He is begotten of the Father; eternally He comes forth from the Father as His source. This process is an eternal relationship in the Godhead. Likewise, the incorporation of the three within one another is a process of eternal relationship. Eternally the Son incorporates the Father in Himself; eternally the Spirit incorporates the Son in Himself.

The incorporation among the three of the Divine Trinity, and particularly that of the Son, is the basis of the incorporation to be noticed in the divine economy. Indeed, the divine economy among humankind is a reflex of the incorporate person of Christ; that is, the divine economy obtains as it does because of the very incorporate characteristic of the Son. In the counsel of the Godhead, it was determined that creation, redemption, and new creation are to issue from the person of the Son. He is uniquely commissioned to carry out this divine economy and does so through the qualities of His very person. His person, in His eternal existence in the Godhead, is incorporate, and the economy He carries out is one of incorporation, in creation, in redemption, and in new creation.

### **In Creation Christ Incorporates All Things in Himself as the Firstborn of All Creation**

The divine economy begins with creation, but God's initial creative act is really only a step toward the divine goal. As time proceeds, God moves in His economy to accomplish His heart's desire, and as He moves His relationship to His creation deepens and more and more involves His very person. I suggest that the progress in that relationship can be gauged by the way Christ incorporates His creation into Himself progressively, and I believe it is fair to say that a delineation can be made in the divine economy between God's work before His incarnation and that which follows it. In the history of God's move with humankind, the incarnation is the great watershed that fundamentally changes the relationship between the Creator and His creation. Because of it, the Creator now participates in creation not only as its source, origin, and initiation, but as a very member of it. Christ has indeed become a part of creation, and any protestations against this are simply docetic and in error. The completion of the divine economy intrinsically depends upon God becoming human, and for this reason, the incarnation is the first step in His economy that directly involves the investment of His person. What precedes the incarnation in time, though of great import, are preliminary and preparatory steps that enable the first great step of incarnation.

**I**n incarnation God's work changes fundamentally from His being merely among humankind to His being in humankind as humankind. In keeping with my overall thesis, I will speak of the incarnation as an incorporation,

but I wish to suggest that even before the incarnation the divine economy operated through the incorporate person of Christ and was by way of incorporation. Again, the nature of this incorporation varies from that of the incarnation, but it is, I maintain, an incorporation nevertheless. The first action in the divine economy is creation, and here I wish to submit that creation was accomplished as an incorporation of Christ as the Firstborn of all creation (Col. 1:15). In another article in this journal I have tried to develop a view of this subtle Christological title that refers it both to Christ's humanity as well as to His divinity (see "Christ the Firstborn," in *A & C* II:2). I realize that this view is much the minority one and stands in opposition to that of so great a theological thinker as J. B. Lightfoot (and decades of following consensus). However, as I detailed in that article, this "minority" view was held by minds as great as Athanasius, Gregory of Nyssa, and Cyril of Alexandria in the fourth and fifth centuries. Rather than rehearsing previously made arguments for this interpretation of the title, I will ask my reader to allow me to merely summarize my major claim here and invite him or her to read and evaluate the arguments in the article itself. There I proposed that the term *the Firstborn of all creation* refers not simply to Christ in His deity as the active agent of creation nor to Christ in His humanity as a member and participant in creation, even though both notions are implied in the term. Rather, it relates Christ's original creative action to His eventual incarnation, by which He came to be a creature Himself. From this perspective, the term draws from the one person of Christ the dual relationship that He has with creation. Since "in Him all things were created" (Col. 1:16), and since "all things came into being through Him, and apart from Him not one thing came into being which has come into being" (John 1:3), Christ is certainly the origin in creation. But His status as such looks not merely back at His eternal deity, by which He could out of nothing create everything, but also forward to His own becoming a creature through incarnation and to His own initiation of and entry into the new creation through resurrection. In creation He is not simply the Logos, as eternal deity uninvolved with humanity, effecting creation, but the Logos, as deity to be incarnated in time, bringing creation into being with reference to His subsequent creatureliness. Thus, His being the Firstborn of all creation is not merely in reference to His deity, nor does it at the same time fully ignore His deity; rather, it refers to His being God become man, Creator become creature, and, as such, the preeminent One among all creatures, who by virtue of His deity authors creation and by virtue of His humanity serves as the aim of all creation. This, I feel, best encompasses what Paul predicates of Christ in relation to creation, that in Him and through Him and unto Him were all things created (Col. 1:16).

