

“Who concerning the Truth Have Misaimed” — 2 Timothy 2:18

Misaiming concerning Christ as the Last Adam and the Second Man

Misaiming: “In Christ, we behold a second and greater Adam, the restorer of human goodness and greatness. What Adam squandered in a moment, the second Adam regains for all and bestows forever...”

“Ever since the day when Adam colluded with the serpent to invert the dominion of humanity over other living things, man has groaned—and all creation with him. The whole creation longs for the restoration of humanity’s dominion, the greatness that Adam lost.

“In restoring us to the image of God, Jesus has regained not only humanity’s original goodness, but also humanity’s original greatness and dominion. Conservative Protestants have not always accented this dimension of the gospel and, at first, it may seem to run against the grain of Scripture’s warnings regarding human pride...”

“But from the womb of Mary has come a second Adam...A second Adam has come to restore the human dominion and greatness that Adam lost in Eden...”

“Humankind will ‘shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father.’ Adam will shine again, and Eve. We, too, will shine, reflecting the glory of the Son of Man, the second Adam, who is Lord and lamp of that eternal country” (Thomas J. Egger, “Jesus: the Second and Greater Adam,” *Modern Reformation*, Nov.-Dec. 2013, pp. 42, 44-45).

Truth: In *Modern Reformation*’s most recent issue, organized around the theme of “How to Read the Bible,” Thomas J. Egger’s article ironically misaims in its discussion of two designations for Christ that do not appear anywhere in the Bible: *the second Adam* and *the greater Adam*. While the Bible speaks of Adam being a type of Christ and of Christ being a genuine man through incarnation (Rom. 5:14; John 1:14), the terms *the second Adam* and *the greater Adam* are never utilized in the Bible as descriptors of Christ. Rather, Paul refers to Christ with the terms *the last Adam* and *the second man* in 1 Corinthians 15:45 and 47, respectively. In the article’s explication of terms that are not moored in the Scriptures, there is a deviation from the revelation

of God’s purpose for humanity. The distinctions between Egger’s terms and Paul’s terms may seem insignificant, but the implications related to God’s purpose and plan for humanity are vast.

Although Egger never refers to the biblical terms that Paul employs or specifically associates his unique terms with Christ’s death as the last Adam or His resurrection as the second man, the backdrop of resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15 is implicitly present in his article. This can be seen in his emphasis on redeemed humanity’s glory and dominion in the coming kingdom, which displays the “restoration of humanity’s dominion, the greatness that Adam lost” (44). Despite this implicit connection, Egger explicitly associates his terms, *the second Adam* and *the greater Christ*, with Christ’s incarnation, saying, “From the womb of Mary has come a second Adam...A second Adam has come to restore the human dominion and greatness that Adam lost in Eden” (44). The term *second Adam*, in some respects, can be viewed as violating the biblical revelation of the person of Christ, who is both divine and human, a genuine God-man of flesh and blood in the lineage of the first Adam, yet without sin. The God-created humanity of Christ is the same as the God-created humanity of Adam; hence, Christ does not represent a second, a different, Adam. In its association with Christ’s incarnation, the word *second* can seemingly imply that there is a difference between the God-created humanity of Adam and the God-created humanity of Jesus. In contrast, the word *last* implies an end, a termination, of Adam’s humanity, which became old as a result of the fall. The old creation ends with the terminating death of a man, the last Adam. Christ was incarnated in the flesh as the last Adam, not as a second Adam. He lived a crucified life in which His divine life was lived out and expressed through His God-created humanity. His God-created humanity, thus, was not the source of His life and living. His humanity was effectively terminated in His living under the shadow of the cross prior to His death, and it was actually terminated by His crucifixion at the time of His death. *Second* implies a distinctive continuation of Adam’s humanity, whereas *last* implies the termination of Adam’s humanity.

