

CHRIST IS EVERYTHING

BY RON KANGAS

Christ is everything: He is the reality of God, of humanity, and of every positive thing in the universe. Tragically, most Christians, lacking the excellency of the knowledge of Christ (Phil. 3:8), do not know or experience such an all-inclusive Christ. Because the biblical revelation of Christ as everything is not embraced by the vast majority of believers, including those who consider themselves evangelical, fundamental, or orthodox, the truth concerning the all-inclusiveness of Christ stands in desperate need of recovery.

If we would be faithful to the divine revelation regarding the person of Christ, we must not only avoid heresy but also be released from the unnecessary limitations of traditional, orthodox Christology in order to acknowledge the full and complete biblical revelation concerning Christ as the One who is everything. We should never become subject to the reemergence of destructive heresies: the denial of Christ's humanity (Docetism); the denial of Christ's divinity (Ebionism); the erroneous teaching that Christ is not the ever-existing Jehovah but merely a divine being created by God before the ages (Arianism); the absurd notion that Christ's humanity is incomplete, allegedly having a human body and human soul but not a human spirit, which was supposedly replaced by the Logos (Apollinarianism); the false doctrine which maintains that Christ's two natures, divinity and humanity, are separated to the extent that in the one body of Christ are two distinct persons or beings (Nestorianism); the teaching which denies the distinctness and coexistence of Christ's divinity and humanity and asserts that these two natures were merged into a third nature, which is neither human nor divine but in which divinity dominates humanity and humanity is absorbed into divinity (Eutychianism). In addition to being watchful against heresy, we should exercise in the Lord not be satisfied simply to be heirs of a treasured heritage of Christological truth—the truth that Christ has both divinity and humanity, each

being complete and both being united in the body of one person—without separation, without confusion, and without being changed into a new nature. The orthodox view of the person of Christ embodied in historic documents such as the Chalcedonian Definition is marvelous, but it is insufficient because it does not express the totality of the divine revelation regarding the all-inclusiveness of Christ. To remain within the confines of traditional, orthodox Christology, therefore, is to be content with a limited knowledge of Christ and to be deprived of the full knowledge of Christ presented in the Scriptures. No earnest seeker of the truth should be held back by a narrow view of Christ, and no serious follower of Christ should be limited by traditional theology. Although we should never go beyond the Word of God, we need to go beyond the general theology of what is commonly called "historic Christianity." It is dangerous to have only a little knowledge of Christ, for it can keep us from seeing that, according to the divine revelation, Christ is everything.

All genuine Christians believe that Christ is God incarnated as a man, that He died on the cross for our sins, that He resurrected bodily, that He ascended to the heavens where He is now sitting as Lord of lords and King of kings, and that He will return to earth and establish His kingdom. Although this is true, it is nonetheless a narrow, limited, and incomplete view of the Christ unveiled in the Bible. The Christ revealed in both the Old Testament and the New Testament is all-extensive and all-inclusive. Ephesians 1:23 says that Christ is the One who fills all in all, and 3:18 declares that His dimensions—the breadth, the length, the height, and the depth—are immeasurable, for they surpass and transcend the dimensions of the universe. Hence, Christ is all-extensive. As the all-extensive One, He is all-inclusive. As the Christ whose riches are unsearchable and as the only begotten Son of God in His divinity from eternity and the firstborn Son of God in

His humanity from His resurrection, He is the center of the Bible, the complete God, the mystery of God, the only begotten Son of God, the effulgence of God's glory and the impress of His substance, the Word, the centrality and universality of God's economy, the Creator and the First-born of all creation, the reality of every positive thing in the universe, the Son of Man, the God-man, the reality of the divine attributes and of all human virtues, the first-born Son of God, the Redeemer, salvation, everything in the new covenant, the portion of the saints, everything to the believers, the believers' life, everything in the church, and the One who is preeminent in all things.

Christ Is the Center of the Bible

The Bible is a wonderful book that unveils a wonderful person—the all-inclusive Christ. Christ is the center, the focal point, of the entire Bible; He is the central person, the central figure, of the Scriptures. Therefore, in a very real and practical sense, the Bible is a book of Christ, unveiling Him as the One who is everything for our experience and enjoyment in and for God's eternal economy. Realizing that the Bible is a book of Christ, Norman Geisler writes:

Christ is the key to the interpretation of the Bible, not only in that He is the fulfillment of Old Testament types and prophecies, but in that Christ is the thematic unity of the whole span of scriptural revelation....The purpose of the propositional revelation of the Scripture is to present the person of the Saviour; the Bible is the instrument of God to convey the message of Christ and, therefore, the Bible should not be sought so much for its own sake, but should be searched for the purpose of finding Christ, for "to him all the prophets bear witness" (Acts 10:43). (7-8)

Evidence that the Bible is a book of Christ is provided by the Lord's word to the disciples on the way to Emmaus: "O foolish and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and enter into His glory?" (Luke 24:25-26). Then "beginning from Moses and from all the prophets, He explained to them clearly in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself" (v. 27). Later in this chapter He says, "These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all the things written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and Psalms concerning

Me must be fulfilled" (v. 44). The Lord's word indicates that the entire Old Testament is a revelation of Him and that He is its center and content. The Law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms unveil Christ in many ways and in numerous aspects. The Pentateuch ("the Law of Moses") contains many types and figures of Christ: light, the tree of life, Adam, the sacrifice affording the coats of skins, the ark of Noah, Melchisedec, Isaac, the lamb provided by God, the ladder in Jacob's dream, Joseph, the lion of Judah, Moses, the Passover, the unleavened bread, the manna, the rock flowing with living water, the tabernacle with all its furniture, the testimony (the law), Aaron, the offerings, the Sabbath, the feasts, the brass serpent, a star out of Jacob, the One hanged on a tree, and the good land (a full type of the all-inclusive Christ). In the Prophets there are scores of prophecies concerning Christ, only a representative sampling of which can be mentioned

here: the seed of the woman, the seed of Abraham, the root of David, the seed of David, Emmanuel born of a virgin, the Christ born at Bethlehem, a root out of dry ground without form or comeliness, the Lord's Anointed to proclaim the jubilee, a great light springing up to the people sitting in darkness, a man of sorrows, the One who bore our griefs and carried our sorrows, the One who came to do God's will, the smitten Shepherd, the One forsaken by God, the cursed One hanging on a tree, the pierced One, the One who was raised from the dead on the third day, the

One who was begotten the firstborn Son of God, Shiloh, the stone who was rejected by the builders but became the cornerstone, the One with the key of David, the stone falling on the Gentile kingdoms and scattering them as chaff, and the coming King setting up His kingdom over all the earth. In the Psalms Christ is revealed in His divinity (45:6), His incarnation, His humanity (8:4), His human living (16:1-8), His death (22:1-21), His resurrection (2:7; 16:10; 22:22), His ascension (68:18), His exaltation (80:17), His crowning (8:5), His enthronement (2:6), His dominion, kingship, and authority (2:8; 8:6; 47; 72; 89; 110), His priesthood (110:4), His fighting (110:5-6; 45:3-5), His victory (110:5-6), His indwelling (22:22), His shepherding (23), His being the stone for the building (118:22), His coming (72; 96; 110), and His reigning (93—101).