It is particularly the phrase *in Him* in Colossians 1:16

that invites us to view creation as an act of incorporation by Christ. All things were created in Him; that is, all creation sprang into being within His own eventual coming into being as the God-man. We need not dismiss the locative notion of the preposition *in* and level the meaning out to that of mere means. All things were created within Christ, because Christ is “the type, idea, or rule on which the creature was made,” as Newman interprets Athanasius to say (383). In the beginning, when God acted to create, He did so with a view to His own eventual incarnation and was in this sense the image in which humankind was made. Creation sprang forth from Christ the Logos and with reference to His own eventual participation in creation. As the Firstborn of all creation, Christ incorporates in Himself all the created realm and gives existence to it, firstly by virtue of His divinity, which provides Him His very creative power, but also by virtue of His eventual humanity, which provides creation its prototype, idea, and “design rule” (so to speak). While all creation is included in this incorporation, it is particularly the human being, as the capital creature, that features most prominently in the incorporation. Hence, the creation of Adam lies within the incorporate person of Christ as well.

### In the Preparation for His Coming Christ Incorporates Israel in Himself as YHWH’s Son

While the incarnation initiates God’s move in human-kind, the long biblical history preceding it served to prepare the way for His coming as the God-man. It is primarily a history of one nation, Israel, specially chosen by God among the nations to receive His promises and covenants and to eventually provide Him His own human body. In the next section I will develop more fully the notion of the incarnation as an incorporation of humanity into Christ, but relative to Israel, the incarnation is particularly an incorporation into Christ. Because of that, in the Old Testament we find texts showing a relationship between God and Israel that depends on Israel being incorporated into Christ the Son. Probably the clearest passage is Hosea 11:1: “When Israel was a child, I loved him, / And out of Egypt I called My son” (RcV). The significance of this passage depends on Matthew’s identification of the “son” in this verse with the incarnated Son of his Gospel (2:15). Generally, interpreters of the Bible have regarded Matthew’s use of the Old Testament text as indicating the fulfillment of an ancient type, understanding Israel as a prefigure of the incarnate Son. While this is certainly true, I think that the implications of God calling Israel His son are far deeper and

worthy of note. There are a number of places in the Old Testament where either Israel is referred to as YHWH’s son or YHWH is referred to as Israel’s Father. In addition to Hosea 11:1, I list the major ones here:

Then you shall say to Pharaoh, Thus says Jehovah, Israel is My son, My firstborn. And I said to you, Let My son go that he may serve Me; but you have refused to let him go. I will now slay your son, your firstborn. (Exo. 4:22-23, RcV)

For You are our Father,  
 Since Abraham does not know us,  
 And Israel does not acknowledge us.  
 You, Jehovah, are our Father;  
 Our Redeemer from of old is Your name. (Isa. 63:16, RcV)

But now, Jehovah, You are our Father;  
 We are the clay, and You our Potter,  
 And all of us are the work of Your hand. (Isa. 64:8, RcV)

For I am a Father to Israel,  
 And Ephraim is My firstborn. (Jer. 31:9b, RcV)

Our first inclination may be to understand these verses as referring metaphorically to Israel as God’s son and to God as Israel’s Father. But certainly God can be a Father to Israel only because He is in reality a Father somehow. Otherwise, we make of God something He is not and are guilty of transmuting Him (if only in our concept of Him). Indeed, God can be a Father to Israel because He is in reality a Father in His eternal, unchanging, and unchanging existence. Further, He is the Father in the Godhead because there exists an eternal Son in the Godhead. This is, of course, the simple proof from Nicea that was used to establish the full deity of Christ as the Son of God. But here the same principle applies. Israel can speak

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of itself as God’s son only because there is the reality of a Son in the Godhead that provides for a sonship for Israel. I would like to suggest, then, that just as God can be a Father to Israel because He is indeed an eternal Father in the Trinity, Israel can be God’s son because it is somehow associated with the eternal Son in the Trinity. The association I am suggesting is incorporation: Christ incorporates Israel in Himself so as to make Israel God’s son. Ultimately, the Son of God becomes a man, and more specifically, an Israelite. Thus, God,

in His dealings with Israel, views Israel as the humanity that His eternal Son will assume, and in this sense also calls Israel His son and terms Himself Israel’s Father.

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Perhaps this is what Paul was referring to when he listed sonship as Israel's first privilege in Romans 9:4.

### In the Stage of His Incarnation Christ Incorporates Humanity in Himself as the Son of Man

**I**ncarnation initiates a new relationship between God and humankind. As I have mentioned above, God's move in humankind and as humankind begins with His incarnation. God's move in humankind also can be characterized as a progressive incorporation. In developing this point, I will follow the outline of thought expressed by my colleagues in the last issue of *A & C* and will speak of God's move in humankind as stages in Christ's full ministry: the stages of incarnation, inclusion, and intensification. In that issue, a major article was devoted to the development of each stage, so I need not repeat the arguments of my colleagues here. I will, however, render some observations of my own on these stages, particularly as my own thesis regarding the incorporate person of Christ relates to each stage.

