

Experiencing Christ as Our Person for God's Eternal Purpose

- 1 My old person has been nullified;
 With my Lord upon the cross he died;
 Now in nothing shall he be applied;
 He's dead to me.
 My new Person in my spirit dwells;
 Springing in me as a bubbling well;
 Flowing out until each part He fills
 With abundant life.
- Christ, my Person, in my spirit lives;
 And my heart to Him I'd daily give;
 That my inner man could have a home
 And a place to settle down, yes,
 A place to call His own, and—
 There be my complete reality,
 There expressing all He is to me,
 Living in my heart abundantly
 As my Person real.
- 2 By this Person being formed in me,
 I'll a member of His Body be,
 No more acting individually,
 But with the saints.
 More and more our Person He must be;
 That our natural personality
 Be eliminated thoroughly
 Till Christ is all.
- Only Christ, our Person, must remain;
 From our aims, our goals we must refrain,
 Till the church be only Christ Himself
 Built up as the one new man,
 Thus fulfilling God's great plan of—
 Mingling fully with the human race
 To obtain a proper dwelling place,
 'Stablishing His kingdom's rule and grace;
 Over all the earth.
 Not Himself just individually,
 But the church together corporately,
 Taking Christ as all in all, to be
 The full-grown, perfect man. (*Hymns*, #1180)

very clear knowledge and grasp of the entire Bible with its revelation of the eternal economy of God. Although the author is unknown, he has encapsulated the thought of God regarding His creation of man. Without a substantial awareness of the profound mystery of God's economy, it is not possible to discover the implicit meaning embedded within this short hymn of two stanzas and their accompanying choruses.

An Overview of the Mystery of the Divine Economy

Paul is unique in his reference to God's eternal intention and plan as the divine economy. He particularly defines this divine objective in Ephesians. The word *economy* in 1:10 and 3:9 is a transliteration of the Greek word *oikonomia*, meaning "house law"; this term suggests the management or administration of a household. It indicates that the goods and services of a household are being managed for the benefit of all the members of the household. In the case of God's economy the goods are God Himself. God as the bountiful life supply is being distributed, or dispensed, into the members of His household. The central principle in the divine economy is that whatever God gives in His economy is God Himself. Thus, in His divine economy we, the believers, are being filled with the Triune God—all that He is, all that He has, and all that He has accomplished in and through Christ are now being transmitted into us for His pleasure.

The Scriptures also affirm that the dispensing of the divine riches is available only "in Christ." Verse 3 of Ephesians 1 is a rich utterance of abounding praise to God the Father who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing *in Christ*. Verse 4 tells us that we were chosen *in Him*. Verse 5 says that we were predestinated unto sonship *through Jesus Christ*. Verse 6 points out that we have been graced *in the Beloved*. Verse 7 affirms that it is *in Him* that we have redemption through His blood. Verse 10 proclaims that God is heading up all things *in Christ*. The person of Jesus Christ is the unique basis of our relationship with God, not only for redemption but also for the carrying out of God's eternal economy.

The Triune God is working to redeem, regenerate, and transform His chosen people. Within the Divine Trinity, the Father is the Initiator. Before the foundation of the

Understanding hymns and spiritual songs depends upon the discernment that a reader has concerning the viewpoint, experience, and vision of the author. The above hymn unveils the Christian's experience of taking Christ as his or her person for the fulfillment of God's eternal purpose. The understanding of such a hymn requires a

world God planned and purposed in Himself what He would do in creation. God's plan is to join Himself to humanity and to bring redeemed humanity into Himself. Thus, He chose a group of people who would be the inheritors of His riches, making Himself the source and the essence of everything in His economy. The Son is the Accomplisher; He became a man to carry out the Father's plan of redemption and regeneration through His human living, death, and resurrection; and He is now living in resurrection to work out the purpose of the Father in and through those whom He has redeemed and regenerated. Through His death He accomplished redemption and released His divine life to become the energizing source to carry out a daily salvation in His redeemed people (cf. Rom. 5:9-10). Through the dispensing of His divine life, He constitutes them as His Body. It is in, through, and by the Son that the Father's plan is being realized today. The Spirit is the Dispenser, the means by which the divine accomplishments of the Son are being transmitted into God's chosen, redeemed, and regenerated people. This action of the Spirit is identified by Paul as a seal and a pledge (Eph. 1:13-14). The recipients of God's grace are sealed by the Spirit and have the Spirit as the guarantee of their inheritance (vv. 11, 14, 18).