Christ is the central person not only in the Bible as a whole but in the New Testament in particular. From Matthew 1 through Revelation 22 we see a continuous unveiling of Christ

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in His all-inclusiveness. John, 1 Corinthians, Colossians, and Hebrews are especially rich in presenting Christ to the believers for their participation and enjoyment. Christ unveiled Himself in a marvelous way in His parables, which, among other things, present Him as the Physician, the Bridegroom, the new garment, the new wine, the Lord of the harvest, the Sower, the Merchant seeking pearls, the Householder, the Son for whom the wedding feast is prepared, the lightning, the Thief in the parable of watching, the Master of the faithful and unfaithful slaves, the Money-lender with two debtors, the compassionate Samaritan, the best robe and the fattened calf, the door, the pasture, the Shepherd, and the vine.

Since Christ is the focal point of the Bible and since the Bible is a book of the all-inclusive Christ, we should never separate the Scriptures from Christ. Religionists, however, have the tendency to do this very thing and stand in need of the Lord's warning in John 5:39-40: "You search the Scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is these that testify concerning Me. Yet you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life." "Search the Scriptures" can easily be separated from "come to Me." Some may search the Scriptures to seek support for their theology, to find weapons to use in doctrinal disputes, to receive ethical instruction, to obtain spiritual succor, to discover principles of worship, or to obtain personal guidance—all without coming to the One concerning whom the Scriptures testify, the all-inclusive Christ who is the center of the written Word of God. If we would see that Christ is everything, we need to be deeply impressed with the fact that the Bible is a book concerning the all-inclusive Christ. For this, we need the three "openings" mentioned in Luke 24: the opening of the Scriptures (v. 32), the opening of our mind to understand the Scriptures (v. 45), and the opening of our eyes to behold the Christ revealed in the Scriptures (v. 31).

Christ Is the Complete God

The deity of Christ is unveiled both in the Old Testament and in the New Testament. In 2 Samuel 7:14 God says, "I will be a father to him and he will be a son to Me." Hebrews 1:5 indicates that this word spoken by God refers to Christ. God is His Father, and He is God's Son. According to biblical usage, such statements show equality with God (John 5:17-18). As God's Son, Christ has the Godhead and is equal with God. "He came as the Son of God with the Godhead to be the Christ of God to accomplish God's will" (Lee, *Person* 13). In Psalm 45:6 the psalmist declares, "Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever; / A scepter of uprightness is the scepter of Thy kingdom." Hebrews 1:8 notes that these words are addressed to the Son, thereby revealing that the Son, the object of the invocation "O God," is not only divine but is the very God Himself. Psalm 102:24-27 presents a further unveiling of Christ's deity:

I say, "O my God... / Thy years are throughout all generations. / Of old Thou didst found the earth; / And the heavens are the work of Thy hands. / Even they will perish, but Thou dost endure; / And all of them will wear out like a garment; / Like clothing Thou wilt change them, and they will be changed. / But Thou art the same, / And Thy years will not come to an end."

According to Hebrews 1:8-12 this laudation to God—a praise of Him as the Creator and Ruler of the heavens and the earth and as the immutable One—is addressed to Christ, offering further testimony to the fact that Christ is God.

What is revealed regarding Christ's deity in the Psalms is confirmed by the prophets Isaiah and Micah. If we juxtapose Isaiah 6:1-3 and John 12:38-41, we will see that the One whom Isaiah beheld in His splendor, "the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted, with the train of His robe filling the temple" (Isa. 6:1), was no one other than Christ, who is God most high, who is praised by the seraphim, and whose glory fills the whole earth. "Our Lord is the most high God who sits on the throne and whose glory fills the universe! He is worthy not only to receive praises from the heavenly angels, but much more, to be praised and worshipped by us!" (Lee 15). Micah 5:2 declares, "But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah... / From you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel. / His goings forth are from long ago, / From the days of eternity." Matthew 2:4-6 applies this passage to Christ. *The days of eternity* refers to Christ's eternity, to His eternal origin, to His being the eternal One. Since only God is from the days of eternity, Micah 5:2 affords additional testimony that Christ is God, eternal, self-existing, and ever-existing. As God, He has the Godhead with the status, standing, and position of God.

Christ's deity is revealed throughout the New Testament from Matthew to Revelation. In Matthew 1:18-23 there are three matters which indicate that Christ is God. Mary was "found to be with child of [lit., out of] the Holy Spirit," for that which had been "begotten in her [was] of [out of] the Holy Spirit." Christ was born through the impregnation of the Holy Spirit, and, of course, the Holy Spirit is God Himself. Therefore, when the Lord Jesus was born through the Holy Spirit, that was the very God incarnated, the very God becoming flesh (John 1:14). God ordained that the name of this One—the God-man—would be called Jesus (Matt. 1:21). *Jesus* is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew name *Joshua* (Num. 13:16; Heb. 4:8), which means "Jehovah the Savior," or "the salvation of Jehovah." From this we see that Jesus is not only a man but Jehovah God becoming our salvation. Whereas God ordained that the Lord's name would be Jesus, others called His name Emmanuel, which means "God with us." He is not only God—He is God with us.

The Gospel of John was written to bear witness to the fact

that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, the One who is the same as God, having God's nature and Godhead, and who, with the Father, is rightly an object of our worship (20:31; 9:35-38). John 1:1 reveals that Christ's deity is eternal and absolute, that from eternity past to eternity future, He is with God and He Himself is God. As God, He is Jehovah, the I Am. "I Am" is the meaning of the name *Jehovah* (Exo. 3:14), and Jehovah is the name of God (Gen. 2:7), the self-existing and ever-existing One. The Lord Jesus as the great I Am is the eternal, ever-existing God. Hence, He could say, "Before Abraham came into being, I am (John 8:58). As the I Am He is everything to us in our experience and enjoyment of Him: the bread of life (6:35), the light of the world (8:12), the door (10:7), the good Shepherd (v. 11), the resurrection and the life (11:25), and the way, the reality, and the life (14:6).

The revelation of Christ's deity in the Gospels is developed in the Epistles of Paul. In Romans 9:5 Paul speaks of "the Christ, who is God over all, blessed forever." Christ is God over all, which means that He is above all created things, and He is blessed forever, which means that He, as God, is worthy to be praised, worshipped, and adored. Second Corinthians 13:14 says, "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all." Here the Lord is placed on the same level as God and the Holy Spirit, proving that He has the same divine

nature and Godhead as God and the Holy Spirit. Philipians 2:6 refers to Christ's "existing in the form of God," and Colossians 1:15 says that He is "the image of the invisible God." The Lord exists in the form of God and is the image of God because He is God. In 1 Timothy 3:15-16 Paul goes on to speak of Christ as God manifested in the flesh. Here Paul speaks of the mystery that Christ in the flesh was God Himself manifested in the flesh.

In his first Epistle John strengthens the biblical testimony to the Godhood of Christ: "We know that the Son of God has come and has given us an understanding that we might know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son, Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life" (5:20). *This* refers to the God who has come through incarnation and who, in His Son Jesus Christ, has made it possible for us to be in Him. To be in the true God is to be in the Son of God. Because Christ is God, to be in Him is to be in the true God.