To speak of the termination of Adam’s humanity in the living and death of Christ does not mean the elimination

of humanity, the abolition of our human nature. Rather, it signals the uplifting of our redeemed humanity into the realm of God's glory. This uplifting occurred in Christ's humanity in His resurrection as the second man, and it is occurring in our sanctification, which will consummate in our glorification. The humanity of the crucified and resurrected Christ is qualitatively different from the God-created humanity of Adam, to say nothing of the fallen humanity of Adam. In resurrection the humanity of Jesus was deified, and in His humanity He "was designated the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness out of the resurrection of the dead" (Rom. 1:4). The divine life was never imparted into Adam, and even though his creation was very good in God's eyes (Gen. 1:31), he still needed to receive the divine life in order to live by the divine life to express God. Thus, God placed him in front of the tree of life (2:9, 16-17), signaling his need to receive the life of God. Adam's fall involved more than disobeying God's word to not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil; it also involved his failure to eat of the tree of life. The divine life, however, was brought into humanity in the incarnation of Christ. And by virtue of His satisfaction of God's righteous requirement in His human living by living according to the divine life, Jesus' humanity was deified in His resurrection. Thus, the deified humanity of the last Adam produced a second man, who incorporated Christ's new deified humanity in His resurrection. The resurrection involved more than the mere continuation of Adam's humanity, and so Paul speaks of Christ not as a second Adam but as the second man. Egger's difficulty in seeing the significance of the term *the second man* may reflect the same reticence that he attributes to "conservative Protestants" who are reluctant to acknowledge, out of misplaced deference to the "Scripture's warnings regarding human pride," that redeemed humanity regains its "original greatness and dominion" in Christ's "restoring us to the image of God" (44). To accurately speak of created and redeemed humanity being incorporated into the One who is the image of God and who exercises the authority of God would certainly cause greater consternation among Protestants who speak only of a forensic salvation. While such reticence may be seen as a proper and humble response, it denies the truth of God's purpose and plan for created and redeemed humanity.

The second man is a new creation, not a restored creation. In His resurrection, a new creation, involving the redeemed and divinized human nature and the divine nature of the Triune God, was initiated in Christ. This creation produced a second corporate man, Christ, in contrast to the first corporate man, Adam. This second corporate man is Christ as the one new man, which is constituted with Christ as the Head and the many

members of His Body as the church. While the article displays lofty regard for Christ as "the restorer of human goodness and greatness," as One who restores "the greatness that Adam lost" (42, 44), this regard actually diminishes the true impact of Christ's work on the cross in creating the two divisions of created and fallen humanity in Himself into one new man. In Christ, as the second man, the one new man was created, and this second man speaks of the redeemed, resurrected, and divinized humanity of Jesus that has been incorporated into the Triune God in Christ.

Thus, to merely speak of a restoration through a second and greater Adam obscures the Triune God's eternal heart's desire for humanity, a desire that was present both prior to the fall and after the fall. The Triune God made humanity in His image and likeness to express Him. He did not predestine the believers to merely be an outward expression of "human goodness and greatness" (42) but to be to the praise of the glory of His grace (Eph. 1:6). Christ is the image of God (2 Cor. 4:4; Col. 1:15), and humanity was created in order to express Him as the One with the capacity to fill all in all (Eph. 1:23). Even without the fall, God's purpose would still have required Christ to become the second man. Because of the fall, however, Christ also had to be the last Adam in order to terminate the fallen elements of the old creation in His death on the cross, which ushered in the new creation, the new man.

Last, this article severely misaims in stating that Adam "colluded with the serpent to invert the dominion of humanity over other living things" (44). *Colluded* may simply be a poor choice of words, but its use implies that Satan and Adam were working together and that their work, which resulted in an inversion of God's dominion, was predicated upon an evil intention. This would further imply that God's creation of humanity was flawed. The disobedience of Adam, however, was not the issue of collusion but rather a result of Satan's deception and lies. It is beyond dispute that, as fallen human beings under the tyranny and enslavement to sin, we need to receive Christ as our redemption and life. It is even more sobering, however, to realize that Adam and Eve in their God-created state of perfect humanity were not able to withstand the schemes of the devil, whose actions are designed to frustrate the accomplishment of God's eternal plan in time. We should thus be ever more thankful that God made a provision for the redemption of our created humanity through Christ as the last Adam and for the incorporation of our redeemed humanity into Christ as the second man so that, in Him, we may be one new corporate man.

by the Editors