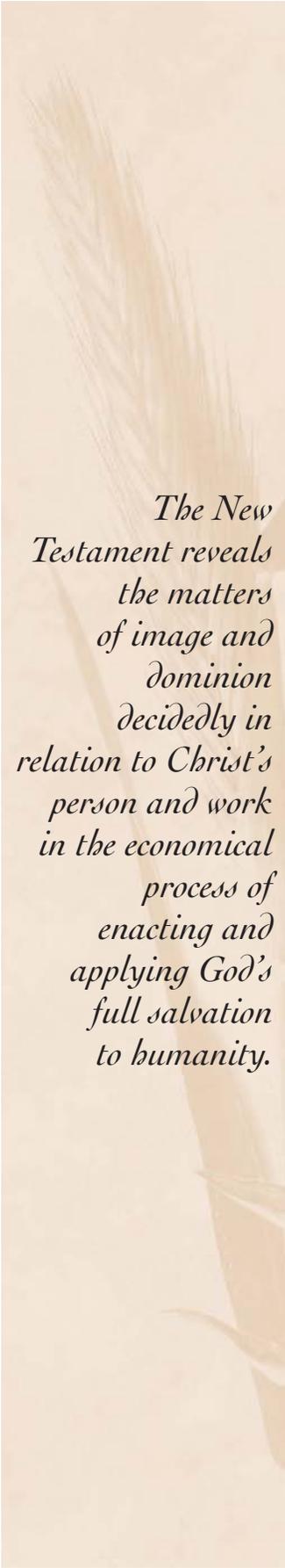


The Person and Work of Christ in the Expression and Enlargement of God's Image and Dominion

by John Pester

No two other words in the Holy Scriptures encapsulate the divine intention of the Triune God and allude to more aspects of the economical accomplishment of His intention than *image* and *dominion*.¹ These words are at the core of the divine ordination for humanity. When God began the process of restoring the heavens and the earth,² He spoke many things into being: light out of darkness (Gen. 1:3), an expanse in the midst of the waters (v. 6), dry land (v. 9), light-bearers in the expanse of heaven (v. 14), and swarms of living animals and birds (v. 20). All these actions were accomplished through divinely performative speech acts alone, but with the creation of humanity, God did not utilize merely the power of His word to call forth things not being as being. Instead, He first revealed the purpose for His crowning creative act: “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness, and let them have dominion,” and then He involved Himself in the working out of His stated intention by personally forming humanity as a tripartite vessel to contain and express Himself: “Jehovah God formed man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul” (v. 26; 2:7).

When God formed Adam, He formed not only a genuine man but also a man who was a type of Christ. As a “type of Him who was to come” (Rom. 5:14), Adam is a picture of Christ in three important respects that bear on the matter of image and dominion in the Scriptures. First, as a privileged being who was created in the image of God and given dominion over the created order, Adam points to Christ as the unique God-man who bears the reality of the image of God and who is exercising dominion over all things (2 Cor. 4:4; Col. 1:15; Eph. 1:22). Second, as a corporate being whose image was enlarged organically to include all the old creation (Gen. 1:28), Adam points to Christ whose image has been enlarged organically to include all the new creation (1 Cor. 12:12; 2 Cor. 5:17).³ Third, as an organic being whose sin-stained image and abrogated dominion was incorporated into his human nature and passed on to his descendants (Rom. 5:12, 19), Adam points to Christ whose God-attested image and operative exercise of dominion have been incorporated into His divine-human nature and dispensed into all who receive Him through faith (vv. 15, 17, 19). The corporate privilege of image and dominion was given to Adam and to his descendants according to God’s intention. As an individual, however, Adam failed to fulfill God’s desire for an enlarged expression of His image and an enlarged exercise of His dominion. The enlarged corporate image of Adam now bears only an earthly image, and, rather than exercising dominion, humanity is a slave to sin in a world under the slavery of corruption (6:6; 8:21). Nevertheless, as a type of Christ in His corporate enlargement, the corporate Adam points to the fulfillment of God’s desire for an enlarged expression of His image and an enlarged exercise of His dominion in redeemed and regenerated humanity. The fulfillment of the type of image and dominion in Adam is realized in Christ and His enlarged corporate expression—the church as His organic Body.



The New Testament reveals the matters of image and dominion decidedly in relation to Christ's person and work in the economical process of enacting and applying God's full salvation to humanity.

The Person and Work of Christ

The fulfillment of image and dominion is intrinsically related to the person and work of Christ. In fact, the terms *person* and *work* develop and reflect the scriptural terms *image* and *dominion*. *Person* and *work* are theological terms used to describe the being and accomplishments of Christ. In His person Christ is the complete God in His divinity and a perfect man in His humanity. He is the fullness of the Godhead becoming a man through incarnation (Col. 2:9), and He is the initiation of deified humanity through His death and resurrection (Rom. 1:4; Heb. 1:5). In His work Christ passed through incarnation, human living, death, and resurrection, and in resurrection He became a life-giving Spirit who is now joined to and indwells our created and regenerated human spirit (1 Cor. 15:45; 6:17; Rom. 8:9, 11; John 3:6), working to apply all the organic and incorporated elements of His person and work into us to transform us into His same image (2 Cor. 3:18) in order for us, as the church, to jointly exercise His authoritative rule with Him (Eph. 3:10). Thus, *image* speaks not only of Christ bearing God's image in His individual person but also of the manifestation of God's image in His corporate enlargement, the church, and *work* speaks not only of Christ exercising God's dominion through His unique accomplishments but also of the joint manifestation of God's dominion through His corporate enlargement, the church.

The Initial Expression of Image and Dominion in the Person and Work of Christ

The New Testament revelation of God's image and dominion in relation to the person of Christ is primarily economical in its focus; that is, it reveals the matters of image and dominion decidedly in relation to His person and work in the economical process of enacting and applying God's full salvation to humanity. This is because the accomplishment of God's ordination for the enlargement of His image in humanity and the expression of His dominion through humanity began with His creation of humanity and continues to be focused on redeemed and regenerated humanity. Nevertheless, the eternal effectiveness of the corporate enlargement of God's image and dominion in humanity begins with and is dependent upon Christ, as an individual, bearing God's image and exercising God's dominion both in His divinity and in His humanity.

The Initial Expression of Image in the Person of Christ

The New Testament reveals that Christ bears the image of God in His divinity and in His humanity. In Hebrews 1:3 Paul refers obliquely to Christ bearing God's image in His divinity, "being the effulgence of His [God's] glory and the impress of His [God's] substance,"⁴ and in Philippians 2:6, he speaks of Christ "existing in the form of God" in His eternal preexistence. In a footnote to Hebrews 1:3 Witness Lee states,

The effulgence of God's glory is like the shining or the brightness of the light of the sun. The Son is the shining, the brightness, of the Father's glory. This refers to God's glory. The impress of God's substance is like the impress of a seal. The Son is the expression of what God the Father is. This refers to God's substance. (Recovery Version, note 1)

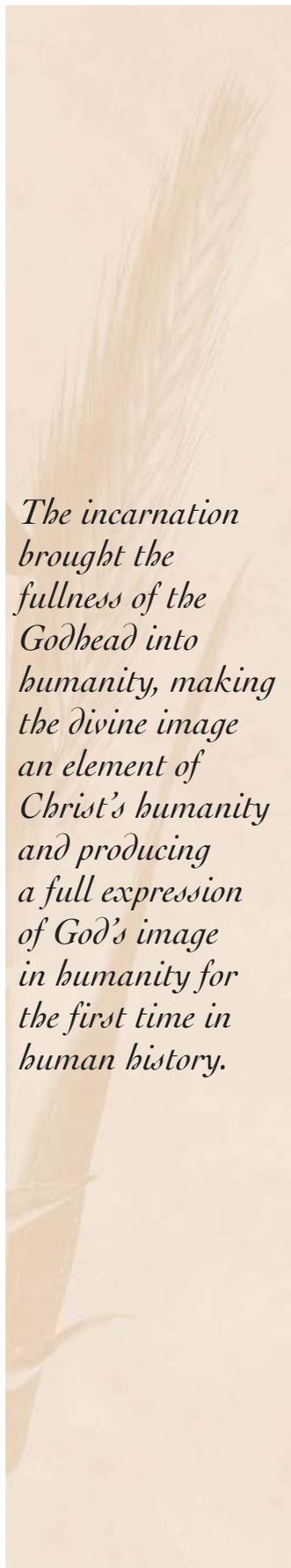
God's substance is divine, and the impress, the image, of His divinity is present in the being, the person, of the Son in His divinity. The word *being* in verse 3 points to what He is in His person. In His person, Christ's divinity as the Son manifests the image of God. Witness Lee speaks of the content of the image that Christ bore in Paul's use of the word *form* in Philippians 2:6: "The expression, not the fashion, of God's being (Heb. 1:3), identified with the essence and nature of God's person and, hence, expressing them. This refers to Christ's deity" (Recovery Version, note 2). Lee further states in a footnote to *existing* in verse 6 that *existing* "denotes existing from the beginning, implying the Lord's eternal preexistence" (Note 1). In His eternal preexistence as the Son, Christ bore God's image, being equal with God in His divinity.