There has long been a strand in Christian thought that in incarnation Christ incorporated all humanity into Himself. The earliest proponent of this notion was Irenaeus († ca. AD 200), who gave great consideration to Paul's presentation in Romans 5 of Adam and Christ. In the history of doctrine the view held by Irenaeus on this point is called recapitulation, from the Latin translation of the Greek term ἀνακεφαλαιώσις. Pelikan summarizes Irenaeus's understanding in this way:

[Christ] summed up in himself the entire continuity of the human race and provided man with salvation in a concise summary...Christ became the example for men, as Adam had been the example for Christ; being the Logos of God, Christ was not only the example, but the exemplar and prototype of the image of God according to which man had been created. (144-145)

Pelikan goes on to explain that in the writings of Irenaeus, as in those of others of his era, the term *example* bore a deeper significance than what might commonly be understood today or even by the apologists, who followed him. *Exemplar* and *prototype* provide a better understanding, in that they indicate not merely the ethical imitation of Christ but an identification with Christ that relies on our assimilation into Him. Pelikan also notes that for the most part Irenaeus's view on recapitulation reflects that of the early Christian community, even though Irenaeus certainly appears to have developed and elaborated what was more seminal in the church of his day.

Recapitulation for Irenaeus, then, refers to Christ coming in incarnation not simply as an instance of humankind

but as a resumming up, a reheading up, of the entire race, just as Adam formerly had summed up, had headed up, the fallen race. Additionally, in Irenaeus's understanding, Adam's own existence as a human being depended on Christ being the Logos of God; thus, when the Logos was incarnated, Adam's very Exemplar and Prototype was now manifest in the flesh, and Adam's function as the incorporate head of the race now fallen was superseded by Christ's own function as the incorporate Head of humankind.

**S**een from this perspective, Paul's labeling of Adam and Christ as "the first man" and "the last Adam" (1 Cor. 15:45) respectively takes a significance not usually recognized in traditional Protestant theology. Normally, as the last Adam Christ has been viewed as the final instance of the human race initiated by Adam, and as the last Adam Christ represented the human race particularly in His work of redemption as the vicarious Substitute for all humankind. If, however, we follow Irenaeus's line of thinking, we see Christ reassuming from Adam the headship over all humankind and subsuming, that is, incorporating, all humankind in Himself. All His actions as the God-man, including His redemptive death, do not merely represent the rest of humankind; they include it. His personal action as the man Jesus is the corporate action of all humankind, for all humankind is incorporated in Him and exists in Him.

Many of the references Christ makes to Himself as the Son of Man in the Gospels can, I think, be understood as allusions to His incorporation of humanity into Himself. Certainly there are distinct strains of significance in the use of this term in the Gospels—the man of authority (e.g., Mark 2:10), the suffering Servant (e.g., Mark 8:31), and the apocalyptic, returning King (e.g., Mark 8:38)—but the term itself, no doubt something more than a simple periphrasis for *I*, points to Christ's involvement in the whole genus of humankind. Like its Hebrew source *ben 'ādām*, the term refers to an individual being in relation to all humankind. Thus, when Christ refers to Himself as the Son of Man, while He speaks of Himself individually, He does so in reference to all humankind and includes in His own experience humankind in general. Matthew 9:6-8 provides an excellent example of this. While it was Christ as the Son of Man who actually exercised the authority to forgive sins, the crowd "glorified God, who had given such authority to men." What should impress us here is not merely that a Savior comes as a man to forgive our sins but more that the forgiving of sins, something we might expect only God to do (Mark 2:7), has been given to humankind. It is worth noting that after His resurrection Christ commits this authority to His church (John 20:23) and thus brings to the full the giving of this authority to humankind. In a similar way, Christ as the Son of Man is often portrayed as the suffering Servant

in the Gospels, an individual no doubt; but He suffers as one encompassing in Himself all humankind. He had nowhere to lay His head (Matt. 8:20), and in a real sense all mankind with Him was equally displaced and not at rest, at least until He as the Son of Man could be seated in glory with the Father (Luke 22:69). We find mention of our being incorporated into Him as the suffering Christ and the exalted Christ in Paul's writings when he speaks of filling up that which is lacking of the afflictions of Christ for His Body (Col. 1:24) and of being raised up and seated together in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus (Eph. 2:6). Certainly the afflictions here are not the sufferings He underwent for our redemption, for only He individually could suffer and die for that. But Paul knew that our personal sufferings are nevertheless the sufferings of Christ, and these point to our incorporation into Christ. When He returns as the glorified Son of Man, He comes bearing in Himself glorified humankind, incorporated into Him. Again, Paul declares that Christ will come "to be glorified in His saints and to be marveled at in all those who have believed" (2 Thes. 1:10), for they are incorporated in Him and derive their glory from that which He will possess. In this sense, Christ as the Son of Man is not a lone instance of humankind but indeed the last Adam who resumes humankind in Himself, who incorporates humankind in Himself, and as such carries humankind through His own human existence and experience, and bears it through suffering, death, resurrection, and into glory to fulfill God's original intention for humankind (for Adam) to express God and represent His authority in the created realm (Gen. 1:26). From even the onset of the incarnation, Christ was there as an incorporate person, including in Himself all the human race. Emile Guerry puts it most elegantly: "God saw all mankind in His Son Jesus, cradled in the poor manger. He saw them linked with Him, incorporated in Him" (89).

