



Bible Student's Notebook™

The Herald of His Grace

Presenting *every man* perfect in Christ Jesus. Colossians 1:28

Volume IX
Issue 221

God in Consummation

by – A.E. Saxby (1873-1960)

God has not left us in doubt as to His ultimate purpose in creation. In the plainest terms He has made known to men what is to be the end of the long drawn-out history of sin and redemption. It seems as if the Author of Scripture has, by design, laid out the vision of the consummation in the simplest words, and has preserved them from the marring hand of translators so that it is easy to learn what is the goal to which all creation turns.

True, those passages that proclaim so definitely His ultimate purpose may fail to enlighten us because we read them through eyes that are blinded by traditional teaching. We may miss the goal by a fixed gaze upon the road thereto. We may mistake the immediate purposes for the ultimate purposes. We may mistake the judgments of the Kingdom for the goal of God's purposes, not recognizing that they are simply the means by which His goal is reached.

We may be perplexed about the outworking of some statements which have to do with the process God is pursuing to reach His ultimate purpose, and we may not be able to fit them thoroughly into the mosaic of revelation; but if we have a definite, repeated and clear pronouncement in His Word to rest upon, we may know that what He has promised He is able also to perform, and that He will reach the goal to which He moves.

We have already quoted some of these magnificent passages, sufficient to convince all who are

after truth and who are not intent upon simply establishing their own foregone conclusions. We propose calling our readers' attention in this portion to four more statements. They all point unmistakably to the same goal. With Divine foresight the Author of Scripture has met every argument that has ever been raised against the truth of God's ultimate, universal and complete triumph, so that the open heart and eye cannot fail to see the truth.

The **first** passage deals with the SCOPE of this consummation. "All things in the heavens and the earth will be gathered together in Christ" (Ephesians 1:10).

The **second** reveals the POSITION of all things in the heavens and the earth. They will be "reconciled" to God (Colossians 1:20).

The **third** gives us the SCENE of worship, thus making known the attitude of the vast throng that will be gathered and reconciled (Philippians 2:10-11).

The **fourth** passage emphasizes the intrinsic CONDITION of the multitude, while it also endorses that which the other passages have to say of their scope, their position, and their attitude (I Corinthians 15:22-28).

(see CONSUMMATION, page 2107)

God in Consummation.....	2105
God's Will and Man's Will.....	2112

Bible Student's Notebook™

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This weekly publication (52 times a year) is dedicated to:

- the proclamation of the riches of God's abundant, exceeding grace (Romans 5:20; 11:6; Ephesians 1:7)
- the affirmation of God's purpose to save all mankind through the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ (I Timothy 2:3, 4; 4:10; Titus 2:11)
- the "preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began" (Romans 16:25)
- true freedom and liberty apart from law (Galatians 5:1)
- the organic nature of the church, the Body of Christ (I Corinthians 12)
- the distinct message and ministry of Paul, the apostle to the nations (Romans 11:13)
- the importance of receiving all whom Christ has received (Romans 14-15)
- the recovery of rich Biblical truth that has too long remained hidden under the veils of traditionalism, prejudice, misunderstanding, and fear (Mark 7:7, 13).
- the completeness of the believer in Christ (Colossians 2:10), with
 - ... total forgiveness of sins (Colossians 1:14)
 - identity in His death, burial, and resurrection (Romans 6)
 - adult sonship position (Galatians 4)

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CONSUMMATION (continued from page 2105)

Lest we may limit the extent, this last passage deliberately includes God's "enemies." It strengthens the position by showing that there is not only reconciliation, but subjection. The attitude of worship is endorsed by the reminder that there will not only be a confession of Christ's Lordship, but also a complete possession of creation by God – since He then becomes "All in all" – while it adds a further evidence in the condition that all who died in Adam will reach. They will be quickened with the life that made the last Adam ALIVE – not simply resurrected – from the dead. With this vision in his mind it is little wonder that Paul closes his masterly summary of the whole truth in Romans with the doxology, "For of Him and through Him and to Him are **ALL THINGS**, to Whom be the glory for the ages. Amen."

If God has declared His purpose once, it should be enough to settle the fact. However, He has seen fit to repeat it and emphasize it from every point of view, until there is no loophole of escape from the conclusion that God will yet arrive at His goal.

These passages will bear the closest inspection, for the finer the scrutiny the fuller is their manifest meaning. Even in our *Authorized Version* the meaning lies upon the surface if we believe what the passages say, and the more we probe their depths the fuller their message stands revealed. In no case do the context and the translation deny one iota of their meaning. In every case they confirm their truth. Never did such a galaxy of stars shine with more splendor in the firmament of revelation.