In Colossians 1:15 Paul refers plainly to Christ bearing God's image in His divinity, speaking of Him as the "image of the invisible God" and in 2 Corinthians 4:4, he states plainly that Christ "is the image of God." Both of these references to Christ's bearing God's image in His divinity are linked with the application of this image to humanity. When He is spoken of as the "image of the invisible God" in Colossians 1:15, He is also revealed as the "Firstborn of all creation," indicating that God's divine image is reflected in His original creation, especially in humanity that can express "God's being in all His attributes and virtues" (Lee, Recovery Version, note 1). In 2 Corinthians 4:4 He is spoken of as the image of God in the context of "the gospel of the glory of Christ," indicating that God brings in His new creation through the shining of His divine image into unbelievers through the gospel (cf. 5:17). The new creation is entirely the result of the shining, the impartation of the divine life, that brings Christ as the divine image of the invisible God into those who respond in faith to the gospel of the glory of Christ.

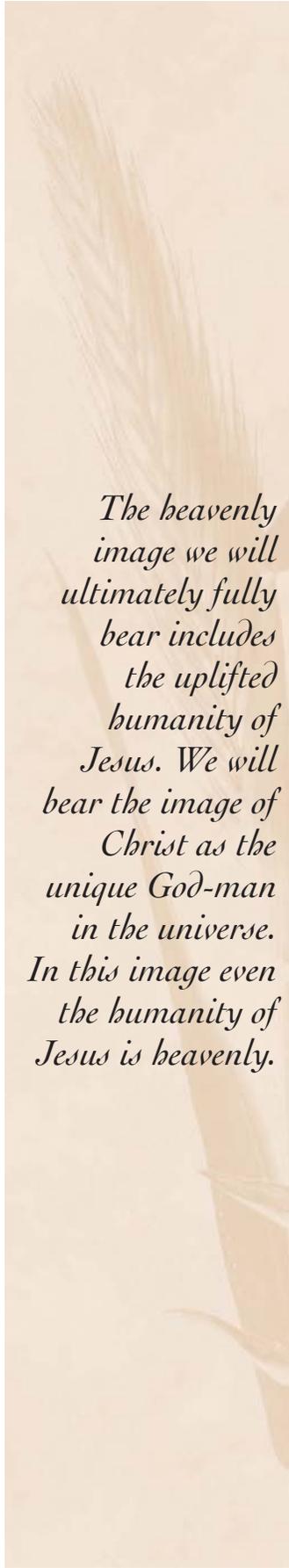
The New Testament also reveals that Christ bears the image of God in His humanity. The incarnation brought the fullness of the Godhead with the divine image into humanity, and the divine image was mingled in a man created in God's image in the incarnation, making the divine image a constituent element of Christ's humanity and producing a full expression of God's image in humanity for the first time in human history. In *The Gospel of Genesis: Studies in Protology and Eschatology*, Warren Austin Gage refers to Christ as the "God-man, the true image of the Creator in his person" (33), and he also notes that in the person of Christ "history finds ultimate fulfillment" of God's commission to Adam (27-28), the commission of image and dominion.

Christ's fulfillment of God's commission for humanity to bear the divine image can be seen in narratives in the Gospels and Acts and in teachings in the Epistles. A few examples include the transfiguration accounts, the testimony of the centurion at the cross, and the teaching of Paul in Romans 8 and in 1 Corinthians 14. In the transfiguration accounts in the Gospels, there is a clear testimony of the divine image being present in the humanity of Jesus. Out from the shell of His humanity, Jesus was transfigured before Peter, John, and James, and "His face shone like the sun, and His garments became as white as the light" (Matt. 17:2). This shining out was the manifestation of the divine glory of the divine image resident in the person of Christ in His humanity.⁵ This divine image was also manifested at the cross during Christ's redemptive death, being testified of by the Roman centurion, who declared, "Certainly this man was righteous" (Luke 23:47). As a man on the cross, Jesus manifested the righteousness of God; that is, He manifested the divine image with the divine attribute of righteousness (cf. Rom. 5:18). In regard to the thief on the cross, Jesus bore the righteous judgment for his sin in His humanity, and as the result of God's righteousness, grace was made available to him and even to those who did not know what they were doing (Luke 23:34).

In the book of Acts Peter alludes to Jesus' bearing the divine image in His humanity in his reference to "Jesus the Nazarene, a man shown by God to you to be approved by works of power and wonders and signs, which God did through Him in your midst, even as you yourselves know" (2:22). Works of power and wonders and signs were displayed through the humanity of Jesus, but the source of these works was God, who did them "through Him." In Peter's eyes, each display of Jesus' works of power was a manifestation of the divinity of God's image. In Romans 8:29, when Paul speaks of the believers being conformed to the image of the Son, he identifies Christ as "the Firstborn among many brothers." The phrase *Firstborn among many brothers* clearly situates the image of the Son in the humanity of Jesus, who is not only the Firstborn of humanity in the new creation but also the brother of those who believe into Him and share in His deified human life and nature. By virtue of His incarnation, Christ



The incarnation brought the fullness of the Godhead into humanity, making the divine image an element of Christ's humanity and producing a full expression of God's image in humanity for the first time in human history.



The heavenly image we will ultimately fully bear includes the uplifted humanity of Jesus. We will bear the image of Christ as the unique God-man in the universe. In this image even the humanity of Jesus is heavenly.

partook of flesh and blood, bringing the divine image into humanity, and by virtue of His resurrection, Christ as the last Adam brought humanity into the divinized realm of God's divine image, making His divinely human and humanly divine image available to those who previously bore only the image of the earthly: "Even as we have borne the image of the earthy, we will also bear the image of the heavenly" (1 Cor. 15:49, cf. v. 45). It is important to note that the image that Christ now bears and that we will ultimately fully bear is heavenly, but what is heavenly now includes the uplifted humanity of Jesus. Consequently, the heavenly image that we will bear is the image of Christ as the unique God-man in the universe. In this image even the humanity of Jesus is heavenly.

The Initial Expression of Dominion in the Work of Christ

In His divinity and in His humanity, Christ bore the divine image, and this image served as the basis for the initial expression of God's dominion in the work of Christ. In the divine economy image is the foundation for dominion,⁶ and the image of God borne by Christ in His divine and human person produced an expression of God's dominion in His work. Considerations of the work of Christ are often limited to His redemptive death on the cross because of a limited view that the forgiveness of sins is the focus of Christ's work. This view, however, narrows the scope of the divine economy that is prefigured in the creation of sinless humanity in the Old Testament and realized through the initiation of the new creation in the New Testament.

The Genesis account in the Old Testament reveals that God created humanity as a tripartite vessel in His image, according to His likeness (2:7; 1:26),⁷ with the intention of filling humanity with His divine life, as signified by the tree of life (2:9). God created humanity to receive and organically express His divine attributes through God-created human virtues, both individually and corporately, so that humanity could express Him by virtue of being joined to Him in life and nature. In such a union in life, humanity would have the capacity to jointly exercise God's dominion in the heading up of all things in Christ, the things in the heavens and the things on the earth (Eph. 1:10). The heading up of all things in Christ involves much more than just the forgiveness of sins. It involves a progressive sanctification of the spirit and soul and body of every redeemed and regenerated believer through the divine life (1 Thes. 5:23), ultimately conforming the many brothers to the image of the Firstborn (Rom. 8:29). And when the Firstborn comes again into the inhabited world (Heb. 1:6), the dominion of God will be fully exercised to deal with all the elements of rebellion in the universe through Christ as the Head and the church as His Body (Eph. 1:22; cf. Rom. 16:20).