The stage of Christ's incarnation concludes with His death, and He dies as an incorporate person. I cannot overstate the particular worth of His individual redemptive death and the unique value of His sacrifice as an individual for the reconciliation of God and man. But we should not overlook the incorporateness of His death, which is also revealed in the New Testament. In Romans 6 Paul tells us that we who have been baptized into Christ have been baptized into His death and have been buried together with Him (vv. 3-4). Paul gives an even more graphic description of this when he says that "we have grown together [σύνφυτοι γεγόναμεν] with Him in the likeness of His death" (v. 5). This speaks

of our incorporation into Christ. In verse 6 he then goes on to say that "our old man has been crucified with Him." In the New Testament the *old man* refers to both the corporate person of created humankind and the individual instantiation of it in each individual human being. Just as the new man is a corporate person, created in new creation out of the Jews and Gentiles through the death of Christ (Eph. 2:14-15) and encompasses all God's redeemed elect, so the old man that precedes it is a corporate person that encompasses all fallen humankind. On the other hand, the old man is "worn" (4:22) by each human being as his or her natural and fallen manner of life, and becomes part of his or her dispositional constitution. The old man, God's pristine created man become fallen through Adam's transgression, is an incorporation of all humankind. Then Christ, as the last Adam and resummation of all humankind, died an all-inclusive death, all-inclusive in the sense that it included all humankind, and thus terminated the old man. We who are of faith participate in the benefits of Christ's death and are ushered into the new man, the new incorporation with Christ as the Head and the believers as the many members of His mystical Body. Those who are not of faith remain in the old man, now terminated through Christ's death on the cross. Faith, then, becomes the crucial device, the divine *machina*, that bears God's elect out of the old man into the new man, out of Adam into Christ; and baptism becomes the appropriate symbol of that transfer, giving visible substance to the spiritual reality of being buried with Christ and raised with Him too. The traditional complaint against the ancient doctrine of recapitulation—that if all humankind was incorporated into Christ at His incarnation, then all humankind must enjoy the redemption He accomplished, a universalist interpretation of redemption—is answered by the divine requirement for faith. Without faith all humankind is buried with Adam in the death of Christ; by faith all God's elect die with Christ, are buried with Him, and rise with

Him in new creation as the new man, a mystical, divine and human incorporation. Faith, in this light, is no mere mental assent but the divine impulse that carries God's elect out of the old created incorporation into the new, redeemed, and regenerated incorporation.

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**In the Stage of His Inclusion  
Christ Incorporates  
the Believers in Himself as  
the Firstborn Son of God**

Christ in resurrection entered a new stage of His full ministry. His earthly ministry ended with His death, and His heavenly ministry began with His resurrection and ascension (Heb. 8:1-2). In a past issue of *A & C* my colleagues suggested



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that Christ's heavenly ministry can be construed as having two stages, inclusion and intensification. Here I wish to add the notion that in these two stages as well the divine economy operates through the incorporate person of Christ.

**B**efore showing how Christ incorporates the believers in Himself in the stage of inclusion, I should summarize our understanding concerning this stage. In incarnation Christ possesses the divine nature and the human nature, both fully preserved and distinguishable in His one person. Further, as the God-man moving and living on the earth, Christ was not separate from the Father and particularly from the Spirit, but rather did all things with the Father and by the Spirit. His eternal Sonship was constantly affirmed by the continual abiding of the Father within Him, and the pneumatic nature of His existence was at every point manifested by His doing all things by the Spirit of God. But the Spirit of God was at that time as much only divine as Christ had been only divine before incarnation. When Christ resurrected from the dead, the humanity of Christ, with all His experiences and accomplishments, was added to the Spirit of God, and the Spirit was no longer merely the Spirit of God but now "the Spirit of Jesus" (Acts 16:7), "the Spirit of Christ" (Rom. 8:9), and "the Spirit of Jesus Christ" (Phil. 1:19). The Holy Spirit after Christ's resurrection now "includes" the humanity of Christ with all His perfect virtues, all His experiences, all His accomplishments, and all His attainments. The Spirit today bears the Christ who lived and died as a man, and transmits all that He is to us: His compassions, His sufferings, His perfect redemption, His transcendency, and His lordship, among so many other marvelous things. For this reason, we believe, Paul declared that "the last Adam became a life-giving Spirit" (1 Cor. 15:45b). The life-giving Spirit here is not anything other than the Holy Spirit of God, but now referred to in His economic relationship to the resurrected Son of God and Son of Man, and indicative of His economic role in the church to enliven the believers and be the reality of Christ to them. All that Christ is, both in His divinity and in His humanity, is included in this wonderful life-giving Spirit. This Spirit is all-inclusive in the sense that He includes all that Christ is and has, and has become the reality of all that Christ is and has to the believers. Today Christ comes to the believers in and as the life-giving Spirit. Certainly the distinction between the Son and the Spirit is preserved, as is the case in the eternal Trinity, but we should never think that the Spirit comes separate from the Son. In the divine economy it is the Spirit's role to bear and communicate the reality of the Son, and so He does by being the all-inclusive Spirit. From Christ's perspective, He enters a new stage of His ministry in His resurrection, a stage in which He moves and lives in the church in and as the life-giving Spirit, who includes all that He is within Him.