THE SCOPE OF THE CONSUMMATION

That God's children may not be in doubt as to the issue of creation, God makes known the mystery of His will, that has its spring in His good pleasure. He purposes,

*That in the dispensation of the fullness of times He might gather together **all things** in Christ, both which are in the heavens and which are on the earth; even in Him (Ephesians 1:10).*

This phrase "gather together" only comes in one other place in the New Testament, where it is translated "briefly comprehended" (Romans 13:9) – the whole of the law being briefly comprehended or "summed up" in one sentence. Coneybeare and Howson's well-known translation and commentary says that the phrase means "literally, to unite all things under one head, in union with Christ." Other versions of the New Testament agree with this. The Headship of Christ over all creatures, both the things which are in the heavens and in the earth, is clearly expressed here in this final summary of the issue of the work of creation.

Inclusion, not exclusion is the principle upon which this consummation will be effected. This is to take place in time – "in the dispensation of the fullness of times." It must be subsequent to the judgment of Revelation 20, for there is no sign of such inclusion in the latter passage, but rather the opposite. It is effected in that "age of the ages," that last age which is the crown of all other time periods, referred to in the same epistle as follows: "Unto Him be glory in the Church by Christ Jesus unto all the generations of the age of the ages" (Ephesians 3:21). Thus we have the SCOPE of ultimate redemption and the period of its accomplishment.

THE POSITION OF ALL THINGS

When we turn to the second passage Colossians 1 we find, first of all, an amplification of the term "the things in earth and in the heavens." We discover that the things in earth relate to all things that God has created and over which He presides, obviously the world of men and their interests. The things in the heavens are enumerated as "thrones, dominions, ►

principalities and powers” (:16-17), those spirit beings of which glimpses are given occasionally in Scripture.

These two spheres, “*visible and invisible*,” are ultimately to be reconciled by the blood of that Cross, which already had availed to reconcile the Colossians believers, who were enemies in mind and works (:20-21). Exactly the same word is used in both cases to express the position into which some had already been brought, and into which it is God’s ultimate purpose to bring the rest of His creation. In all of these verses the strongest words that could be selected have been chosen to emphasize each point. This word “*reconcile*” is the stronger of two words which could have been used, and Rotherham rightly translates it “*fully reconcile*.” We know that he is right, for the reconciliation effected in those already saved by the Cross of Christ is the fullest possible. The significance of this passage is seen more fully still when its drift [meaning] is observed. Paul was combating the Gnostic claim that Christ was only one of the angelic hierarchy. His reply to their claim was that, in common with the earthly beings, the heavenly hosts themselves stood in need of His atonement, so that the position into which some of His creatures have been brought by the work of His Cross and into which it is His purpose to bring “*ALL THINGS*” in the earth and in the heavens, is one of complete reconciliation.

The argument that “*all things*’ does not mean “*people*” is confuted by the use of the word “*reconcile*.” The inanimate creation is to be “*delivered from the bondage of corruption*” into which its association with sin has brought it, but it needs no reconciliation. Such a need presupposes sin and enmity to God; and demands the action of intelligence and choice, of all of which only sentient beings are capable.

THE SCENE OF WORSHIP

If, however, proof is still needed that people and not mere inanimate creation is meant, we shall

find it as we put the third passage, Philippians 2:10-11, under the X-rays. Here, the introduction of the bent knee and the confessing tongue “*of all things in heaven, and things in the earth and things under the earth*,” at once refutes the claim that people are not intended.

Every word of these two verses is teeming with the fullest meaning. To begin with, we may notice that the idea of mere forced acknowledgment of Christ’s Lordship, which is the most that some of the Lord’s people will allow that this passage gives to Him, is met by several clear indications to the contrary.

In the first place, the preposition “*at*” must be exchanged for the word “*in*” to meet the requirements of the original, as readers of the *Revised Version* will note. “*In the Name of Jesus*” is the term used everywhere in the New Testament to express an attitude of intelligent, willing consent and co-operation – e.g., “*In the Name of Jesus ... rise up and walk*” (Acts 3:6).

The word “*bow*” is selected to denote willing worship, as will be seen by comparison with its use in other settings. It is the word used when Paul “*bows*” the knee to the Father (Ephesians 3:14). The seven thousand men whom God reserved for Himself at Carmel had not “*bowed the knee to Baal*” (Romans 11:4). They had refused to give this false god willing worship.