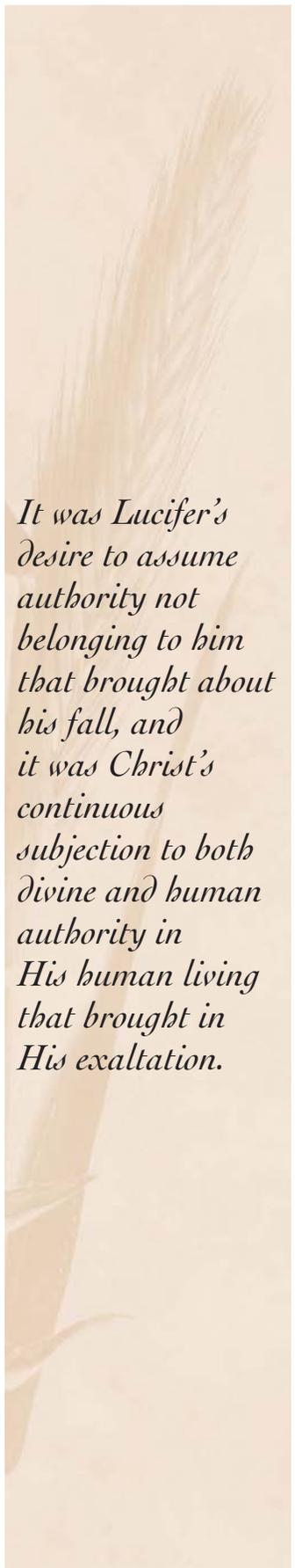
The process of sanctification involves growing up into Christ as the Head in all things (Eph. 4:15), and this growing process is the enlargement of the divine image in Christ that was initially manifested in His incarnation, that was continuously expressed in His human living, that was justified in His death, and that was imparted in His resurrection. In the work of Christ in His incarnation, human living, death, and resurrection, the dominion of God was ever present and continuously expressed. Through His all-inclusive work in the divine economy, the new creation was initiated—a new creation bearing the image of God and exercising the dominion of God. The pattern of Christ in Philippians 2:6-11 is a succinct summary of the work of Christ. Verses 6 and 7 speak of the incarnation of Christ Jesus, who "existing in the form of God," nevertheless "emptied Himself, taking the form of a slave, becoming in the likeness of men." Verse 8 speaks of the human living of Christ, who "humbled Himself, becoming obedient" throughout His life to the will of God (cf. Heb. 10:7). Philippians 2:8 speaks of the death of Christ Jesus, who was "obedient even unto death, and that the death of a cross." Verse 9 infers the resurrection of Christ Jesus, whose high exaltation was possible only in His resurrected and ascended status. As a result of His work in

verses 6 through 9, there is the full realization of God's dominion, spoken of in verses 10 and 11—when every knee in heaven and on earth bows and every tongue openly confesses that Jesus Christ is Lord.

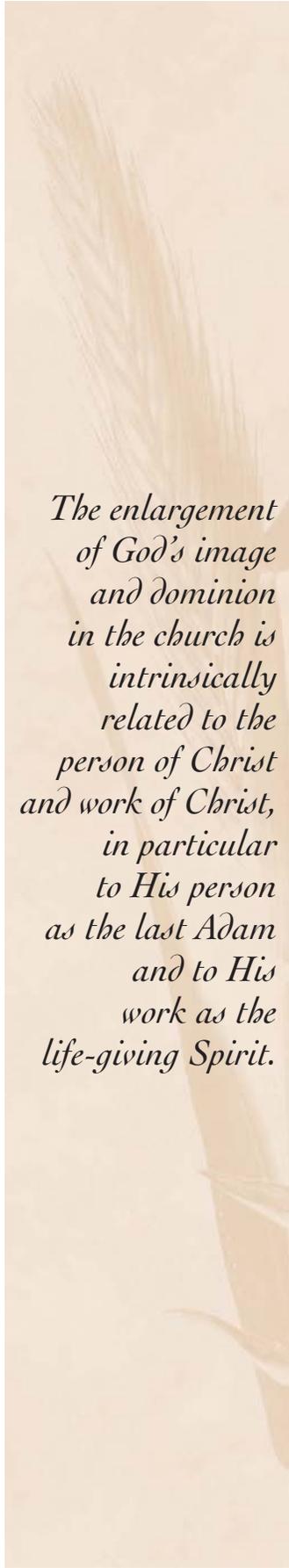
The expression of dominion in the incarnation of Christ is revealed in Romans 8:3, Hebrews 2:14, and 1 John 3:8.⁸ According to Romans 8:3, God sent His Son in the likeness of the flesh of sin and concerning sin in order to condemn sin in the flesh. This shows that in addition to the forgiveness of sins, the work of incarnation was related to establishing God's dominion through Christ's condemnation of the element of sin in the flesh of humanity, an element that is in opposition to God's rule and reign. According to Hebrews 2:14, Christ partook of blood and flesh in His incarnation so that "through death He might destroy him who has the might of death, that is, the devil." Thus, the work of incarnation also involved the establishment of God's dominion through not only the condemnation of sin but also the destruction of the source of sin, the devil. Finally, according to 1 John 3:8, the Son of God was manifested through incarnation so that "He might destroy the works of the devil," the activities and systems of Satan, in order to fully express the dominion of God.

The expression of dominion in the human living of Jesus is revealed in Luke 2:49-51; Matthew 4:8-10; 12:28; and Acts 10:38. According to the account of Jesus as a child in the temple in Luke 2, God's dominion was expressed in Jesus' subjection to both His Father, when He spoke of being in "the things of My Father" (v. 49), and to His parents, when "He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was subject to them" (v. 51). The expression of dominion involves being under authority as much as it involves the exercise of authority, because a willingness to be subject to others is an intrinsic recognition that there is order and hence authority in the universe. It also expresses an unwillingness to assume a position higher than that ordained by God. It was Lucifer's desire to assume authority not belonging to him that brought about his fall, and it was Christ's continuous subjection to both divine and human authority in His human living that brought in His exaltation. According to the account of Jesus' temptation in the wilderness in Matthew 4, God's dominion was expressed in Christ's response to Satan's offer to make Him ruler over "all the kingdoms of the world and their glory" (v. 8): "Go away, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only shall you serve'" (v. 10). When offered dominion over the world but subjection to Satan, Christ expressed His steadfast position of upholding God's rule and testifying of the preeminence of God's dominion. According to an account of Jesus' casting out demons during the course of His public ministry in Matthew 12:28, Jesus stated that God's dominion was being expressed in His human living, declaring, "If I, by the Spirit of God, cast out the demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you." Peter also affirmed the Lord's exercise of God's dominion in Acts 10:38, saying, "Jesus, the One from Nazareth, how God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good and healing all those who were being oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him." All of Christ's work in casting out demons from Satan-usurped humanity and healing Satan-oppressed humanity pushed against the authority of Satan and extended God's dominion.

The expression of dominion in the death of Jesus Christ is revealed in Colossians 2:14-15 and Hebrews 2:14. According to the account of Jesus' death on the cross in Colossians 2, the triumph of God's dominion was fully displayed to the principalities and powers in the heavenlies. During the crucifixion of Jesus, while God was wiping out the handwriting in ordinances, taking them out of the way, nailing them to the cross (v. 14), He was also stripping off the rulers and the authorities, making a display of them openly and triumphing over them (v. 15). God's stripping off of the rulers and authorities "left Christ as the sole Mediator, who is the Head of all rule and authority" (Lee, Recovery Version, note 2). Furthermore, according to Hebrews



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authority not
belonging to him
that brought about
his fall, and
it was Christ's
continuous
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authority in
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that brought in
His exaltation.*



The enlargement of God's image and dominion in the church is intrinsically related to the person of Christ and work of Christ, in particular to His person as the last Adam and to His work as the life-giving Spirit.

2:14, Christ destroyed "him who has the might of death, that is, the devil," through His death on the cross, dealing with the one who seeks to usurp God's authority.

The expression of dominion in the resurrection of Jesus Christ is revealed in Ephesians 1:20-21 and Revelation 1:5. According to the account of Jesus' resurrection in Ephesians 1:20-21, God's dominion was expressed "in raising Him from the dead and seating Him at His right hand in the heavenlies, far above all rule and authority and power and lordship and every name that is named not only in this age but also in that which is to come." The apostle John affirms the Lord's authoritative status in Revelation 1:5, identifying Him as "the faithful Witness, the Firstborn of the dead, and the Ruler of the kings of the earth." As a faithful witness in His human living, Christ was qualified to be the Firstborn of the dead in resurrection following His death on the cross. And in His resurrection He now expresses God's dominion as the Ruler of the kings of the earth, thus exercising God's dominion.