We, the many believers, also participated in Christ's resurrection and were included in it, again, in the way of incorporation. Paul speaks of us being raised together with Christ (Eph. 2:6; Col. 2:12; 3:1). From God's point of view, the spiritual reality of the believers is that we were in Christ when He was raised from the dead. Our experience of the power of Christ's resurrection in time (cf. Phil. 3:10) is based upon this spiritual reality. By the exercise of faith we as individual believers enjoy what has already been accomplished spiritually through our incorporation in Him. Our incorporation into Christ forms the basis for perhaps the deepest significance of Paul's repeated use of the phrase *in Christ* throughout his Epistles. Every spiritual blessing and every spiritual experience derive from our being included in the incorporate Christ (Eph. 1:3, 6).

**F**urther, in resurrection Christ obtains the status of Firstborn Son among many brothers (Rom. 8:29). From eternity He is the only begotten Son of God, and in the Godhead He remains so eternally. As the eternal Son, He alone enjoys Sonship and is uniquely the Son of God. However, in becoming a man, He takes up humanity and through His resurrection "sonizes" His humanity. As to His status in the eternal Trinity, He is eternally the only begotten Son of God, but as to His status as the incarnate God-man, He became the firstborn Son through His resurrection. Prior to resurrection, according to the flesh, He was merely the seed of David, but after His resurrection He was designated the Son of God manifestly, so that now His humanity bears the designation *Son of God* (1:3-4). In this sense Christ's resurrection was a begetting for His humanity (Acts 13:33). At the same time all God's elect were begotten as sons in Him, for in resurrection, relative to His humanity, He is not termed only Begotten but Firstborn. Again, we become the many sons of God through our incorporation in Him as the incorporate Son of God. Our co-resurrection with Christ engendered us to be the many sons of God.

Finally, also in this stage of His inclusion, Christ formed His Body, which is quite simply the most manifest evidence of His incorporate person. Elsewhere in this issue this notion is developed well, so I need not belabor the matter here. But it is necessary to stress the importance of the Body in the divine economy. Contrary to what some may hold, the Body is not merely a metaphor expressing the unity of the believers in the church. If anything, our physical bodies are the real metaphor of the organism produced through Christ's resurrection that encompasses Him as the Head and the many believers as the Body. Further, the Body of Christ is not some tangential item in the divine economy, but actually the unique reality of the believers' existence and very goal of their living and work. Our calling from God was not merely to the Christian life but to the Body of Christ

(Col. 3:15; cf. Eph. 4:4). Corporately, we are the Body of Christ, but even individually we are not strictly individual believers but members of one another (Rom. 12:5; 1 Cor. 12:26). Our entire Christian existence should be in and for the Body, even if in actuality we mostly fall short of the ideal. As I mentioned earlier in this article, the goal of the divine economy is to bring all the created realm into an incorporation with Christ, i.e., to head up all things in Him (Eph. 1:10), and the formation of the Body is the greatest single advance toward that goal. With the formation of the Body, Christ can be said to be corporate and not only individual. As with the co-resurrection of the believers, the formation of the Body is a spiritual reality that came into being with the resurrection of Christ. The practicality of this reality, the full realization of the Body of Christ among the believers, has not yet been completely manifested in the church. Although His marvelous ministry to form the Body as a spiritual reality is complete, His ministry to build the Body up into a practical entity that properly expresses Him is still needed. This stage of His incorporation is accomplished in the third stage of His full ministry, the stage of intensification.