The unveiling of Christ's deity which begins in Matthew is consummated in Revelation. In 1:4-5 Christ is placed on the same level as God and the Spirit, indicating that He, along with God the Father and God the Spirit, possesses the Godhead. In 1:17, 2:8, and 22:13 the Lord Jesus speaks of Himself as "the First and the Last." To be sure, the One who is the First and the Last is God, who is from eternity to eternity (Psa. 90:2). This is further evidence that Christ is the eternal God. Revelation 5:13 says, "To Him who sits upon the throne and to the Lamb be the blessing and the honor and the glory and the might forever and ever." The fact that God and the Lamb (Christ the Lord) together receive equal praises proves that Christ and God are one and that Christ is equal with God in honor and glory. Revelation 21:22 says of the New Jerusalem that "the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb are its temple." For God and the Lamb to be the temple, God and the Lamb must be

one. A further illustration of this oneness is found in 21:23: "The glory of God illumined it, and its lamp is the Lamb." Just as the light and the lamp are one, so God and Christ are one. "God is the content of Christ, and Christ is the expression of God" (Lee 26-27). Furthermore, the throne in the New Jerusalem is "the throne of God and of the Lamb" (22:1). The Lamb and God share one throne (no doubt because God as the light is in the Lamb as the lamp); this places Christ the Lamb on an equal level with God and demonstrates that God and Christ are one. Moreover, in 22:13 the

Lord Jesus says, "I am the Alpha and the Omega," but in 1:8 the Lord God says these words. This clearly reveals that Christ is God, "He who is and who was and who is coming, the Almighty." Christ, therefore, is the true and living God and is worthy of our praise and worship.

The Bible reveals not only that Christ is God but also that He is the complete God, by which we mean that He is not merely one-third of God, the Son, but the totality of God, the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. For Christ to be the complete God means that He is the Triune God. Christ is the Triune God in the sense that He is the embodiment of the fullness of the Godhead and that He is the manifestation in the flesh of the whole God, not only the Son. Colossians 2:9 says, "For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." *All the fullness of the Godhead* refers to the entire Godhead, to the complete God. The fullness of the Godhead is the entire Godhead, including the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. Since the Godhead comprises the

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Father, the Son, and the Spirit, the fullness of the Godhead must be the fullness of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. That all the fullness of the Godhead dwells in Christ bodily means that the Triune God is 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. Hence, Christ is the embodiment of the Triune God; the Father, the Son, and the Spirit are all embodied in Him.

As the embodiment of the fullness of the Godhead, Christ is the complete God manifested in the flesh (1 Tim. 3:15-16). He was manifested in the flesh not only as the Son but as the complete Triune God. Such a manifestation could take place because it was the entire God and not only the Son of God who was incarnated. The New Testament does not say that the Son of God was incarnated; it says that God was manifested in the flesh, meaning that the entire Triune God became incarnated. The Word who became flesh (John 1:1, 14) is not a partial God but the complete God—God the Son, God the Father, and God the Spirit. Therefore, to receive Christ is to receive the Triune God.

For Christ to be the complete God, the Triune God, implies that, in some sense, He must be both the Father and the Spirit, and this is precisely what the Scriptures reveal. Isaiah 9:6 prophesies, “For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; / And the government will rest upon His shoulders; / And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, / Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.” Here there are two lines: The child born will be called Mighty God, and the son given will be called Eternal Father. The child born is Christ, and the son given is also Christ. Christ, the child born, is the Mighty God, and Christ, the son given, is the Eternal Father. Following the principle of using Scripture to interpret Scripture, we turn to the Gospel of John for help in comprehending how the Son can be the Father. According to John, the Son came in the Father’s name (5:43), that is, He came as the Father. The Son also worked in the Father’s name (10:25), lived because of the Father (6:57), did the Father’s will (5:30; 6:38), spoke the Father’s word (14:24; 7:16-17), did the Father’s work (5:17, 19), sought the Father’s glory (7:18), was one with the Father (10:30), and expressed the Father (14:7-9). Because the Son did all this in, with, by, and as the Father, He may, in fulfillment of Isaiah 9:6, rightly be called the Father.

The Son is called the Father also because the Son and the Father coexist in the way of coinherence. For the Son and the Father to coexist means that the two exist together at the same time; for the Son and the Father to coinhere means that the two exist in each other, dwelling in each other. This coinherent coexistence is unveiled in John 14:10-11a: “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.” This is coinherence, the mutual dwelling of the Father in the Son and of the Son in the Father. Because the Son is in the Father and the Father is in the Son, to see the Son is to see the Father. The Son who dwells in the Father and who simultaneously is indwelt by the Father is, in actuality and practicality, the Father Himself expressed. Because the Son came with the Father and in the name of the Father, because the Son lived by the Father, spoke the Father’s word, and expressed the Father, and because the Son coexists with the Father in the way of coinherence with the Father, the Son is called the Eternal Father.

As the One who is the embodiment of the Triune God and the One who is the Triune God manifested in the flesh, Christ is also the life-giving Spirit. “The last Adam became a life-giving Spirit” (1 Cor. 15:45b). Christ, the last Adam in the flesh, became a life-giving Spirit in and through His resurrection. “And the Lord is the Spirit” (2 Cor. 3:17). As the context makes evident, *the Lord* here refers not to the Lord God (as wrongly supposed by some who wish to evade and avoid the implications of Paul’s word) but to the Lord Jesus Christ. *The Lord* in verse 17, as in verses 16 and 18, surely refers to the Lord Jesus. The strong word in verse 17 that Christ the Lord is the Spirit is confirmed by the very particular appellation of Christ in verse 18—*the Lord Spirit*. The Christ who is the life-giving Spirit is the Lord Spirit, the Lord who is the Spirit. From all this we conclude that, according to the full revelation in the Word of God, Christ, the One who is everything, is not only God but also the complete God.

Christ Is the Mystery of God

In Colossians 2:2 Paul speaks of “the mystery of God, Christ.” That Christ is the mystery of God indicates that if we desire to know God, we must know Christ as the One who is the definition, explanation, and expression of God. The universe is a mystery, and the God who created the universe is also a mystery, for He, the immeasurable, infinite, and eternal One, is a God who hides Himself (Isa. 45:15). God Himself is a mystery, and Christ is the mystery of this mystery. In Christ and by Christ as the mystery of God, the mysterious God is fully revealed. Everything concerning God is in Christ. Embodied in Christ as the mystery of God is all that God is and has and all that God has done, is doing, and intends to do. God is in Christ, and the only way to have God is to have Christ. Because Christ is the mystery of God, if we know Christ, we know God, but if we do not know Christ, we do not have the way to know God.

A person may be a theist and thus may believe in God, at least as a concept or theory. However, one who is merely a theist and not a Christian has God only in terminology, not in reality, because such a theist does not know Christ as the

mystery of God, that is, does not know Christ as the embodiment, definition, explanation, and history of God. Apart from Christ, who is the mystery of God, we cannot be in God, we cannot be one with God, and we cannot enjoy the reality of God. As the mystery of God, Christ is the key that opens to us the being of God. If we have Christ, God is open to us. Through Christ we know God and are even brought into God.