The Enlarged Expression of Image and Dominion through the Person and Work of Christ

In His person Christ expresses God image, and in His work during the days of His flesh (Heb. 5:7), He expressed God's dominion. Now in resurrection and ascension He is enlarging God's image and dominion in His person and through His work to produce a glorious church (Eph. 5:27). Through Christ's economical operation, God's original ordination for humanity will be fulfilled; that is, the church will bear the glorious image of the heavenly by being conformed corporately to the image of the Son and jointly rule and reign with Him. Just as the initial expression of God's image and dominion is intrinsically related to the person and work of Christ, the enlargement of God's image and dominion in the church is also intrinsically related to the person of Christ and work of Christ, in particular to His person as the last Adam and to His work as the life-giving Spirit.

First Corinthians 15, which speaks of the last Adam becoming a life-giving Spirit in verse 45, reveals the centrality of resurrection in the economy of God. In his discourse Paul stresses the preaching of resurrection in verses 1 through 4, the witnessing of resurrection in verses 5 through 11, the affirmation of resurrection in verses 12 through 19, the history of resurrection in verses 20 through 28, the moral influence of resurrection in verses 29 through 34, the manifestation of resurrection in a spiritual body in verses 35 through 49, the consummate victory of resurrection over sin and death in verses 50 through 57, and the motivation of resurrection in the work of the Lord in verse 58. Embedded in this long discourse on resurrection, there is a single, but unique and economically significant, revelation of the person and work of Christ: "the last Adam became a life-giving Spirit" (v. 45).

In chapter 15 image and dominion are referenced directly in its overall emphasis on the matter of resurrection, and the revelation that Christ, as the last Adam, became a life-giving Spirit is central to Paul's understanding of resurrection as it relates to image and dominion. In regard to image, Paul speaks of the church bearing the image of the heavenly (v. 49), an image that will be manifested in a spiritual body raised in incorruption (vv. 42, 50, 53). In the consummate manifestation of the image of God in bodies of incorruption, death will be swallowed up in victory, having no sting and no power (vv. 54-57). In regard to dominion, Paul speaks of Christ delivering up "the kingdom to His God, once He has abolished all rule and all authority and power" (v. 24). Christ will reign until God puts all His enemies under His feet, the feet of the church as His Body (v. 25). He will abolish death, the last enemy (v. 26), subjecting "all things under His feet...except Him who has subjected all things to Him" (v. 27), and He will be "subjected to Him who has subjected all things to Him, that God may be all in all" (v. 28).

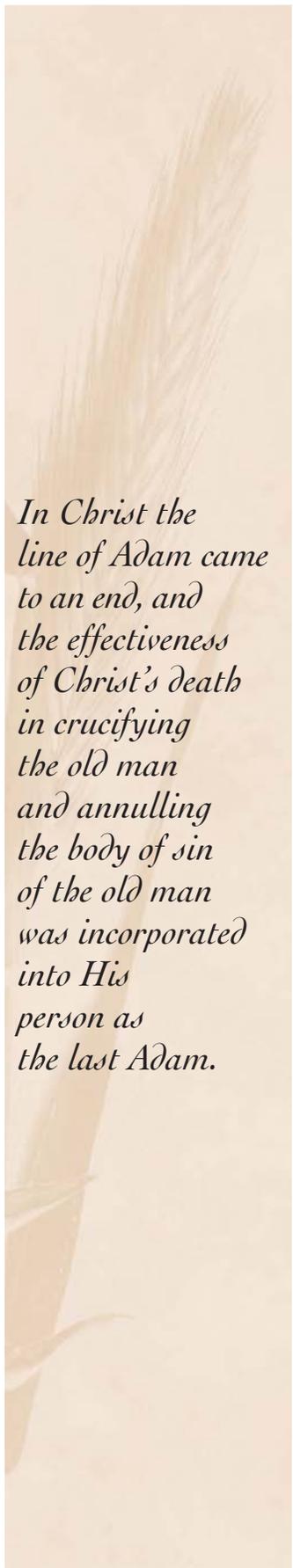
Given the direct references to image and dominion in this chapter, it is hard to overlook the connection between image, dominion, and resurrection in general and to the enlargement of image and dominion in the believers in particular. Nevertheless, many overlook or ignore the central means for the economical enlargement of God's image and dominion in redeemed and regenerated humanity that is presented in this same chapter—the person of Christ as the last Adam and the work of Christ as the life-giving Spirit.⁹ While many laud Christ as the incarnate God in His person and as the redeeming Lamb in His work, few laud Christ as the last Adam in His person and as the life-giving Spirit in His work. Both of these designations in 1 Corinthians 15, however, are crucial to the fulfillment of God's eternal intention to enlarge His image in humanity and to exercise His dominion through humanity.

The Enlarged Expression of Image in the Person of Christ as the Last Adam

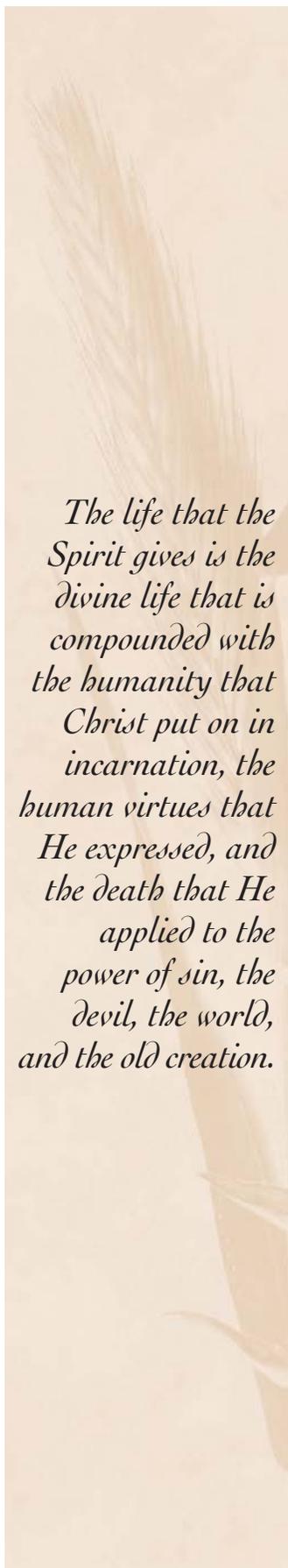
When God created Adam, He created an organic human vessel to receive and contain His divine life to thus express His image and exercise His dominion. In his disobedience, Adam not only failed to fulfill God's desire for image and dominion, but he was also contaminated with sin, the corrupted life and nature of Satan. Given this organic contamination, unmediated fellowship between God and sin-filled humanity was no longer possible, and thus, there was no possibility for humanity to receive the divine life without first satisfying God's righteousness. In the divine economy the means of mediation is the shedding of blood through sacrifice for the sake of appeasement. No mere human sacrifice, however, could satisfy God's righteous requirement because of the organic transmission of sin to all humanity through Adam. In all humanity no blood from a purely human source was without blemish or spot. The mingling of divinity and humanity through incarnation in the person of Christ, however, produced a precious blood without blemish and without spot to be the basis for an acceptable sacrifice (1 Pet. 1:19). The blood of Christ is precious because it is God's own blood (Acts 20:28). The sacrifice of Christ's own blood also involved termination. In the death of Jesus on the cross, there was a termination of humanity's organic heritage in Adam, with its ties to the old creation. Thus, Paul rightly speaks of Christ as the last Adam. In Christ the line of Adam came to an end, and the effectiveness of Christ's death in crucifying the old man and annulling the body of sin of the old man was incorporated into His person as the last Adam (Rom. 6:6).

Without Christ being the last Adam in His person, human vessels created by God to contain His life and nature and to express His image and dominion cannot receive His life and nature, because of the organic presence of sin. In Adam all die, but in Christ as the last Adam, all will be made alive with the life of God (1 Cor. 15:22). In Adam all die because through Adam "sin entered into the world, and through sin, death; and thus death passed on to all men because all have sinned" (Rom. 5:12). Condemnation came to all men through Adam's offense, causing the many to be constituted sinners, because Adam was not only an individual person but also the organic head of humanity (vv. 18-19). As an individual man, Adam sinned, and as a corporate man, the consequences of his sin passed on to all who were in his loins (cf. Heb. 7:9-10). In God's eyes there was only one man, Adam, prior to the incarnation of Christ, who terminated the old organic legacy of Adam on the cross, becoming the last Adam. In human history Christ represents not only the termination of sin but also the termination of the old man tied to the old creation. In the person of Jesus Christ as a man, as the last Adam, there was a termination of the old creation, a passing away of old things, and now in the person of Christ a way has been opened for the new things of the new creation (2 Cor. 5:17), especially things related to the newness of the divine image that makes it possible for the church to exercise God's dominion by carrying out His authoritative commission as ambassadors of the ministry of reconciliation (v. 20).