The beneficiaries of the move of God for the completion of His purpose are the chosen and regenerated people who are passing through a process of growth and transformation. The ultimate consummation of the economy of God will be many sons built together to constitute the Body of Christ. The regenerated sons are built together to form the corporate Body of Christ, which is His fullness (vv. 22-23). The Body of Christ, as the enlargement and extension of Christ, is the focus of Christ's work on the earth. The Body of Christ is produced in and through regenerated and built-up sons of God, who are constituted with and indwelt by the Triune God.

Such a dramatic transformation cannot be accomplished by human effort or self-improvement. The sinner must be renewed. According to the Scriptures, this renewing takes place in Christ: "So then if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old things have passed away; behold, they have become new" (2 Cor. 5:17). This revolutionizing conversion involves the death of the former person of the believer with Christ and his being brought forth as a new creation in the resurrection of Christ.

Our Old Person and Our New Person

The hymn begins with a firm declaration concerning a believer's identification with Christ in His death on the cross. For the believer to live a life of consecration in oneness with the indwelling Christ requires that he has a clear realization of the effectiveness of the Lord's death and its operation in his own life and living. Stanza 1 begins,

"My old person has been nullified; / With my Lord upon the cross he died." In the death of Christ the old creation was terminated. Everything of the old man—the created natural man who has fallen into sin and corruption and who is full of self-occupation, self-justification, and self-determination—has been put into Christ and into His death (Rom. 6:3). The death of Christ was our death; this is a divinely executed fact. Our old person, the old man, has been crucified with Christ (v. 6).

The term *old man* refers to the totality of our fallen, natural life, which is the life in our soul. Three lives are revealed in the Bible in three Greek words—the physical life (*bios*), the soul-life (*psuche*), and the divine life (*zoe*). Here the reference to the old man is certainly not a matter of our physical life, and it obviously cannot be our experience of the divine life. It signifies that our natural life has expired, our soul-life has been terminated—the soul itself has not died, but the old life of the soul has been nullified through the death of Christ.

The old man is our very being, which was created by God but became fallen through sin, and it is the same as the "I" in Gal. 2:20. It is not the soul itself but the life of the soul, which has been counted by God as hopeless and has been put on the cross and crucified with Christ. Formerly, our soul acted as an independent person, with the old man as its life and personality; now, since the old man has been crucified, our soul should act only as an organ of Christ and should be under the control of our spirit, having Christ as its life. (Lee, Recovery Version, Rom. 6:6, note 2)

Stanza 1 continues, "Now in nothing shall he be applied; / He's dead to me." As a result of our experience of the death of Christ, the body of sin is "annulled, that we should no longer serve sin as slaves" (Rom. 6:6). Hence, the body, which was the instrument of sin in our flesh, has been put out of function. It is no longer a factor in our living. It cannot be applied in our daily life. By the effort of their natural life, many Christians attempt to live according to the ethical, moral, and spiritual principles of the Bible. But the natural life is incapable of living such a life. The old man must not be applied in anything. It is finished! It is over! It is done!

Based on the accomplished fact of Christ's terminating death on the cross, the sinner has been cut off from the source of sin in his flesh. The power of sin has thus been broken. Sin is no longer able to exercise its absolute power over a believer: "One died for all, therefore all died; and He died for all that those who live may no longer live to themselves but to Him who died for them and has been raised" (2 Cor. 5:14-15). Christ died for all—on behalf of everyone; therefore, in Him all died. The result is that those who live have the strength and

ability to live no longer to themselves but to Him who died and has been raised (v. 17).