Christ Is the Son of God

Christ is the only begotten Son of God (John 1:14, 18; 3:16, 18; 1 John 4:9). Christ's being the only begotten Son of God refers to His deity and to His identity in the Godhead. As the only begotten Son, He is of the same essence as the Father and the Spirit; therefore, He possesses the full essence of God with all its unique attributes. To say that Christ is the only begotten Son of God does not mean that there was a time when He did not exist and that at some point in eternity past He was begotten of God. Since He is eternally God and eternally with God (John 1:1-2), His being the only begotten Son of God refers not to an event but to an eternal relationship to the Father. In this relationship the Father is the eternal source of the Son, and the Son is the eternal expression of the Father. Christ's being the Son of God implies the expression of God, the issue, or the coming out, of God. Whereas the Father is the hidden God, the Son is the expressed God. Concerning God's existence, Christ is the complete God as the embodiment of God, but concerning God's expression, Christ is the Son of God.

In the Godhead the Father is the source, and the Son is the expression of the Father. The Son can be the expression of the Father because He is the embodiment of the Father, He is one with the Father, and He is coinherent with the Father. As the source the Father is the Initiator, the Originator, the Planner, and the Designer, and as the expression the Son is the Accomplisher, the One who carries out what the Father has initiated, originated, planned, and designed. According to the Gospel of John, the Son carried out the Father's plan by coming in the Father's name, working in the Father's name, doing the Father's will, speaking the Father's word, and seeking the Father's glory. As such a One, the Son did not express Himself—He expressed the Father.

Christ Is the Effulgence of God's Glory and the Impress of His Substance

Hebrews 1:3 says that Christ the Son of God is "the effulgence of His glory and the impress of His substance." The effulgence of God's glory may be compared to the shining, the brightness, of the light of the sun. Just as the shining of the sun cannot be separated from the rays of the sun, so Christ as the effulgence of God's glory cannot be separated from this glory. Christ is the radiance of God, the bright expression of God's glory. "The inscrutable glory of God streams forth in the Son who is the effulgence of that glory" (Lenski 36).

This wonderful Christ is not only the effulgence of God's glory but also the impress of God's substance. The glory is the outward expression, and the substance is the inward essence, the inner substance or reality of God's being. The Greek word for *impress* "means two things, first, a *seal*, and, second, the *impression* that the seal leaves on the wax. The impression has the exact form of the seal" (Barclay 14). The impress is "that by which a person or thing can be recognized," the person's exact representation (Earle 419). Christ is, therefore, the exact representation of the inner being of the hidden God.

As the effulgence of God's glory and the impress of God's substance, Christ is the image of God (Col. 1:15; 2 Cor. 4:4). To use J. B. Phillips's felicitous expression, Christ is "the

visible expression of the invisible God." God is invisible, but Christ is God's image, the expression of God's being in all His attributes. Although God is invisible, He is expressed through His image, which is His Son. When we behold Christ, we behold the expression of the invisible God, for Christ, the image of the invisible God, is actually God Himself expressed.

Christ Is the Word

Christ is also the Word (John 1:1, 14), the personal speaking of God. As the Word, Christ is the living definition and explanation of God. All that Christ is and does speaks for God and even speaks God forth; all that He is and does defines God and explains God. He is the exegesis of God. Just as we are expressed through our words, so God is expressed through His Word, which is Christ, the only begotten Son of God. God is invisible, mysterious, and abstract, and He needs the Word to express Him. "Christ, as the Word, is

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AND ARE EVEN BROUGHT INTO GOD.**

the definition, explanation, and expression of God. This Word is actually God Himself, not God hidden, concealed, and mysterious, but God defined, explained, and expressed” (Lee, *Conclusion* 235).

Christ’s being the Word to define and explain God involves four divine attributes in a very particular way—life, light, grace, and reality (John 1:4, 14, 16). The Word is the Word of life (1 John 1:1). Life is the first and the basic attribute of God. The life of God (Eph. 4:18) is divine, eternal, uncreated, unchangeable, and indestructible. God’s life is *the life* (1 John 5:11-12), a word which reveals that, in the sight of God, only His life is the life “which is really life” (1 Tim. 6:19). This life is the content of the Word, the inner element of God’s definition. Furthermore, this life is light: “In Him [the Word] was life, and the life was the light of men” (John 1:4). Light is an expressive attribute of God and may be defined as the nature of God’s expression. Life is God as the content of the Word, and light is God as the expression through the Word. When the Word became flesh, He was full of grace and reality. Grace is God in Christ to be enjoyed by us, and reality is God in Christ to be realized (to be substantiated as real) by us. The Word imparts the divine life, the divine life shines as light, and with this life and light we have grace and reality. In this way God is defined and explained by Christ as the Word with life, light, grace, and reality. “The Word is God expressed, life is God imparted, light is God shining, grace is God enjoyed, and reality is God realized” (237).

Christ Is the Centrality and Universality of God’s Economy

God’s economy is His administrative arrangement to dispense Himself in Christ as the life-giving Spirit into His chosen, redeemed, and regenerated people to produce the Body of Christ, which will consummate in the New Jerusalem as the ultimate, eternal, and corporate expression of the processed and consummated Triune God in His redeemed, regenerated, transformed, and glorified tripartite elect. In this divine economy, in this plan formulated by God according to His good pleasure, Christ is the centrality and the universality. In God’s economy Christ is the center and the circumference. Christ is everything in and for the accomplishment of God’s economy.

In the Bible God’s universal move for the fulfillment of His economy is likened to the move of a great wheel (cf. Ezek. 1:15). Christ is every part of this wheel. He is the hub, the holding center (Col. 1:17); He is the spokes, the support; and He is the rim, the circumference. From this we see that in God’s economy and in God’s move for the carrying out of His economy, Christ is everything. All of God’s activities to dispense Himself into His people for His corporate expression are in Christ, by Christ, with Christ, through Christ, and for Christ.

God has appointed Christ to be everything and to accomplish everything in the divine economy. Christ is, therefore, God’s anointed One and appointed One, the One appointed by God to accomplish His purpose and the One commissioned by God to fulfill the desire of His heart. God has determined to head up all things in Christ: “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” (Eph. 1:10). For this purpose God has given Christ to be “Head over all things to the church, which is His Body, the fullness of the One who fills all in all” (vv. 22-23). These verses reveal that God’s economy is to head up all things in Christ through His Body. At present, Christ is in the process of heading up all things through the church, and at “the economy of the fullness of the times”—in the new heaven and new earth with the New Jerusalem as the center—all things will be headed up in Christ, who is not only the Head of all things but also the center of all things in God’s economy. He is truly the centrality and universality of God’s economy:

Christ is God’s centrality
And His universality;
He is God’s delight and joy
Throughout all eternity.

He’s th’ embodiment of God,
In Him all God’s fulness dwells;
His unique supremacy
And His Godhead none excels.

All God’s purpose is for Him,
That He might be all in all;
All the things in heav’n and earth
With Himself are made withal.

All creation is for Christ,
Everything was made by Him;
'Tis by Him all things subsist,
He’s the hub and He’s the rim.

In redemption He is all,
All through Him is reconciled;
By His blood all things with God
Now in peace are domiciled.