In the reconciliation of God and redeemed and regenerated humanity, made possible



In Christ the line of Adam came to an end, and the effectiveness of Christ's death in crucifying the old man and annulling the body of sin of the old man was incorporated into His person as the last Adam.



The life that the Spirit gives is the divine life that is compounded with the humanity that Christ put on in incarnation, the human virtues that He expressed, and the death that He applied to the power of sin, the devil, the world, and the old creation.

by the eternally effective and corporately applied death of Christ as the last Adam, the image of God in the unique person of Christ has been enlarged in all those who are joined to Him by faith. This is because redeemed and regenerated believers have the right to receive and contain the divine life, as signified by the tree of life (Rev. 22:14), a right that eluded Adam. It is this divine life that enlarges the divine image through the church as the Body of the corporate Christ. When redeemed and regenerated humanity is joined to the Lord as one spirit (1 Cor. 6:17), all the attributes in the divinity of Christ's image as the Son and all the virtues in the humanity of Christ's image as the last Adam are made available to humanity by virtue of being incorporated into His person. And through Christ's work as the life-giving Spirit, the divine attributes and perfect human virtues of Christ are supplied to the church, enlarging the image of the unique God-man into redeemed and regenerated humanity for the sake of an enlarged expression of His dominion.

The Enlarged Expression of Dominion in the Work of Christ as the Life-giving Spirit

When Christ was incarnated, God became a man, and when Christ, as the last Adam, was resurrected, He became a life-giving Spirit. Now in His work as the life-giving Spirit, Christ is enlarging God's dominion. The work of Christ as the life-giving Spirit represents the essence of God's economical operation in the believers to produce an enlarged expression of Himself and an enlarged expression of His dominion. The essence of His work, as it is put simply in the Scriptures, is to give life. The life that the Spirit gives is the divine life that is compounded with the humanity that Christ put on in incarnation, the human virtues that He expressed in His human living, and the death that He effectively applied to the power of sin; the devil, who is the source of sin; the world, which is the operative realm of sin; and the old creation, which is the manifestation of sin. Christ's life is also compounded with the power of His resurrection and the glory and honor associated with His ascension. All these elements are present in the life that is given by the Spirit, and the dispensing of these elements into the three parts of redeemed and regenerated humanity—the human spirit, the human soul, and the human body—enlarges the realm of God's dominion through the church, the corporate recipient of Christ's divinely compounded and blood mediated life. In His work of giving life, Christ as the Spirit imparts the elements of God's image into the church, enlarging God's image and thus the realm of the exercise of His dominion.

The process of giving life is initiated in the regeneration of a believer's human spirit through faith in response to hearing the word of the truth, the gospel of salvation, through the coming and announcing of Christ as the Spirit (Eph. 1:13; 2:17). In regeneration the human spirit is born of the Spirit (John 3:6), and those who were dead in offenses and sins are made alive together with Christ (Eph. 2:5). Thus, in Christ, all are made alive with the life given by Christ as the life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:22). The process of giving life continues through the availability of a bountiful supply of the Spirit (Gal. 3:5), even the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ (Phil. 1:19). This supply touches primarily the untransformed elements of the soul, reconstituting and filling the soul with the compounded element of Christ's human living by bringing the believers into the reality of the pattern of the human living of Jesus as the truth (Eph. 4:17-24). In this filling, the mind of the soul becomes life (Rom. 8:6), the emotions of the soul are conformed to the inward parts of Christ (Phil. 1:8), and the will of the soul is set on God's goals and directives. The process of giving life also enables the believers to participate in the effectiveness of Christ's death by putting to death the practices of the body by the Spirit in order to live in the realm of the divine life (Rom. 8:13) and even to experience the giving of life to the mortal body (v. 11). The process of giving life brings the believers into the realm of resurrection and ascension so that "just as Christ was raised from the dead through

the glory of the Father, so also we might walk in newness of life” (6:4), and having “grown together with Him in the likeness of His death, indeed we will also be in the likeness of His resurrection” (v. 5). In the supplying of the life-giving Spirit, those who die with Christ will also live with Him (v. 8).

The process of giving life ultimately brings the believers into the realm of Christ’s ascension, a realm in which God’s enemies become His footstool and, thus, are under the feet of the church as His partners (Heb. 1:9, 13; Rom. 16:20). In the believers’ participation in the ascended life that is given by the Spirit, God’s dominion is enlarged through the church’s wrestling “against the rulers, against the authorities, against the world-rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenlies” and through the church’s binding and loosing (Eph. 6:12; Matt. 16:19; 12:29). Such wrestling and such binding and loosing are not possible through natural strength or natural resolve but through the abundant supply of life that is given by the Spirit.

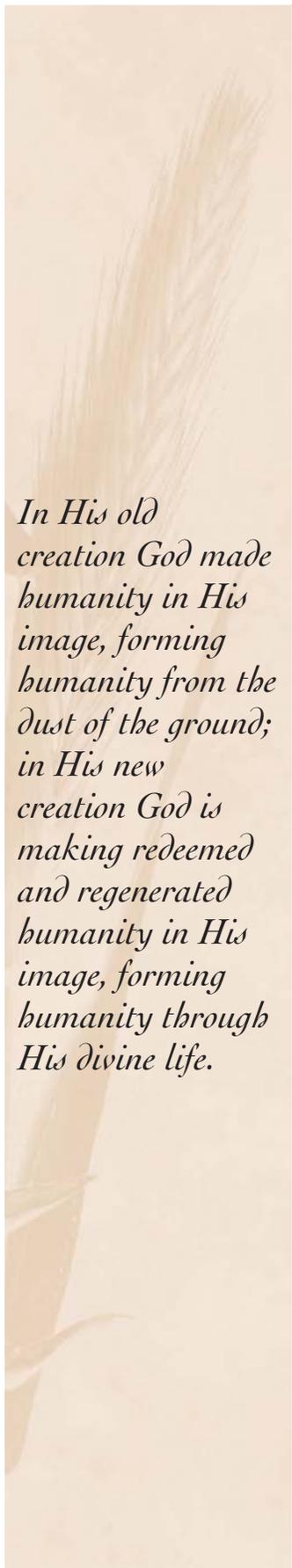
The supply given by the life-giving Spirit in His work in the believers is a supply of grace, and grace is simply Christ as our enjoyment. A supply of the grace of life is available to all who believe, because this supply is in the regenerated human spirit through the indwelling of the Spirit of life, the Spirit of grace (Rom. 8:2; Heb. 10:29). This grace, however, must be received by opening to the Lord through the exercise of our human spirit unto godliness (1 Tim. 4:7),¹⁰ but when grace is received, the realm of God’s dominion is enlarged in us and, thus, enlarged in the church. When the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness is received, there is a reigning in life through the One, Jesus Christ (Rom. 5:17). This reigning reflects and manifests the enlargement of God’s dominion. This reigning comes out of the divine image conveyed by the divine life, and it is even unto eternal life (v. 21). In the believers’ and the church’s reigning in life, God’s dominion is fully expressed and magnified.