### **In the Stage of His Intensification Christ Incorporates the Overcomers in Himself as the Head of the Body**

The stage of intensification in Christ's full ministry is perhaps more difficult to perceive and perhaps more open to controversy than His first two stages. We base our understanding of this stage on the particular designations given to the Spirit in the book of Revelation and upon the particular function that the Spirit has in the church according to the book of Revelation. Again, these matters have been fully and adequately sounded in an earlier issue of *A & C* (see Ron Kangas's "The Seven Spirits of God"); thus, I need only summarize here. The book of Revelation begins with a blessing from the Triune God in which the Spirit is called the seven Spirits (1:4). Certainly the Spirit is always one; hence, *seven* here should refer not to multiplicity but to intensity. *The seven Spirits*, then, should be understood as a designation of the intensification of the Spirit in His function to accomplish the divine economy. Further, in 5:6 the seven Spirits that are sent forth into all the earth are said to be the eyes of the Lamb, and in this we perceive the intrinsic relationship between Christ and the Spirit that I have mentioned above at various points in this article. The symbol of the seven Spirits as the eyes

of the Lamb signifies the Spirit's function to express Christ in His own move and in His own work on the earth. Christ, as the center of the divine economy, ever carries out that economy, but He does so through the Spirit, and particularly as the age degrades, through the intensification of Himself as the Spirit.

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The book of Revelation is not simply a book of prophecy concerning the last times but a revelation of the Christ accomplishing the divine economy. It commences with His ministry among the local churches (chs. 2—3) and concludes with the New Jerusalem, the aggregate sign and ultimate consummation of God's economy. To complete the

divine economy, Christ manifests Himself as the sevenfold intensified Spirit, and He first operates among the churches, particularly through His speaking to them in the seven epistles to the seven churches in ancient Asia. Christ's speaking to the churches, which John characterizes as the Spirit's speaking (2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22), should not be construed as simply past correctives to ancient Christian communities but as words of universal import to the church in the "age of Revelation," in the period from Christ's ascension to His imminent return. These seven epistles are Christ's ministering in a particular way to bring the believers out of the inevitable degradation of the church into the fulfillment of His economy. Christ calls the believers to be overcomers (2:7, 11, 17, 26; 3:5, 12, 21), ones who overcome the degradation of the church around them. In actuality, Christ is not calling the believers to be "super-Christians" but to be normal Christians. But to be that, the believers must overcome the surrounding degraded situation in the church. Our firm conviction is that the church, taken in all its current dimensions, is for the most part degraded and falls far short of God's intention for it. Hence, there is the need for Christ to call, there is the need for the Spirit to intensify His function, so that some would overcome the degradation and stand as the proper manifestation of the church in this dark age. To meet this need, Christ is intensified in His own ministry as the sevenfold intensified Spirit.

This intensification is not so much a separate stage of Christ's full ministry as it is a deeper application of the stage of His inclusion in the life-giving Spirit. All that Christ does in resurrection in and by the life-giving Spirit is intensified in this stage to particularly answer to the degradation of the church. Christ's death is perfect for redemption, and His resurrection is perfect for bringing forth the many sons of God and forming the

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Body of Christ. But degradation is a fact of the old creation, and all the believers, regardless of their spiritual status in the new creation, are still influenced by the old creation and to a great extent subject to its tendency toward collapse. Christ intensifies His ministry in this third stage to bring into practicality all the spiritual realities accomplished through His resurrection in the stage of inclusion. He ministers in an intensified way to bring the believers fully into sonship, i.e., to lead the many sons into glory (Heb. 2:10), and to build up His Body practically as His actual and genuine corporate expression (Eph. 4:15-16).

**P**erhaps the best practical evidence for positing a distinct stage of intensification in Christ's ministry is the creation of the New Testament writings. These were certainly not needed to bring the church into existence, for the church's coming into being antedates the writings of the New Testament. But the New Testament is certainly needed to perfect the church and is instrumental to Christ's ministry in the church for the accomplishment of the divine economy. In a very real sense every book of the New Testament was written to answer some aspect of degradation that was setting in very early on in the history of the church, be it a shrinking back to Judaism, or a veering off into Gnosticism, or a stumbling on sinfulness and worldliness, or a falling away in apostasy. From almost the moment of its inception, the church has been subject to decline (cf. Acts 5:1-10), and the Lord as the Spirit soon motivated the writers of the New Testament to combat this natural and general tendency. Paul was particularly exercised in this way, using his writings to draw the errant churches back onto the line of the divine economy. It is worth noting that Paul did not simply correct wrong situations; rather, he helped the churches transcend their shortcomings to aspire to the goal of the divine economy, the Body of Christ. His Epistles to the Romans, to the Corinthians, to the Ephesians, and to the Colossians all bear this quality. For Paul, the Christian life was not simply proper Christian behavior but proper function in the Body of Christ, and the resolution of a problem was only a step toward the greater goal of achieving the building up of the Body. This should be the general principle for all the New Testament as well. In the wealth of information to be found there, advising us on numerous matters within the very broad spectrum of our human living, there is the core truth concerning the Body of Christ, which, as I mentioned before, is the very essence of our Christian existence. The New Testament, then, as a collection of writings that calls the church out of degradation and perfects it to be the Body of Christ, stands as the most visible evidence that Christ has intensified His ministry in resurrection to produce overcomers for the sake of the building up of His Body. His ministry in this stage of intensification, then, is resolutely directed toward the incorporation of all the believers into Himself.