Stanza 1 continues, “My new Person in my spirit dwells; / Springing in me as a bubbling well.” The experience of the believer’s death with Christ is a termination of the life of the natural man. Termination does not mean, however, the end of the existence of the human living of a believer. Rather, there is a change in the identity of the person who is living. Previously, it was the fallen and corrupted person—the old person. Now it is a new person, a person who is dwelling within the spirit of the believer and is springing up as a bubbling well within him. This is an obvious reference to John 4:14, where the Lord said, “Whoever drinks of the water that I will give him shall by no means thirst forever; but the water that I will give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into eternal life.” There is a new person (Christ as the living water) who is now springing up within our spirit. Our old person has died, but Christ, our new person, is actively living.

Through His indwelling presence, we sinners have been brought into union with our Lord. We are in Christ, and He is the realm of our living. In this organic union with Christ we become partakers of His divine nature so that He becomes our living person. It is God who energizes us so that we have both the desire and the power to live out a life that is according to the good pleasure of God (Phil. 2:13).

Stanza 1 concludes, saying, “Flowing out until each part He fills / With abundant life.” The phrase *each part He fills* must refer to Christ making home in all our heart (Eph. 3:17). When Christ comes into us, He becomes one spirit with us (1 Cor. 6:17). As the life-giving Spirit, He comes into our human spirit, and the two spirits are joined as one spirit (15:45; Rom. 8:9-10, 15-16). The apostle prays that the believers would be strengthened into the inner man (Eph. 3:16). But Paul’s prayer does not end with praying for our being strengthened into the inner man; rather, his goal is that Christ may make His home in our hearts. Our heart represents our person—our mind, emotion, will, and conscience. God’s desire is that Christ would spread from our spirit into every part of our person. In this way Christ will become the person not only in our spirit but in our entire being. The chorus of stanza 1 expresses the goal in the personal life and experience of the consecrated believer, who now gives a name to his new person—Christ:

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SPREAD FROM OUR SPIRIT INTO
EVERY PART OF OUR PERSON.
IN THIS WAY CHRIST WILL BECOME
THE PERSON NOT ONLY IN OUR SPIRIT
BUT IN OUR ENTIRE BEING.

Christ, my Person, in my spirit lives; / And my heart to Him I’d daily give; / That my inner man could have a home / And a place to settle down, yes, / A place to call His own, and— / There be my complete reality, / There expressing all He is to me, / Living in my heart abundantly / As my Person real.

The goal and desire of such a believer is that Christ would spread and settle down in his heart to become the real person within him.

Our New Corporate Person

Stanza 2 broadens the view from the individual to the corporate. The individual Christian is being perfected so that he might live together with Christ as one person with Him with a view to His producing a corporate entity in which

all the believers are built up to be His corporate expression and His kingdom. Thus, stanza 2 begins, “By this Person being formed in me, / I’ll a member of His Body be, / No more acting individually, / But with the saints.” The goal of the experience of Christ in each believer is to constitute each one as a

member of Christ’s Body, which is a crucial factor for the completion of God’s eternal purpose. In the eyes of God, man fulfills His purpose as a corporate entity, not as individuals. The church is a corporate entity composed of all the redeemed, regenerated, and sanctified elect of God. As such, the church is also the one new man, created by Christ’s work on the cross (Eph. 2:15). Our participation in the new man is made a reality through the renewing of our mind, putting off the old man, and putting on the new man, which was created in the image of God (4:22-24). Eventually, we will all arrive at a full-grown man, at the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ (v. 13). God’s purpose cannot become a reality if there are no believers who are filled with the Lord Jesus to the extent that He becomes their person

The church is being built up in and through overcoming believers, who are learning how to practice the oneness of the Body, “no more acting individually, / But with the saints.” The unique person in each one is Christ, who is the Head of the Body. Because He is the Head, the members of the Body are joined together, knit together, and built together through the operation in the measure of each one part of the Body (cf. vv. 15-16; Col. 2:19). This ongoing process will result in our natural man becoming less and less and the Christ within us increasing more and more. The hymnist proclaims, “More and more our Person

He must be; / That our natural personality / Be eliminated thoroughly / Till Christ is all." At the same time that our natural personality is being eliminated, the parts of our God-created personality are being uplifted and filled with the Spirit of Christ to make us the same as He is for His expression on the earth.