He the great beginning is,
And the Church’s living Head;
He her life and content too,
And the firstborn from the dead.

In God’s Kingdom He’s the King,
All the pow’r to Him is giv’n;
In His glory He shall rule
Over all in earth and heav’n.

In new heaven and new earth
Center of all things He'll be,
For the Godhead and for man
Throughout all eternity.

God intends in everything
Christ should have preeminence,
And that such a Christ of all
We should now experience. (*Hymns*, 450-451)

Christ Is the Creator and the Firstborn of All Creation

Since God is the Creator of all things and since Christ is God, Christ is the Creator. This is proved by the fact that in Hebrews 1:10 a word concerning God as the Creator (Psa. 102:25) is applied to Christ. As the Creator, Christ is the origination and source of all created things. In addition, Christ is the One through whom all things came into being (John 1:3). For all things to come into being through Him and for nothing to come into being apart from Him mean that apart from Christ nothing has existence. Not only is Christ the Creator and the One through whom everything has existence; He is also the One in whom all things were created (Col. 1:16). All things were created in the power of Christ's person and in Christ as the sphere. Furthermore, all things cohere in Christ (v. 17). In Christ all things have their existence, and in Christ all things are maintained in their existence. The phrase *in Him* indicates that Christ is related to the universe in a subjective way, for Christ is not merely the objective Creator who created all things to exist as objective entities distinct from Himself but is also the subjective instrument through whom the process of creation took place and in whom all things continue to exist.

Christ, the Creator of all things, is also a creature—the Firstborn of all creation, the first among all creatures. Such a claim cannot reasonably be doubted or disputed. With respect to His deity Christ is the eternal God, and there “was not when He was not.” Contrary to Arius and his followers today, Christ is Jehovah God from eternity to eternity. He is not a divine being created by Jehovah prior to the creation of the universe. Christ is the very God. Nevertheless, with respect to His humanity Christ is a creature, for He as the Word became flesh, a created element, and thereby became a human being, a creature. As

a creature, Christ occupies the first place, the place of preeminence, as the Firstborn of all creation. Regarding His deity He is the Creator; regarding His humanity He is a creature. Once again we see that Christ is all-inclusive, that Christ is everything.

Christ Is the Reality of Every Positive Thing in the Universe

As the One who is everything, Christ is the reality of every positive thing in the universe. This is the central thought of the book of Colossians, which contains the highest revelation of Christ in the Scriptures. We do not claim that Christ is literally every positive thing in the universe. Any literal identification of Christ with material things would involve the pantheistic identification of Christ and nature, and we repudiate pantheism utterly and absolutely. According to the unveiling of Christ in Colossians we must testify that

Christ is the reality of every positive thing. For example, He is the real life, the real light, the real bread, and the real vine. Concerning Christ as the true vine, Andrew Murray says:

All earthly things are the shadows of heavenly realities—the expression, in created, visible forms, of the invisible glory of God. The Life and the Truth are in Heaven; on earth we have figures and shadows of the heavenly truths. When Jesus says: “I am the true Vine,” He tells us that all the vines of earth are pictures and emblems of Himself. He is the divine real-

ity, of which they are the created expression. They all point to Him, and preach Him, and reveal Him. (9)

Just as Christ is the real vine, so He is the reality of countless other items: He is the real water, the real air, the real clothing, the real dwelling place, the real rock, the real mountain, the real sun, the real star, the real land, the real earth, and the real universe.

It is by no means an accident that all the positive things are signs, figures, pictures, of Christ. God's intention in His creation is to use the various items of creation to portray or illustrate the all-inclusive Christ. In fact, the entire universe came into existence for the purpose of describing Christ. For example, if vines had not been created, the Lord Jesus could not have made reference to a vine in revealing Himself to His disciples. Likewise, if there were no pasture, He could not use it as a picture of Himself as the real pasture. Once we grasp the principle here, we will realize that the

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universe with all the positive items in it is a picture of Christ. If we see this, we will begin to realize how rich, profound, and all-inclusive Christ is.

Christ Is the Son of Man

Although Christ as God is outside of time, one day He entered His creation and became a man in time. How marvelous it is that the eternal God became a man! He was begotten in the womb of a virgin and was born as a genuine human infant, yet He was still the complete God—Emmanuel, God with us (Matt. 1:22-23). By His incarnation Christ took upon Himself our human nature. He is still the eternal God, possessing the divine essence with the divine nature, but He is also the perfect man, possessing the human essence with the human nature.

In His incarnation Christ is called the Son of Man (Matt. 12:8, 40; Mark 8:31; Luke 19:10). *The Son of Man*, another wonderful title of Christ, indicates that Christ is a genuine man and the perfect representative of our race. Although He partook of blood and flesh as we do (Heb. 2:14), He does not have the sinful element that we have. He became a genuine man but a man without sin (Heb. 4:15; 2 Cor. 5:21). As the Word He became flesh; however, He did not become the sinful flesh but came in the likeness of the flesh of sin (Rom. 8:3). Throughout His living on earth, He committed no sin (1 Pet. 2:22). Hence, as the Son of Man, He is the perfect man.

As the Son of Man, Christ is fully related to, involved with, and concerned about our needs. The title *Son of Man* therefore implies relationships and involvements. When Christ became the Son of Man, He became involved with our human situation for the sake of God's economy. As the Son of Man, He came not to be served but to serve and to give His life as a ransom for many (Matt. 20:28; Mark 10:45). As the Son of Man, He, who had no place to lay His head (Matt. 8:20; Luke 9:58), came to seek and save lost sinners (Matt. 18:11; 9:13; Luke 19:10), to eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners (Matt. 9:10-11; 11:19; Luke 7:34), and to visit and lodge with a sinful man (Luke 19:5-7). As the Son of Man, He came not to destroy people's lives but to save them (Luke 9:56). As the Son of Man, He is a Physician to those who are ill (Matt. 9:12), and He has authority to forgive sins (v. 6). As the Son of Man, He is the Lord of the Sabbath (Mark 2:28). As the Son of Man, He came to sow Himself as the good seed in order to reproduce Himself (Matt. 13:3-9, 37). As the Son of Man, He died, He was resurrected, He ascended, and He is caring for the churches (John 3:14; Mark 8:31; 14:62; Acts 7:56; Rev. 1:11-13). As the Son of Man, He will come back to earth, execute judgment, reign in the millennium, and be the ladder joining earth to heaven in eternity (Matt. 10:23; John 5:27-29; Matt. 19:28-29; John 1:51).

Christ Is the God-man

Since Christ is the complete God and the perfect man, He is the God-man. Witness Lee offers the following summary of the orthodox, biblical view concerning the person of Christ as the God-man, the One who is both God and man:

He is truly God and truly man, and He is both God and man. He has perfect divinity as well as complete humanity. The two natures in Him are neither confused nor separated. Although He has two natures, still He is one person. His Person cannot be divided, and His natures may not be confused. This is the proper revelation as shown in the entire Holy Word of God; this is also the orthodox view of the church of God through the ages. Our Lord who is both God and man, one person with two natures, without separation and without confusion is truly a mystery of mysteries and is worthy to receive our worship and praise forever! (*Person 12*)

Christ was conceived of the Holy Spirit with the divine essence, and He was born of a human virgin with the essence of humanity. This conception and birth, involving the divine essence with the divine life and nature and the human essence with the human life and nature, constituted a marvelous mingling of divinity with humanity to produce the God-man, the One who is both the complete God and the perfect man, without producing a third nature—something neither wholly divine nor altogether human. Christ is both God and man, and it is a great heresy to claim that He is not quite God nor quite man but a third entity with a third nature, something neither God nor man. No, Jesus Christ is the mingling of divinity and humanity in the unique person of the God-man, who is both fully divine and fully human.