When, however, a mockery of worship was accorded Jesus in His trial before Pilate, another word is chosen by the Holy Spirit (Mark 15:19) than that used in the passages that we have quoted, where willing adoration is offered. Anyone who takes the trouble to compare these words in his anxiety to arrive at the truth, will find these points verified. What surprises us, more than anything else in this discussion, is that so many of God’s people show no disposition to get at the truth, and seem to be satisfied with assumption and tradition.

Paul is here quoting from Isaiah 45. After bidding “*all the ends of the earth*” to look and be saved, God swears by Himself – the strongest determination being expressed by this form of speech – that unto Him “*every knee shall bow and every tongue shall swear.*” Again the greatest care has been observed in the Hebrew in the selection of the word translated “*bow*” in this passage, that a word indicative of whole-hearted worship and a word everywhere else used to denote the homage of the heart should be chosen. Moreover, on the two occasions that the word “*swear*” appears in this passage, it is the same word in the Hebrew. With that full purpose of heart that God swears by Himself to effect His end, every tongue shall swear to Him. The passage even gives the terms of the confession: “*Surely, shall one say [that is, the one that will thus swear], in the Lord have I righteousness and strength ...*” (Isaiah 45:22-24).

Turning back to the Philippian passage, equal care is shown in the choice of the word “*confess.*” It is the word – to give one instance of many – which Christ uses when He says, “*I thank Thee, Father, etc.*” (Matthew 11:25). Far removed is the thought in this word of forced, unwilling worship, as one other point still further demonstrates.

The Lordship of Christ is the burden of the confession, when, thus, every knee and every tongue shall be engaged in worship. Scripture shows us that the confession of Christ’s Lordship is the outcome of an inner working of the Holy Spirit. To set Scripture to explain Scripture is the most satisfactory method of exposition, as it is the only means by which the truth can be reached. The reader will easily recall the passage where confession of the Lord Jesus with the mouth, together with the belief of the heart in Him, is a sign of salvation (Romans 10:9). Also that other passage where confession of the Lordship of Christ is said to be the outcome of the work of the Holy Spirit.

No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Spirit (I Corinthians 12:3).

Of this company in Philippians 2:10-11, Mr. D. M. Panton says,

Now it is certain that this Scripture states that all creation, all persons whatsoever in the illimitable universe, will one day, personally and openly, confess Christ. “*God hath highly exalted Him and given unto Him the Name which is above every other name; that*” – in order that, as the purpose and result of the exaltation – “*in the Name of Jesus every knee should bow*” – the bent knee in dumb acknowledgment of a worshiping will – “*of things in heaven*” – all unseen principalities and powers whatsoever, fallen and unfallen – “*and things on earth*” – the totality of mankind – “*and things under the earth*” – the abyss, the home of both the dead (Romans 10:7) and demons (Luke 8:31), “*and that every tongue*” – therefore every personality, human and angelic – “*shall confess*” – confess, as the Greek word means, openly and plainly, the tongue confessing that before which the knee bows – “*that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father*” (Philippians 2:11). A name above every name, every knee bowed, every tongue confessing; not one knee unbent; not one tongue silent; no universality could be more complete.

Nevertheless Panton escapes from the admission he thus makes by the most extraordinary claim that, “It is clear that this universal homage is offered at the second advent.” Does not Mr. Panton see that if this homage is offered at the second advent, it cannot be composed of “the totality of mankind,” for the second advent is previous to the Millennium, when multitudes of beings will be yet unborn, and at the close of which a number as great as the sand of the sea will revolt against the dominion of Christ (Revelation 20:8)? How hard do the lovers of Christ labor to prove that He will never be Lord of all creation in the fullest deepest sense!

This worship, furthermore, will be "to the glory of God the Father." If compulsion, as to a judge, was the spring of such worship, it could hardly satisfy the heart of Him who pities as a father pities his children.

THE CONDITION OF THE MULTITUDE

We come to the passage now, which, in the vision of "things to come" brings us to the very end of time, when Christ will have reigned "for the ages of the ages" (Revelation 11:15). Many have confused the scene in I Corinthians 15:22-28 with the close of the Millennium. It is easy to see that there are striking differences which prove that the scene in Revelation 20 is an end of a period or age, and the scene in I Corinthians 15 is *THE END* of all time, periods or ages.

The difference will be clearly observed if the diverse conditions are considered. In the former (Revelation 20) there is rebellion and the imposition of the second death. In the latter there is subjection and the destruction of death.

