

The Crystallization

THE REVELATION OF THE CORPORATE CHRIST

The New Testament reveals that the individual Christ, who forever remains the unique, only begotten Son in the Godhead, has become the corporate Christ. By the term *the corporate Christ* we refer to Christ the Head in His organic union with the many members of His Body. In contrast to theologians who regard the Body of Christ merely as a metaphor, we bear witness to the fact that the mystical Body of Christ—the corporate Christ—is, in God’s economy, a spiritual, divine-human reality. God’s economy is His arrangement to dispense Himself in Christ as the Spirit into His chosen and redeemed people to make them, the many sons of God, the corporate expression of Christ, the firstborn Son. This corporate expression of Christ requires that, through the processes of God’s economy, the individual Christ be enlarged to become the corporate Christ.

God’s economy is fully based upon, fully operates through, and is fully directed toward the incorporateness of Christ’s person. Viewed from this perspective, God’s economy operates to make manifest the incorporate person of Christ, who, as such, embodies and expresses the fullness of the Godhead. We exist for the purpose of making known—that is, of glorifying—the incorporate person of Christ. As an incorporate person Christ coinheres with the Father and the Spirit as a divine incorporation. In creation Christ incorporates all things in Himself as the Firstborn of all creation. In the stage of His incarnation Christ incorporates humanity in Himself as the Son of Man; in the stage of His inclusion Christ incorporates the believers in Himself as the firstborn Son of God; and in the stage of His intensification Christ incorporates the overcomers in Himself as the Head of the Body. Ultimately, in the New Jerusalem Christ incorporates in Himself the Father and the Spirit and God’s redeemed, regenerated, transformed, and glorified elect.

In his Epistles the apostle Paul displays a profound understanding both of the incorporate person of Christ and of the church as the Body of Christ, the corporate vessel which fulfills the eternal plan of God. As the corporate Christ the Body of Christ is Christ in another form, for the Body comes out of Christ and is one with Christ. This marvelous organism, the consummation of the work of the cross, is absolutely a matter of the divine life wrought into the believers to make them members of the Body, parts of

the corporate Christ. It is crucial that these members have the consciousness of the Body, live in and for the Body, recognize their need for the supply of the Body, and submit to the Head as the unique authority in the Body. The practicality of this corporate Christ can be seen the local churches, which are the present manifestation of the Body of Christ on earth.

Saul of Tarsus touched the reality and practicality of the corporate Christ when he experienced the great and wonderful corporate “Me.” This “Me” is the constitution of Jesus the Lord and all His believers, who are one with Him through faith in Him. On the day of his conversion, Saul began to realize that the Lord Jesus and the believers, the members of the Body, are a corporate person, a marvelous “Me.” Eventually, he came to realize that in His incarnation the Lord Jesus was the individual Christ, but through death and resurrection, the individual Christ became the corporate Christ, the “Me” of Acts 9 and the Body in 1 Corinthians 12. In Epistles to be written later, Paul would demonstrate that the believers, as members of the Body of Christ, are the corporate Christ in life and nature by virtue of their organic union with Christ.

Although the apostle John does not use the term—*the Body of Christ*—his Gospel is rich in its revelation of the corporate expression of the pneumatic Christ. The Gospel of John reveals not only that Christ in the flesh became the pneumatic Christ (the life-giving Spirit) in and through His resurrection but also that the pneumatic Christ has a corporate expression of several aspects, including the kingdom, the bride, the flock, the house, and the vine. If we would have the proper understanding of the kingdom of God as the corporate expression of the pneumatic Christ, we need to realize that the kingdom of God is not only God’s reign in a general way, with His authority and power, over the universe and everything and everyone in it, but also His reign in a particular way in the believers by Himself as life. The latter aspect of God’s reign is actually the enlargement of the pneumatic Christ and the realm of the divine species. We enter this realm by receiving the life of God through regeneration, and we live in this realm by dealing with sins and by experiencing and enjoying Christ under the inner ruling of His heavenly illumination.

by the Editors