Due to misuse in the early history of the church, some may object to our use of the word *mingling*. We use this word with care and precision, following the first definition given in *Webster's Abridged Dictionary*: "to combine or join (one thing with another, or two or more things together), especially so that the original elements are not lost but remain distinguishable." It is in this sense that divinity and humanity are mingled in the person of Christ as the God-man. In His unique person He is the mingling of God and man, but in this mingling the divine nature and the human nature remain and are distinguishable, and a third nature is not produced. This is the wonderful person of Christ as the God-man—Son of God and Son of Man, complete God and perfect man.

Christ Is the Reality of the Divine Attributes and the Human Virtues

As God Christ possesses the divine attributes, and as man He possesses the human virtues. The word *possesses* suggests that the divine attributes and human virtues are things

which He has, characteristics of His person but not the person Himself. Actually, with respect to Christ as the all-inclusive One in God's economy, attributes and virtues are not merely characteristics of Christ; rather, they are Christ Himself, for Christ not only has the divine attributes and the human virtues—He is these things. He is the reality of all the divine attributes and the reality of all the human virtues. For instance, God has the attribute of holiness, and Christ is the reality of holiness; He Himself is holiness. Likewise, God has the attributes of love, life, and light, and Christ is the reality of love, life, and light; He Himself is love, life, and light. The principle is the same with the human virtues. Christ not only has such virtues as humility and patience; He is humility, patience, and all other virtues.

Regarding the attribute of righteousness, believers often speak inaccurately and imprecisely. As we all know, justification is a matter of righteousness. Justification is a judicial procedure whereby God approves us in Christ according to the standard of His righteousness and declares us righteous in Christ. It is commonly supposed, and even taught, that, as those who are justified by grace through faith, by divine imputation we now have the righteousness of Christ. No, we do not have the righteousness of Christ; we have Christ as our righteousness. The *righteousness of Christ* is Christ's virtue of righteousness which He possesses as the Righteous One. God does not give us the righteousness of Christ—He gives us *Christ as righteousness*. Of God we are in Christ Jesus, who has been made righteousness to us (1 Cor. 1:30). The righteousness we have in Christ is not a thing; the righteousness we have in Christ is Christ Himself. As prodigals who have returned to the Father, we have been clothed with the best robe, which signifies Christ, the person, as righteousness to us. Because we are in Christ, because we are covered with Christ as our righteousness, because God has given Christ to us as righteousness, we have been justified by God, approved by Him according to the standard of divine righteousness. From this we see that regarding our participation in the divine attributes and the human virtues, God does not give us things; He gives us the all-inclusive Christ, who is the reality of the divine attributes and the human virtues.

Christ Is the Firstborn Son of God

In His deity Christ is the only begotten Son of God, but as

the result of the process of incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection, He became the firstborn Son of God in His humanity. By incarnation Christ took on humanity, and when He was crucified, His humanity was put to death. After His death on the cross, He was raised from the dead (1 Cor. 15:4). Only His humanity had died, for as He was being put to death in the flesh (humanity), He was being made alive in the Spirit (divinity), and by virtue of His divinity His humanity was resurrected from the dead. Through resurrection His humanity was brought into the sonship of the only begotten Son, and He, as a man in His humanity, became the firstborn Son of God, the first among many brothers. Therefore, on the morning of His resurrection, He could say that His disciples were now His brothers and that His Father was now their Father (John 20:17). Now we who believe in Him are the sons of God (Gal. 3:26; John 1:12; Rom. 8:14). Through His resurrection He became the firstborn Son of God (Rom. 8:29), and we who have received Him by believing into Him have become the many brothers, the many sons of God (Heb. 2:10; 1 Pet. 1:3).

**AS THE SON OF MAN,
CHRIST IS FULLY RELATED TO,
INVOLVED WITH, AND CONCERNED
ABOUT OUR NEED.
THE TITLE "SON OF MAN"
THEREFORE IMPLIES RELATIONSHIPS
AND INVOLVEMENTS.
WHEN CHRIST BECAME THE
SON OF MAN, HE BECAME INVOLVED
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FOR THE SAKE OF GOD'S ECONOMY.**

Eternally, Christ is the only begotten Son of God in His deity, and as such He cannot have brothers. According to His deity He remains, and always will remain, the only begotten Son of God. Nevertheless, the Scriptures testify that Christ is also the Son of God in another sense—the firstborn Son of God, the Firstborn among many brothers

(Rom. 8:29). This designation refers to Christ in resurrection, when He was glorified to be the Son of God both in His divinity and in His humanity. Paul's word in Acts 13:33 clearly reveals that for Christ resurrection was a birth. When He was resurrected, His humanity was begotten to be the Son of God. As a result, in addition to being the only begotten Son of God in His deity, He became the firstborn Son of God with His humanity. In His deity He is eternally the only begotten Son of God, but through resurrection His humanity also became the Son of God, and the way was opened, through God's complete organic salvation, for us to become the many sons of God and the many brothers of Christ.

In Romans 1:4 Paul tells us that Christ "was designated the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness out of the resurrection of the dead." As the only begotten Son, Christ has never needed and never will need to be designated the Son of God, but it was necessary for

His humanity to be so designated, and through His resurrection the humanity of Christ was designated the Son of God. Now He, the all-inclusive One, the One who is everything, is the Son of God both in His deity and in His humanity. To know Christ as the Son of God, therefore, is to know Him both as the only begotten Son and as the firstborn Son.

Christ Is the Redeemer

Christ is our Redeemer, and in Him we have redemption (Rom. 3:24). Originally, we were God's possession by creation, but we became fallen and were lost. However, God desired to regain us, and in Christ He paid the price to gain us back to Himself, repossessing us at a tremendous cost. This is redemption.

Redemption is a complicated process. Because we were fallen and lost, we had many problems with God in relation to His righteousness, holiness, and glory. Heavy requirements were laid upon us, and it was impossible for us to fulfill them. But as our Redeemer Christ paid the price for us, dying on the cross to accomplish eternal redemption for us (Gal. 3:13; 1 Pet. 2:24; 3:18; Heb. 10:12; 9:28). His blood has obtained an eternal redemption for us (Heb. 9:12, 14; 1 Pet. 1:18-19).