If my reader can bear the lament, I cannot conclude this section without expressing some remorse over the situation today in modern Christianity related to the Body of Christ. It seems that every excuse is taken by believers to ignore the great importance of the Body today. Many offhandedly dismiss the Body as a reality and prefer to view the notion as merely an elegant metaphor for that "body" of believers which is the church. Many who accept the Body as a reality believe that it can and should be only a spiritual reality, that we should not expect the Body to be anything more than a spiritual truth that somehow exists in spite of the chaos of denominationalism. Others who believe in Christ's mystical Body consider the dissonant array in today's Christianity as the marvelous expression of the Body, as though Christ is best expressed through the variety of clashing opinions, through contentions over doctrine, and through multiple bases for separating ourselves from elements in the church with which we do not agree. Still others admit belief in the Body of Christ but fail to see it as anything more than a peripheral truth and one subordinate to other truths which demand their more immediate attention and endeavors. I can hardly think that these positions correspond to the genuine struggling that we see in Paul's ministry, who I believe embodied Christ's ministry in the stage of intensification. Paul, it seems, did not live according to a metaphor but in a reality where every member could take Christ as his or her Head and could draw his or her supply from Christ as Head (Eph. 4:15-16), where God specifically had set each believer in the church for a particular function (1 Cor. 12:18-19), and where all the members were being genuinely and practically blended together for one expression (vv. 24-25). Paul, it seems, did not view the Body as a mere spiritual fact but as a daily mode of living where the members practically cared for one another and genuinely co-suffered and co-rejoiced (vv. 25-26). Paul, it seems, considered the Body not as the expression of our varied natural differences but as the proper expression of Christ "where there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free man, but Christ is all and in all" (Col. 3:11). Paul, it seems, saw the Body as the greatest truth and greatest reality in our Christian life, not to be dismissed in deference to lesser truths. But sadly, even Paul himself is dismissed by many today, and the light released through him is ignored as simply Pauline theology in competition with other strands of biblical theology or, worse, the imaginations of a visionary who made of Jesus the Nazarene a myth called Christ and so of his own craft engendered the Christian church.

**In the New Jerusalem Christ Incorporates in Himself the Father and the Spirit, and God's Redeemed, Regenerated, Transformed, and Glorified Elect**

The sign of the New Jerusalem concludes the Bible and

consummates the progression of revelation that commences with the book of Genesis. It is also the symbol of the completion and consummation of the divine economy that issued from the counsel of the Divine Trinity in eternity past. Ultimately, all God's labors result in the New Jerusalem, and all God's elect find their final destiny there. My thesis throughout this article has been that Christ drives the divine economy by virtue of His incorporate person. I began my discussion with the observation that the goal of the divine economy is to incorporate all things into Christ, or as Paul puts it, "to head up all things in Christ" (Eph. 1:10). If the thesis is correct and if I properly understand what Paul is saying, we should expect to find this goal in the symbol of the ultimate consummation of the divine economy, in the New Jerusalem. And I believe we do.

We cannot fully apprehend why time exists and why God created, why we are here and what God is after, but barring a self-absorbed existentialism, there should be some divine impulse for God to bring forth a limited and physical universe and for Him to operate in time through humankind for His good pleasure. Perhaps the deeper significance of His actions can only be derived from the very reality of His existence, and ultimately the primal question may not be "Why, God?" but "Why God?" For whatever reasons and due to whatever that He is, the God of eternity steps into time and ultimately brings His creation into eternity. We should expect that He remains essentially unchanged by the action, but we should also expect that He comes through the endeavor somehow profited; in the language of the Bible, He should be glorified. Glory is perhaps the real significance of His endeavor, and if so, the New Jerusalem should be the final glorifying entity. In the New Jerusalem we should expect God to be glorified as He was in eternity before time; otherwise, His work in creation is vain because it is unrelated to what He really is. Further, we should expect the New Jerusalem to glorify God in His work across the ages; otherwise, His work in creation is vain because it served no real purpose at all.

As Christians we believe that before creation, God was eternally triune, and the deepest relationship among the three of the Trinity was and is coinherence, a mutual existence, interpenetration, and indwelling of the three in one another. The Divine Trinity is Himself an incorporation, each of the three incorporating the other two in Himself eternally. This much should surely be glorified when He is glorified in the New Jerusalem, and in the symbols of the New Jerusalem the eternal incorporate

Trinity is represented in three very important ways. First, the city is called the tabernacle of God, and through it God tabernacles with men (21:3). The allusion is no doubt to the incarnated Christ, who tabernacled among men (John 1:14). The holy city, taken as a whole, is the enlargement of the incarnated Christ, who incorporates not only humankind within Himself but also the Father and the Spirit, as I have mentioned above.