Conclusion

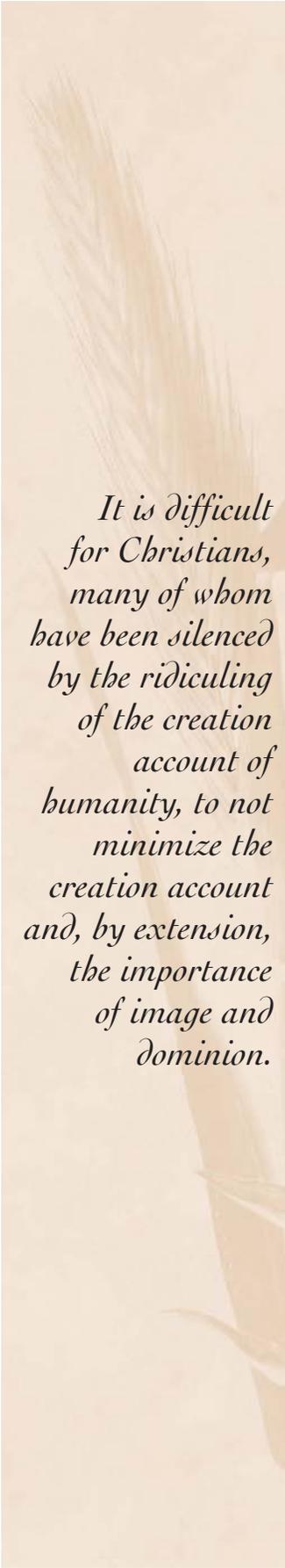
There is no greater work of the Spirit than the giving of life because the divine life initiates and sustains every operation in the economy of God. The person of Christ as the last Adam and the work of Christ as the life-giving Spirit make possible the realization of God’s original ordination for image and dominion. God’s original ordination for image and dominion has been enlarged in and through the person and work of Christ to produce the church as the organic Body of Christ. After God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them have dominion,” He formed a tripartite vessel to contain His life and nature. His efforts to make humanity in His image, however, did not stop with His work of creation. Indeed, He is continuing to make redeemed and regenerated humanity in His image, according to His likeness, for the sake of exercising His dominion through His giving of the divine life as the life-giving Spirit. In His old creation God made humanity in His image, forming humanity from the dust of the ground, and in His new creation God is continuing to make redeemed and regenerated humanity in His image, forming humanity through the giving of His divine life. And in this life, there is an enlarged expression of the divine image and the divine dominion that was initially expressed in the person and work of Christ as the unique God-man. **LFC**

Notes

¹The terms *image* and *dominion* allude to many aspects of the divine economy that are also paired throughout the Scriptures, including Christ and the church, the priesthood and the kingship, and life and building. Christ is the image of God, and the church, who bears His image, also exercises His authority, His dominion, as the kingdom of God. The dominion of the kingdom of



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His divine life.*



It is difficult for Christians, many of whom have been silenced by the ridiculing of the creation account of humanity, to not minimize the creation account and, by extension, the importance of image and dominion.

God is manifested in the church's expression of the divine attributes associated with God's image, including righteousness, peace, and joy (Rom. 14:17). The priesthood in the Old Testament expressed God, especially through the priestly garments and the priestly services, and the kingship in the Old Testament represented the rule of God on the earth. In the New Testament fulfillment of the reality of the priesthood and the kingship, the one new man puts on Christ and fulfills God's desire for redeemed and regenerated humanity to bear His image and exercise His dominion by expressing the Christ who is all and in all and by executing the ruling and subduing power of Christ (Rom. 13:14; Gal. 3:27; Eph. 2:15; 4:24; Col. 3:10; Rom. 16:20; cf. Luke 10:19; Matt. 28:18-20). In the Old Testament the priesthood and the kingship were separate offices, but in the New Testament these offices are realized in the person of Christ and, by extension, in His one expression, the church. Thus, Peter speaks of the believers, as God's spiritual house, being both a "holy priesthood" and a "royal priesthood" (1 Pet. 2:5, 9). John begins Revelation with a reference to the church, even in its representation through local churches, as having been made "a kingdom, priests to His God and Father" (1:4, 6), and he concludes Revelation with a sign of the ultimate accomplishment of God's divine intention, the New Jerusalem, in which all the redeemed serve Him as priestly slaves and reign forever and ever with Him as kings, sitting with Him on His throne (Rev. 22:3, 5; 3:21). The divine life, as an organic element, reproduces God's image in redeemed and regenerated humanity, which is manifested as a divine building against which the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenlies cannot prevail (Matt. 16:18; Eph. 6:12; cf. 3:10). God's divine life issues in a work of building a divine counterpart. The church, as represented by Eve, is built with the organic element of Christ's divine life, as represented by the rib of Adam (Gen. 2:21-22). Underpinning the great mystery of Christ and the church is the life that expresses His image and the authority that manifests His dominion (Eph. 5:30-32; cf. John 1:12).

When we encounter references to Christ, the priesthood, and the divine life in our reading of the Word, we should see an intrinsic connection to His desire for His image to be enlarged, and when we encounter references to the church, the kingship, and His divine building work, we should see an intrinsic connection to His desire for the full restoration of His dominion. Yet another aspect of image and dominion—the subject of this article—can be seen in the revelation of Christ's person and work. In His person Christ is the image of God, and in His work Christ is heading up all things by bringing all things into the obedience of the Christ (Eph. 1:10; 2 Cor. 10:5); that is, into the dominion of Christ. Everything in Christ's person and work is related to God's stated desire for humanity in Christ to bear His image and to exercise His dominion.

²In order to be properly impressed with God's high intention for humanity, it is important to move beyond the thought that the account of creation in Genesis 1 is only a metaphorical account. Accepting the account as literal, however, is difficult for many Christians who cannot discount scientific evidence that seems to effectively support a different account, that is, evolution. Consequently, it is difficult for Christians, many of whom have been silenced by the ridiculing of the creation account of humanity in Genesis 1:26 and 2:7, to not minimize the creation account and, by extension, the importance of image and dominion. Nevertheless, both silence and a deferral to scientific evidence (see Applegate, Kathryn, and J. B. Stump, eds. *How I Changed My Mind about Evolution: Evangelicals Reflect on Faith and Science*. Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2016. Print.) are by-products of a misreading of the Genesis account.

The original creation of the universe occurred at an unspecified time in the past, a time referred succinctly to as "the beginning" in verse 1:1. Following this initial creation there was a rebellion, again at an unspecified time, against the rule of God, a rebellion based upon Lucifer's prideful consideration of his own beauty, his own image (Ezek. 28:17). This rebellion brought in the judgment of God, making the joyful and wondrous place of His creation a place of watery waste, emptiness, and darkness in the first half of Genesis 1:2. However, the Scriptures reveal that God did not abandon His desire for an enlarged expression of His image and dominion. Consequently, He began a process of restoring His damaged creation in the second half of verse 2, first with the brooding of the Spirit upon the waters of the deep and then with His performative restorative utterances beginning in verse 3. Witness Lee summarizes these points in the *Life-study of Genesis*:

Genesis 1:2b does not refer to God's original creation—that was completed with verse 1—but God's restoration. God was going to restore what had been damaged, and was going to have some further creation. For instance, this time God created man. Man was a being created by God, not a being restored by God. Genesis 1:2b—2:25 is a portion of the divine Word showing us God's restoration of the damaged universe, plus His further creation. (26)

The earth is old, but the creation of humanity marked a new and relatively recent and further development of God's economical process in time. Rather than being swayed by the notion that humanity has reached an advanced evolutionary condition over millions of years, we should recognize that the advancement of humanity over a much shorter period of time testifies of the innate capacity inherent in humanity created in God's image and according to His likeness, even a humanity that has been tainted by sin inherited through Adam's fall. Such a high innate capacity is acknowledged by God in the biblical account of the building of the tower of Babel, when He said, "Behold, they are one people, and they all have one language; and this is only the beginning of what they will do; and now nothing which they purpose to do will be kept from them" (11:6). When God created humanity in His image, according to His likeness, there was a tacit acknowledgement that He would reestablish dominion over the old creation through His newly created humanity, a dominion that was lost to Lucifer and his rebellious angelic followers. In Message 2 of *Life-study of Genesis*, entitled "Satan's Rebellion and Corruption," Witness Lee provides a detailed and biblically based account of the events referred to in verses 1 and 2. This message is available online at <http://www.ministrybooks.org/life-studies.cfm>. In this message he speaks of the original position of Satan in the heavenly realm before his rebellion, stating,

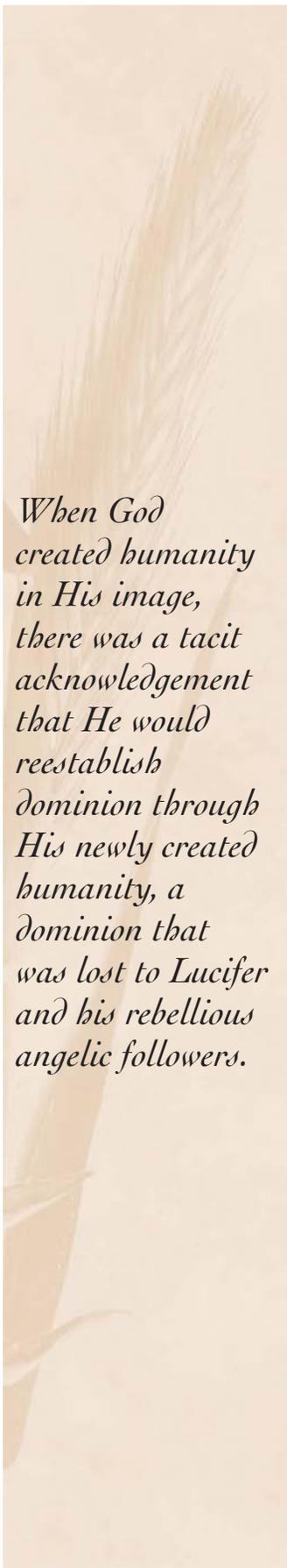
Satan's origin was wonderful. He was God's anointed cherub, the one closest to God, holding the highest position in God's creation. He had not only the kingship, but also the priesthood, the very position that we, God's redeemed people, have forever (Rev. 5:9-10; 20:4-6). But he was deprived of his position and offices when he rebelled against God. Now God has chosen us to be His priests and kings, to take over Satan's position and offices, to put him to shame, and to glorify God. (16)