As our Redeemer, Christ is the Lamb of God who takes away sin from the human race (John 1:29). Christ died on the cross as the Lamb of God to deal with sin and sins. From 1 Corinthians 15:3, 1 Peter 2:24, and Hebrews 9:28 we see that as the Lamb of God the Lord Jesus died for our sins. According to 2 Corinthians 5:21 and Hebrews 9:26 His death dealt with sin, the poisonous nature of Satan, which, at the time of the fall, was injected into humankind. As the Lamb of God, Christ could redeem us because He fulfilled and satisfied the requirements of God's righteousness, holiness, and glory. For our redemption Christ was the Lamb of God designated by God to fulfill His righteous, holy, and glorious requirements and through this fulfillment to regain us for God. We were lost; we have been bought with Christ's redeeming blood; and now, in Him as our Redeemer, we belong to God.

Christ Is Our Savior and Our Salvation

Whereas redemption is what Christ accomplished for us on the cross, salvation is the application to us of the redemption accomplished by Christ. In God's salvation Christ is the Savior. Matthew 1:21 says, "You shall call His name Jesus, for it is He who will save His people from their sins." As we have pointed out, *Jesus* means "Jehovah the Savior," or "the salvation of Jehovah." Concerning His being the Savior, Luke 2:11 says, "Today a Savior has been born to you in David's city, who is Christ the Lord." In John 4:42 the Lord Jesus is referred to as the Savior of the world. Based

upon His person as the God-man and His redemptive work, He is the Savior of fallen human beings.

Christ is not only our Savior—He is also our salvation. He Himself is the salvation that God has prepared for us. Apart from Him there is no salvation (Acts 4:12). John the Baptist prepared the way for Christ to come to be the salvation of God (Luke 3:4-6). When the child Jesus was presented to God, Simeon blessed God, saying, "My eyes have seen Your salvation" (2:30). Therefore, to receive Him is to receive salvation. When the Lord Jesus said to Zaccheus, "Today I must stay in your house," Zaccheus "received Him, rejoicing" (19:5-6). The Lord went on to say, "Today salvation has come to this house" (v. 9). When the Lord came to the house of Zaccheus, salvation came to that house. This reveals that salvation is not simply a thing or an action; salvation is a wonderful person, the all-inclusive Christ.

Christ Is Everything in the New Covenant

Christ is also everything in the new covenant (Heb. 7:22; 8:6). In the new covenant He is the Apostle (3:1), the One sent to us from God and with God (John 6:46; 8:16). As our Apostle He came to share God with us so that we may partake of His divine life and divine nature. In the new covenant Christ is the High Priest (Heb. 3:1). As our High Priest Christ is merciful and faithful (2:17), He has passed through the heavens and is even higher than the heavens (4:14; 7:26), and He is always living to intercede for us and thereby to save us to the uttermost (7:25). His ministry as the High Priest is the ministry of the kingly and divine priesthood in heaven, ministering to us the divine life with all its riches as our daily supply. In the new covenant Christ is the One who shed the better blood to enact this covenant. The new covenant required the shedding of the blood of the God-man, the blood of Jesus the Son of God (1 John 1:7), the efficacy of which is eternal and the application of which is unlimited. This blood not only cleanses us from our sins, but as the blood of the covenant (Heb. 13:20) it enables us to enjoy God as the portion ordained for us by bringing us, actually and experientially, into God. In the new covenant Christ is the Mediator (8:6), the surety (7:22), the Maker, and the Executor of the new testament (9:16-17). As the Mediator Christ goes between us and God; as the surety He is the pledge that everything in the new covenant will be fulfilled; as the Maker He enacted the new covenant; and as the Executor He executes the new testament (which the new covenant has become) consummated by His blood by interceding for us. Finally, in the new covenant Christ is the one sacrifice, which is the reality and the fulfillment of the Old Testament offerings. Christ is not only the One who shed the better blood; He, as the unique sacrifice, is all the offerings required by God and prepared by God for us to receive, experience, and enjoy all of the benefits, blessings, and bequests of the new covenant.

Christ Is the Portion of the Saints

In Colossians 1:12 Paul speaks of Christ as the “portion of the saints.” The Greek word for *portion* can also be rendered “lot.” It is likely that as Paul was writing he had in mind the picture of the allotting of the good land to the children of Israel in the Old Testament. God gave His people the land of Canaan for their inheritance and enjoyment, with each of the twelve tribes receiving an allotment of the good land, which is an all-inclusive type of Christ. Today, as the fulfillment of this type, we have Christ as our good land; that is, we have as our portion the Christ who is everything.

We need to be impressed with the fact that the Christ who is our portion is typified by the good land, the land of Canaan. Like the Passover lamb and the manna, the good land of Canaan is a type of Christ—a type of the all-inclusive Christ, the Christ who is everything to us for our experience and enjoyment. All genuine Christians have experienced Christ as the Lamb slain for their redemption. According to the detailed picture of Christ as the redeeming Lamb in Exodus 12, on the cross Christ was consumed by holy fire that we might be saved from the judgment of God. Because of the blood of Christ, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, God passes over us, and we are redeemed. Furthermore, by partaking of the redeeming life of Christ, we are strengthened to make our exodus from the enslaving world

system (Egypt) under the authority of Satan (Pharaoh). Some Christians have advanced to experience Christ as manna, a type of Christ as the bread of life, the true and living bread of God that came down from heaven to give life to the world. God’s purpose in delivering His people from bondage in Egypt and leading them through the wilderness was to bring them into the good land, a spacious, elevated land flowing with milk and honey. Not many Christians realize that this good land is a type of the all-inclusive Christ as our God-given portion. As the good land Christ is immeasurable and unsearchably rich. In the words of Deuteronomy 8:7-10 Christ is a land of fountains and springs, of wheat and barley, of vines, fig trees, and pomegranates, of olive oil and honey, of iron and copper. All these are figures of Christ in various aspects: the living water to quench our thirst, the One who was limited unto death (wheat), the resurrection life (barley), the cheering wine, the satisfying figs, the pomegranates with the abundance of life, the olive oil to honor God and man, the honey

which strengthens us with its sweetness, the iron for spiritual authority, and the copper for spiritual warfare. God has placed us into such a wonderful Christ so that we may dwell in Him, experience Him, and enjoy Him. Just as God’s intention for the children of Israel was not that they remain in Egypt as slaves under Pharaoh or that they wander in the wilderness as nomads but that they enjoy the good land, so God’s intention for us as Christians is not that we become content either with Christ as the redeeming Lamb or with Christ as the living bread but that we enter into Christ as the good land and enjoy Him as our portion to the uttermost. This requires that we advance in our experience of Christ from the Lamb to the bread of life and then to the good land, progressing until we have the full experience and enjoyment of the all-inclusive Christ.

Christ Is Everything to the Believers

As the portion of the saints, Christ is everything to the believers in living the Christian life. To the believers Christ is wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, redemption, and the life-giving, liberating, and transforming Spirit. To the believers Christ is the door to leave the religious fold, the pasture, the Shepherd, the vine, the way, and the reality. To the believers Christ is the hope of glory, the feast, the new moon, the Sabbath, the armor, and the One with the unsearchable riches. To the believers Christ is all the spiritual necessities—light, food, drink, breath, clothing, dwelling place, peace, joy, and rest. To the believers Christ is the One living within them that they may live Him, the One being formed within them, the One making His home in their hearts, and the One being magnified in them. To the believers Christ is the depths of God, the treasure of excellent power, a Model, the Author and Perfecter of faith, the Captain of salvation, the Forerunner, the Priest, the heavenly Minister, and the divine Administrator. To the believers Christ is also the Bridegroom, the Husband, the Head, the Lord, the Master, the Friend, the Brother, the Partner, the Physician, the Helper, the Advocate, and the Overseer. Oh, how much Christ is to us for our experience and enjoyment!