The chorus for stanza 2 proclaims, "Only Christ, our Person, must remain; / From our aims, our goals we must refrain, / Till the church be only Christ Himself / Built up as the one new man." The church as the one new man is the highest aspect of the church. The church as the Body needs to experience Christ as its life, but the church as the one new man needs to gain Christ as its person. The church as the Body is for the expression of God. For the one new man to be fully realized requires that Christ become the unique person of the one new man. This in turn requires that each believer submit to the dealing of the Spirit to put aside his own person, i.e., reject his own aims, goals, ambitions, and aspirations and allow the Lord to renew him in the spirit of his mind (Eph. 4:23).

The chorus for stanza 2 further says, "Thus fulfilling God's great plan of— / Mingling fully with the human race / To obtain a proper dwelling place, / 'Stablishing His kingdom's rule and grace; / Over all the earth." Some believers may declare that such a goal can never be realized on the earth in this age. "We must wait," they may say, "for the coming age before the one new man will become a reality." But the Bible clearly tells us that Christ will build His church in this age (Matt. 16:18). The overcoming

members of the church will hold the Head, Christ; they will grow up into Him; and out from Him they will build up the church in love (Eph. 4:15-16). The church will be manifested on the earth in the oneness of the faith as a full-grown man, at the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ (v. 13). The church will be "put on" by the believers as the one new man by means of the renewing in the spirit of their mind (vv. 23-24). And Christ will present the church to Himself glorious—as His bride without spot or wrinkle, holy and without blemish (5:27). The church, by making herself ready, will open the way for the Lord to return and marry His bride; then, He with His bride will together fight a great battle against Antichrist and his armies. Christ with His corporate warrior will decisively win the battle to usher in His manifested kingdom (Rev. 19:7-9, 11-16, 19-21).

The above prophecies are not merely doctrine or theology. These events will definitely take place before the manifestation of the kingdom of God on earth. God has established His economy on earth and will bring all these things to pass. May the Lord grant to each one of us a deep responsiveness within. May our hearts burn with the desire that our God would be fully satisfied according to His good pleasure!

by Gary Kaiser

Works Cited

Lee, Witness. Footnotes. Recovery Version of the Bible. Anaheim: Living Stream Ministry, 2003. Print.

The One New Man as the Corporate Person of Christ

The new man is of Christ. It is His Body, created in Him on the cross (Eph. 2:15-16). It is not individual, but corporate (Col. 3:10-11). The fact that the new man is created of two peoples proves that it is corporate. Furthermore, Colossians 3:10 and 11 reveal that the new man is a composition of many different peoples. In this corporate new man there is no Greek or Jew, no bond or free, no barbarian or Scythian, but Christ is all and in all. In Colossians 3:11 the word "all" refers to people. This means that in the new man Christ is all the people and is in all the people. Therefore, in the corporate new man Christ is all and in all.

The book of Ephesians reveals that the church is the Body of Christ (1:22-23), the kingdom of God, the household of God (2:19), and the temple, the dwelling place of God (2:21-22). It reveals further that the church is the new man. This is the highest aspect of the church. The Greek word for church, *ekklesia*, means those called out for a gathering, hence, an assembly. This is the initial aspect of the church. From this the apostle goes on to the aspects of fellow-citizens of the kingdom of God and members of the household of God. These are higher than the initial aspect, but not as high as the aspect of the church as the Body of Christ. Yet the new man is still higher than the Body of Christ. Thus, the church is not just an assembly of believers, a kingdom of heavenly citizens, a household of God's children, nor even a Body for Christ. It is in its uttermost aspect a new man to accomplish God's eternal purpose. As the Body of Christ, the church needs Christ as its life; whereas as the new man, the church needs Christ as its person. This new corporate person should live a life as Jesus lived on earth, that is, a life of truth, expressing God and causing God to be realized as the reality by man. Hence, the new man is the focus of the apostle's exhortation in this section (vv. 17-32).

From *Life-study of Ephesians* by Witness Lee, pp. 402-403