In some respects, the aspects of image and dominion were present in Lucifer prior to his rebellion. This is reflected in his participation in the functions of the priesthood and the kingship for God. In regard to image Lucifer "sealed up perfection" and was "full of wisdom and perfect in beauty" (Ezek. 28:12), and in regard to dominion he made the nations fall prostrate from his throne (Isa. 14:12-13). With his rebellion, however, his image became profane, and his dominion was diminished when he was cast out from the mountain of God and cast to the ground (Ezek. 28:16-17). He lost any connection to God's image and any right to exercise God's authority. With God's creation of humanity, however, a fuller realization of image and dominion became possible even through a humanity that was created a little inferior to angels but was also given the capacity to be crowned with glory and honor and set over the works of His hands by receiving the divine life (Heb. 2:7). Thus, there was an implied transfer of image and dominion to humanity in the words *let them* in God's determined counsel in Genesis 1:26, a transfer that directly challenged Satan and instigated his efforts to corrupt God's chosen and newly created vessel.

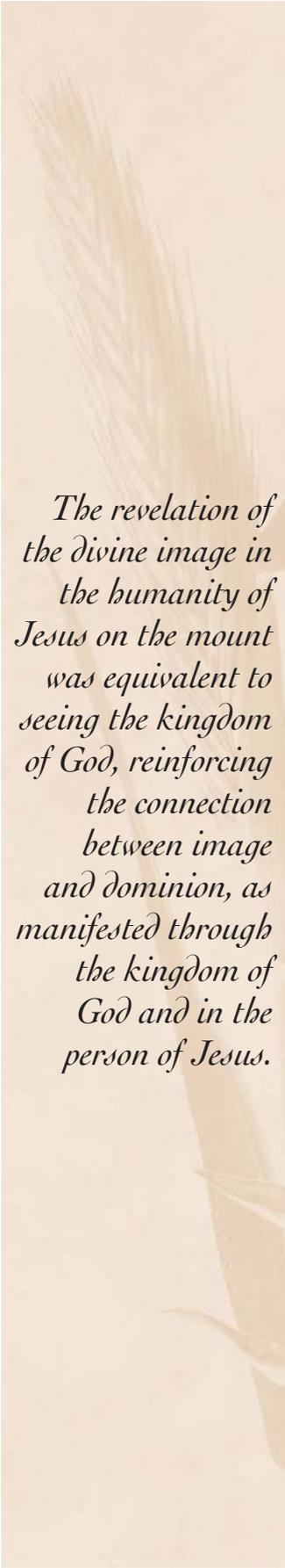
³The corporate aspect of Adam is revealed in the creation account. In the eyes of God Adam was a corporate man: "God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them" (Gen. 1:27). In *Notes on the Book of Genesis*, C. H. Mackintosh writes,

My reader will observe the change from "him" to "them." We are not presented with the actual fact of the formation of the woman until the next chapter; though here we find God blessing "them," and giving "them" jointly the place of universal government. All the inferior orders of creation were set under their joint dominion. Eve received all her blessings in Adam: in him, too, she got her dignity. Though not yet called into actual existence, she was, in the purpose of God, looked at as a part of the man. (11-12)

All fallen humanity is present in Adam as the head of the old creation, and all the believers are in Christ, who is the Head of the new creation. Witness Lee writes,



When God created humanity in His image, there was a tacit acknowledgement that He would reestablish dominion through His newly created humanity, a dominion that was lost to Lucifer and his rebellious angelic followers.



The revelation of the divine image in the humanity of Jesus on the mount was equivalent to seeing the kingdom of God, reinforcing the connection between image and dominion, as manifested through the kingdom of God and in the person of Jesus.

Adam was the head of the old collective man (mankind). Whatever he did and whatever happened to him is participated in by all mankind. In this respect he is a type of Christ, who is the Head of the new corporate man, the church (Eph. 2:15-16). Whatever He did and whatever happened to Him is participated in by all the members of His Body, the church (Eph. 1:22-23). (Recovery Version, Rom. 5:14, note 4)

⁴After speaking of Christ being the effulgence of God's glory and the impress of His substance, Paul speaks of Christ "upholding and bearing all things by the word of His power" (Heb. 1:3), drawing a direct connection between Christ's bearing God's image in His divinity and Christ's upholding power in His divinity.

⁵Luke begins his account of the transfiguration with the Lord's word that "there are some of those standing here who shall by no means taste death until they see the kingdom of God" (9:27). Immediately after recording these words, Luke presents the transfiguration account: "And about eight days after these words, He took with Him Peter and John and James, and went up into the mountain to pray. And as He prayed, the appearance of His face became different, and His garment dazzling white" (vv. 28-29). This indicates that the revelation of the divine image in the humanity of Jesus on the mount was equivalent to seeing the kingdom of God, reinforcing the connection between image and dominion, as manifested through the kingdom of God in general and in the person of Jesus in particular. In His person Christ bore God's image in His humanity, and the power of God's kingdom was demonstrated through His humanity and incorporated into His humanity (cf. Mark 9:1; Matt. 12:28).

⁶Image and dominion are sequential developments in the divine economy. Image always precedes dominion, and dominion always comes out of image. Without God's image, there can be no exercise of God's dominion. Simply put, God's life manifests God's authority, as illustrated by Aaron's budding rod (Num. 17:2-10), and the exercise of God's authority is based on God's operative life, as illustrated by the river of water of life flowing out from the throne of God and of the Lamb (Rev. 22:1). In *Genesis 1—4: A Linguistic, Literary, and Theological Commentary*, C. John Collins reinforces this understanding, writing, "To appeal to the sentence in Genesis 1:26, 'and let them have dominion,' as defining the image is to mistake the grammatical function of that sentence; as Delitzsch puts it, 'the *dominium terrae*...is not...its content but its consequence' (66).

This understanding is in contrast to Bill T. Arnold's view that image is limited to the exercise of dominion and perhaps even consequent to the exercise of dominion. In *Genesis*, he states, "Humans are created to function as the divine image through the exercise of 'dominion' and 'rule,' which of course is reinforced by the statement 'and let them have dominion over...'" (v. 26)" (45). It is always important to remember that what God does in His work is based on what He is in His person. Thus, His work of exercising and extending the reign of His dominion is based on and reflects who He is as a hypostatic expression of love, light, holiness, and righteousness.

⁷There is considerable debate over the difference between the terms *image* and *likeness*. In *How It All Began*, Ronald Youngblood argues that "no distinction should be made between *image* and *likeness*, which are in apposition in 1:26 and are synonyms in both the Old Testament (see Gen. 5:1; 9:6) and New (see 1 Cor. 11:7; Col. 3:10; Jas. 3:9)" (32). The presence of the modifying clause *according to Our likeness*, however, is an indication of distinction in some regard. In *An Outline of the Book of Genesis*, C. A. Coates sees a derivative distinction, stating,

[Christ] will not only as the 'Image' irradiate the whole universe with the light of God, but He will give such an impulse Godward that there will be the 'likeness'—perfect moral correspondence—with God in the whole vast system of which He will be the glorious Head. This 'likeness' will all be derived from Him. (16)

This is an improvement in understanding in that it sees a distinction, but it suggests that this distinction is a subsequent development, that is, one of arriving at a state of "perfect moral correspondence" that "will...be derived from Him." This understanding runs counter to the fact that from the beginning, humanity was endowed with God's image, according to His likeness. Thus, both image and likeness were present in the creation of humanity. In a footnote on the word *image* in Genesis 1:26, Witness Lee provides a detailed explanation of the distinction

between the two terms that is in accord with God's economical desire to impart Himself into tripartite human vessels created to contain Him as the creating, redeeming, and regenerating Triune God. Lee notes that *image* relates to divine attributes that can be expressed through human virtues and that *likeness* relates to the created form of man being according to the likeness of the form of God that enables humanity to receive the divine life and express the divine attributes of God's image.