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Christ Is Life

The Christ who is everything to the believers is the believers’ life; that is, to the believers and in the believers Christ

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AND ENJOYMENT.**

is the eternal, divine, uncreated, indestructible life. Christ Himself is life (John 14:6), He came that we may have life (10:10), and the only way to have life is to have Him (1 John 5:11-12). Since we have believed into Him as the One who is life and since we have received Him as life, He is now our life. This took place when we were regenerated, born of God in our spirit, at which time we received another life—the life of God—in addition to our natural, human, created life. Through regeneration we became in Christ genuine children of God with the life and nature of God, and in Christ God became to us our genuine Father in life. As the children of God we now have the same life God has, the very life that Christ Himself is in His own person. Hence, Paul speaks of “Christ our life” (Col. 3:4). In actuality and as an experiential reality, Christ is our life.

Life is a subjective matter, a matter of intrinsic constitution. Nothing is more subjective or intrinsic to us than our life, and nothing is more intrinsically related to us than our life. It is impossible to separate our life from our person, for our life is actually we ourselves. If we did not have life, we would cease to exist. To say that Christ is our life is actually to say that Christ has become subjective to us to such an extent that He has been wrought into our being organically and intrinsically. For Christ to become our life is for Christ to become us. Because our life cannot be separated from us and because Christ is our life, He cannot be separated from us. Furthermore, because Christ is our life and because our life is just we ourselves, we may say that Christ becomes us. Through His becoming life to us, He, the all-inclusive One, becomes everything to us in our practical, daily spiritual experience.

Christ Is Everything in the Church

God's desire is to produce the church as the corporate expression of the Triune God in Christ through His people's experience of the all-inclusive Christ. Just as Christ is everything to the believers, Christ is everything in the church as God's building, as the Body of Christ, and as the new man. In the church as God's building, Christ is the rock as the foundation, the Builder, the living stone, and the cornerstone. As the rock Christ is the foundation upon which the church is built (Matt. 16:18). The word *rock* in Matthew 16:18 refers not only to Christ Himself

but also to the revelation concerning Christ. The church is built both upon Christ and upon the revelation concerning Christ. This rock is the unique foundation which has been laid by God for the building up of the church (1 Cor. 3:10-11). As the Builder of the church, Christ is building the church with the element of His divinity. Christ's humanity is the material for the building, and His divinity is the element of the Builder. In His humanity He is material for the church as God's building, and in His divinity He is the Builder. As the living stone Christ makes us all living stones for God's building through regeneration and transformation (1 Pet. 2:4-5). In Christ and through Christ we are living stones to be built up a spiritual house. As the cornerstone Christ joins the two walls: the wall of the Jewish believers and the wall of the Gentile believers (Eph. 2:20).

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In the church as the Body of Christ, Christ is both the Head of the Body and the Body of the Head. As the Head of the Body, Christ is the authority in the Body and the source of the Body. All that Christ has accomplished, obtained, and attained as the Head is not only for the Body but also to the Body (Eph. 1:22-23). This means that what the Head has gained is transmitted to the Body and thus belongs to the Body. The Body comes into existence from the transmission of the Head, and the growth of the Body depends on what comes out of Christ as the Head. If

we do not receive the supply that is transmitted to the Body from the Head, the Body cannot grow. The fact that as the Head of the Body Christ is the Firstborn from among the dead indicates that He is the Head of the Body in resurrection. Christ's headship, therefore, is in resurrection. As the Body of the Head, Christ is every member, every part, of the Body, making the Body the corporate Christ. First Corinthians 12:12 says, “For even as the body is one and has many members, yet all the members of the body, being many, are one body, so also is the Christ.” *The Christ* here is not the individual Christ but the corporate Christ, Christ constituted into all His members. The Head of the Body is the individual Christ, and the Body is the corporate Christ. Because He is everything in the church as the Body, Christ is the Head individually and the Body corporately.

In the church as the new man, Christ is “all and in all”; that is, Christ is all the members of the new man and is in

all the members (Col. 3:10-11). He is everyone in the new man, and He is everything in the new man. In the church as the new man, there is no place for any natural person, and there is no room for any regional, cultural, ethnic, or national distinctions. In the church as the new man, there is room only for Christ. As the One who is everyone in the new man and who is in every part of the new man, Christ is all and in all—He is everything.

Christ Is Preeminent in All Things

Since Christ, the all-inclusive One, is everything—the complete God, the perfect man, the centrality and universality of God’s economy, and the reality of every positive thing—He is preeminent in all things. This is the revelation unfolded in the book of Colossians. Christ is the Firstborn of all creation (1:15); therefore, He is the first, the preeminent One, in the old creation. Christ is the Firstborn from among the dead (v. 18); therefore, He is the first, the preeminent One, in the new creation. As the One who is first both in the old creation—the universe—and in the new creation—the Body of Christ, which consummates in the New Jerusalem—Christ has the first place, the preeminence in all things. Christ is everything and He has the first place in everything: This is the all-inclusive Christ unveiled in the holy Scriptures.

Our Need to See the Vision of the Christ Who Is Everything

The Bible reveals that Christ is everything, but in order to realize that Christ is everything we need a heavenly vision consisting of three elements—revelation, light, and sight. All these elements are found in Paul’s prayer for revelation in Ephesians 1:17-18a: “That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the full knowledge of Him, the eyes of your heart having been enlightened.” Revelation is a matter of taking away a veil so that what is behind the veil can be manifested. We need a revelation, an unveiling, concerning the all-inclusive Christ. This does not mean that we need a revelation in addition to what is written in the Scriptures; it means that we need a revelation of what is in the Scriptures. Fearful of any suggestion that believers in Christ can receive revelation today and justly concerned about supposed claims to revelation that is apart from or supplementary to the revelation written in the Word of God, some theologians speak only of enlightenment, not

of revelation. We surely need enlightenment, but this does not eliminate the need of an unveiling of the object concerning which we are to be enlightened. We, therefore, should follow Paul to pray for a spirit of wisdom and revelation. What has been revealed in the Bible needs to be revealed to us. In addition to revelation, a divine removal of the veil, we need the shining of light to dispel spiritual darkness, and we need the healing of our spiritual eyes, the eyes of our heart, so that in the light we may see what has been unveiled. The totality of revelation, light, and sight is vision—the clear beholding of the spiritual, heavenly, and divine scenery.

Only when we have a vision of the Christ who is everything can we truly know such a Christ and enter into the experience and enjoyment of this Christ for the fulfillment of God’s eternal purpose. The more we see Him, the more

we appreciate Him; the more we appreciate Him, the more we love Him and believe into Him; the more we love Him and believe into Him, the more we experience and enjoy Him. God has given to us the all-inclusive Christ as our portion. May all the children of God be willing to know Christ, love Christ, and enjoy Christ. This is God’s desire, and it needs to be the desire and the delight of all who have believed into Christ and who are now one with Him in and for God’s economy. **AF**

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