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Second, at the center of the holy city there is a throne, with a river proceeding forth from it (Rev. 22:1). The throne is that of God and the Lamb. We should not let our natural and physical concepts persuade us into thinking that

there are two individuals here on the throne; rather, we should bring the entire revelation of the Scriptures to bear on this passage and understand that on the throne in eternity future, God is in Christ as the redeeming King. As He was in eternity past, so He will be in eternity future, the incorporate Christ, having the Father within Him. Further, the river that proceeds, again conforming the interpretation of the symbol to the rest of the Scriptures, is the Spirit flowing forth from God, bringing not His own testimony nor bearing simply His own presence, but making real the Son (John 16:13-14). Thus, the river conveys the throne to all the city; the Spirit bears and communicates the Son with the Father to all God's elect. Christ incorporates in Himself the Divine Trinity in eternity past, in incarnation, and in eternity future, and the New Jerusalem will stand as testimony to that.

Third, the entire city is marvelously lit by God Himself. "Night will be no more; and they have no need of the light of a lamp and of the light of the sun, for the Lord God will shine upon them; and they will reign forever and ever" (Rev. 22:5). The natural lights of God's creation will be replaced by God the Creator as the living light, but His shining over them is actually that of the incorporate person of Christ. "And the city has no need of the sun or of the moon that they should shine in it, for the glory of God illumined it, and its lamp is the Lamb" (21:23). In the holy city Christ the Lamb, as the lamp that incorporates the light, incorporates the Father in Himself. Further, the Spirit shines forth as the glory of the light within the lamp, as the glory of the Father within the Son (cf. 1 Pet. 4:14).

**B**ut the New Jerusalem does not merely glorify God as He has always been from eternity; it also glorifies Him in His work in time and creation, a work, as we have seen, that operates by the incorporate person of Christ. All that

Christ accomplished in time, in His labors both for redemption and for the building up of His Body, does not cease to be in eternity future. For eternity He will be the Lamb of God (Rev. 21:9, 14, 22-23; 22:1, 3), reminding all creation of His redemptive work. But more specific to my thesis is the fact that His work of building up His Body will also survive into eternity. We could expect nothing else, since the building up of His Body is the chief work of Christ's full ministry in its three stages. When we examine the symbol of the New Jerusalem, we find that actually it is a massive and extended symbol of the Body of Christ in its ultimate expression for eternity. Of course, the Christian millennia are filled with interpretations concerning the New Jerusalem, and not all students of the book of Revelation would so easily share my characterization of it. But if we understand the New Jerusalem as a sign, a symbol, of the ultimate consummation of the divine economy, Christ's great work to produce and build up the Body of Christ must be at the center of the symbol. The city is "prepared as a bride adorned for her husband" (21:2) and is called "the bride, the wife of the Lamb" (v. 9), and like the church as the bride and wife of Christ, who takes Christ as Head and is thus incorporated into Him, the holy city is incorporated into Christ for eternity. The city is called the tabernacle of God, and in it God will tabernacle with humankind for eternity (v. 3). As I mentioned above, this is an allusion to the incarnated Christ, who was said to tabernacle with humankind (John 1:14), and in doing so, incorporated humankind in Himself. The city is said to have the glory of God, and the light that shines forth from the city (Rev. 21:11) and the building work of its wall is jasper (v. 18); that is, in appearance the city is like the One on the throne Himself (4:3). The city itself is pure gold (21:18) as well as its one street within (v. 21), a symbol of God's divine nature in the Bible. These many symbols indicate that as the incorporation of God for eternity, the city as a whole expresses God. Further, the wall is inscribed with the names of the twelve tribes of Israel (v. 12) and has twelve foundations, on which are the twelve names of the twelve apostles (v. 14). The wall and its foundations symbolize the two redeemed peoples of the old creation, the Jews and the Gentiles, incorporated into the city. In every way, then, the holy city symbolizes the full incorporation of God's redeemed, regenerated, transformed, and glorified elect into Christ for eternity.

From eternity, through time, and unto eternity the incorporate person of Christ operates in the divine economy to fulfill the deep desire of God. Throughout this work He operates in the virtue of what He is in His person; His

work is the reflex of His being, both in essence and in economy. We may perhaps be saying no more than that God works completely in and through the Son or that the Son is center and circumference of the entire economy of God. But knowing that the divine economy, of which the Son is the integral element, operates by way of incorporation, we understand, perhaps more extensively, not only the divine economy but the Son Himself, and if the Son, then God the Father. And realizing that the God who is in Himself an incorporation fulfills His heart's desire through the incorporation that He is, we gain so much greater appreciation for the depth and magnitude of His full salvation for us. Perhaps the realization will speed us on our way toward the goal of the divine economy, helping us to "grow up into Him in all things, who is the Head, Christ" (Eph. 4:15). [AFC]

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**K**nowing that the divine economy, of which the son is the integral element, operates by way of incorporation, we understand, perhaps more extensively, not only the divine economy but the son himself, and if the son, then god the father.

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