God's image, referring to God's inner being, is the expression of the inward essence of God's attributes, the most prominent of which are love (1 John 4:8), light (1 John 1:5), holiness (Rev. 4:8), and righteousness (Jer. 23:6). God's likeness, referring to God's form (Phil. 2:6), is the expression of the essence and nature of God's person. Thus, God's image and God's likeness should not be considered as two separate things. Man's inward virtues, created in man's spirit, are copies of God's attributes and are the means for man to express God's attributes. Man's outward form, created as man's body, is a copy of God's form. Thus, God created man to be a duplication of Himself that man may have the capacity to contain God and express Him. All the other living things were created "according to their kind" (Gen. 1:11-12, 21, 24-25), but man was created according to God's kind (cf. Acts 17:28-29a). Since God and man are of the same kind, it is possible for man to be joined to God and to live together with Him in an organic union (John 15:5; Rom. 6:5; 11:17-24; 1 Cor. 6:17).

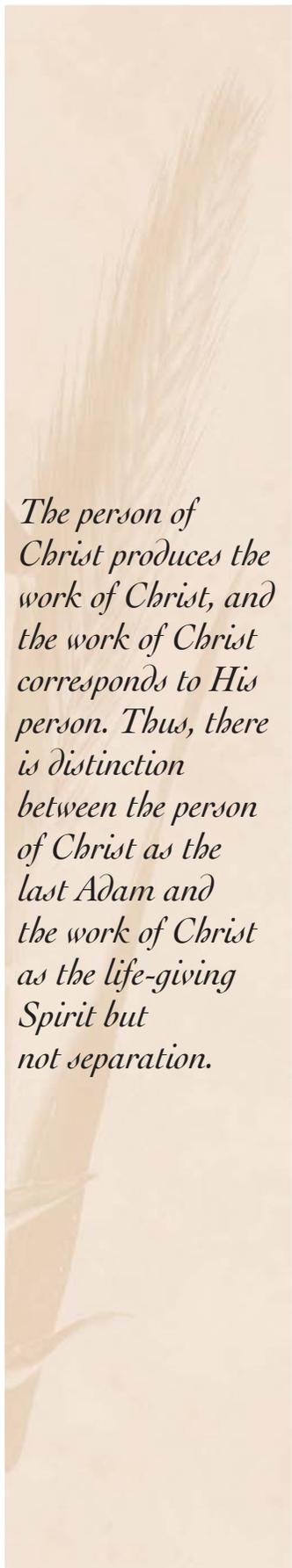
Christ the Son, as God's embodiment (Col. 2:9), is the image of the invisible God, the expression of the essence of God's attributes (Col. 1:15; 2 Cor. 4:4; Heb. 1:3). Man was created according to Christ with the intention that Christ would enter into man and be expressed through man (Col. 1:27; Phil. 1:20-21a). Created man is a living vessel, a container, to contain Christ (Rom. 9:21, 23; 2 Cor. 4:7). Eventually, in His incarnation Christ put on human nature and became in the likeness of men (Phil. 2:6-8) so that through His death and resurrection man may obtain God's eternal, divine life (1 Pet. 1:3; 1 John 5:11-12) and by that life be transformed and conformed to the image of Christ inwardly (2 Cor. 3:18; Rom. 8:29) and transfigured into the likeness of Christ's glorious body outwardly (Phil. 3:21) that he may be the same as Christ (1 John 3:2b) and may express God with Him to the universe (Eph. 3:21).

Created man was a duplication of God in God's image and likeness, but he did not have the reality of God or the life of God. Thus, he still needed to receive God as his life by eating of the tree of life so that he might have the reality of God to express Him (Gen. 2:9 and note 2). (Recovery Version, Gen. 1:26, note 3)

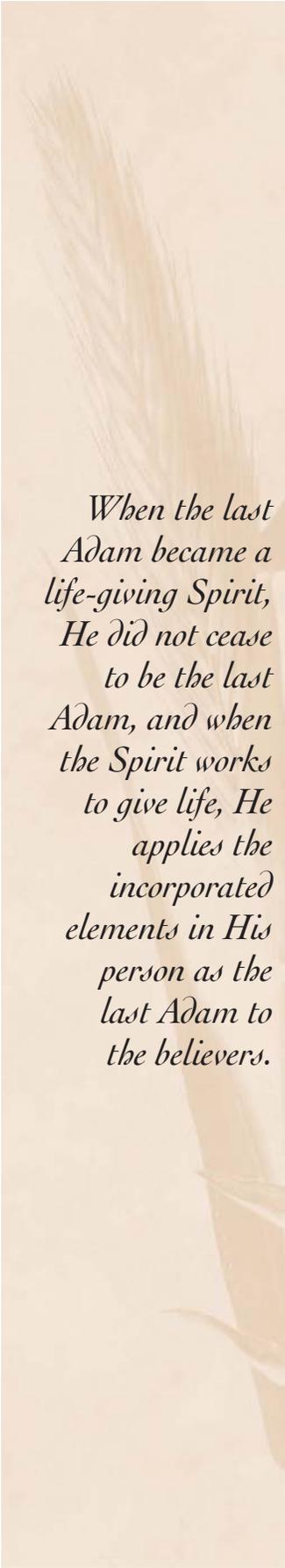
When Witness Lee speaks of image and likeness not being "considered as two separate things," he does not obviate the fact that there is a distinction between the two; instead, he denies the possibility of a notion of separation that would undermine the hypostatic interrelatedness of the realities behind the distinction, much in the same way that we theologically speak of the persons of the Triune God as being distinct but not separate, so as to avoid the error of tritheism. There is no hypostatic separation between the three persons of the Godhead, but there is distinction as signified by the one "name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matt. 28:19). The view that there is no separation between image and likeness is also supported by the use of the prepositional phrase *according to*.

⁸The verses cited in this section are not intended to represent the totality of the verses that reference various aspects of Christ's work; they are merely representative and illustrative. In a very real sense, everything in the Scriptures points to Christ and thus to some aspect of His person and work (cf. Luke 24:27). To see these connections, we need light and revelation.

⁹Although I speak of a primary emphasis on the person of Christ as it relates to His being the last Adam and a primary emphasis on the work of Christ as it relates to His being the life-giving Spirit, this does not mean that these aspects are unconnected, as if His person and work were separate categories. The person of Christ produces the work of Christ, and the work of Christ corresponds to His person. Thus, there is distinction between the person of Christ as the last Adam and the work of Christ as the life-giving Spirit but not separation. The work of terminating the old creation, for example, was incorporated into the person of Christ as the last



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When the last Adam became a life-giving Spirit, He did not cease to be the last Adam, and when the Spirit works to give life, He applies the incorporated elements in His person as the last Adam to the believers.

Adam, and Christ's life-giving work issues from the person of Christ as the consummated Spirit of John 7:39. The presence of distinction but not separation in the person and work of Christ can be seen in the connecting verb *became* in 1 Corinthians 15:45: "The last Adam *became* a life-giving Spirit" (emphasis added). When the last Adam became a life-giving Spirit, He did not cease to be the last Adam in His person, and when the Spirit works to give life, He primarily applies the incorporated elements in the person of Christ as the last Adam to the believers.

¹⁰Concerning our exercise unto godliness, Witness Lee says, "Godliness is Christ lived out of us to be the manifestation of God...Today this very Christ is the Spirit dwelling in our spirit...Hence, to exercise ourselves unto godliness is to exercise our spirit to live out Christ in our daily life" (Recovery Version, 1 Tim. 4:7, note 4). A proper exercise unto godliness does not involve an outward imitation of Christ but an inward contacting of Christ as the Spirit in our spirit.

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Renewing according to the Divine Image

"Put on the new man, which is being renewed unto full knowledge according to the image of Him who created him" (Col. 3:10).

The renewing of the new man is according to Christ, who is the image and expression of God. When we set our mind on the things above, the way is open for the new man to spread the divine element from our spirit into our soul. This spreading of the divine element within us is according to Christ, who is the image of God, God's expression. The more renewing that takes place in our soul, the more we shall be able to express God. In other words, the more renewing we experience in the soul, the more we shall have of the image of Christ.

Although we have been regenerated, we may have very little of the image of Christ in our mind, emotion, and will. Instead, we may cling to the image of the old Adam. But if we set our mind on the things above, the divine element in our spirit will spread into our soul. This spreading will be according to Christ as the image of God. As a result of the spreading of the divine element, we shall have the image of God and become His expression.

From *Life-study of Colossians* by Witness Lee, pp. 556-557