Again, in the former we view Christ upon the throne judging the dead and promulgating a sentence upon the rebels, which takes effect in the future.¹ In the latter (I Corinthians 1:15) we see Him delivering up a subjected Kingdom to the Father: the first is a scene of judgment, the second is one of victory. The enemies in the first are defiant: the enemies in the second are submissive.

Still another proof can be advanced to show that these two scenes are at two totally different occasions, widely separate by indefinite time. The first (Revelation 20) occurs at the end of the Millennium, the Messianic age. The other is at the expiration of "the ages of the ages."

Since Christ reigns for "the ages of the ages" in His kingdom, He could not be said to deliver up His kingdom until the close of that period. Hence it is clear that the scene in Revelation 20 is not to be identified with the deliverance of the kingdom to the Father, because it takes place at the end of one age only, viz.: the Messianic reign.

This is not all. The same word is used six times to designate the kind of submission to which all things, including Christ's enemies, are brought. In our *Authorized Version* this word is translated in three different English ways: "put under," "subdued" and "subject." In the sentence where it is translated "subject," it has reference to the nature of the submission of the Son: "then shall the Son Himself be subject unto Him."

This gives a keynote to the situation, which it is possible the translators of the *Authorized Version* could not accept, since their theology did not admit of such a climax as the complete voluntary subjection of all things, including enemies, to the scepter of Christ. Yet here it is plainly written that, with a subjection identical to that of the Son all things will finally yield to His sway. So complete will be this subjection that it becomes necessary in the statement to exempt God Himself from the general rule.

"It is manifest that He is excepted Who did subject all things unto Him."

Only entire voluntariness to God's will, such as Christ yielded to the Father, could justify the expression that sums up the scene. God cannot be "ALL **in all**" where less than complete, universal obedience and homage is accorded Him. The language is so explicit, that only the bias of tradition can refuse to admit the unmistakable meaning of the terms in use.

We pause a moment to refer to the objection raised on the ground of the solitary use of this word "subject," in the case of the devils who were "subject" to the disciples (Luke 10:17). This is the only place where the word is used in a

1. "And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before the throne." This is the translation preferred by the *Revised Version*, and by six out of seven of the foremost Greek texts. Scofield's Bible adopts it also in the margin.

situation that seems to suggest less than voluntary subjection. It is the word used to express the obedience of Jesus to His parents (Luke 2: 51); of the subjection of the Church to Christ (Ephesians 5:24); of the submission of believers to one another (I Peter 5:5). In every case but that of the devil's submission, it is in a context that connects it with a voluntary, conscientious, moral, dutiful and often affectionate subjection. Is the rule to cover the exception, or the exception to override the rule? If the latter, then a question mark is put to all the other examples of subjection, even to that of Christ!

Two things must be remembered in the treatment of the story of the victory over the devils by the Apostles. First, that it is their verdict of the incident which governs the use of the word. As they beheld the instant response to the authority of that wondrous name, no other word could suggest itself to them. In the second place, if it was too strong a word to express the temporary submission of these spirits to Christ, it is nevertheless used by Paul to denote the subsequent subjection of all things to Christ in this passage under consideration. It is amazing that it is not recognized at once what great glory would be obtained to Christ through the ultimate, entire, voluntary, glad subjection of all His enemies to Himself through the judgments of His Kingdom and grace of His Cross.

One other fact remains for consideration. It is the condition of the three orders into which all men finally group, *“every man in his own order.”*

For as in Adam ALL die, even so in Christ shall ALL SHALL BE MADE ALIVE.

All humanity is divided into three orders, *“every man in his own order.”* (1) Christ is the first fruits; (2) then follow those who are His at His coming; (3) then, at the consummation, come the rest of mankind.

Notice that all are to pass into the same condition, though at different times. There is no distinction

made between Christ and His people, or between His people and the residue of humanity, except that of their order in time.

All are to be *“made alive”* (renewed life, i.e., vivified). This is something more than physical resurrection. Others were raised from the dead previous to Christ's resurrection, but only to natural life. Using the same word in I Corinthians 15:45, Paul speaks of Him as a *“quickening spirit.”* Adam was but a living soul, and could give to his posterity only that which he possessed. Christ has more than physical life to bestow: He has life and immortality; therefore He calls Himself *“the Resurrection and the Life.”* For the same reason it is written that the Father raises the dead and quickens them – makes them alive (John 5:21). How different is that appearance of *“the dead small and great”* before the Great White Throne (Revelation 20:11) at the close of the Millennium. Summoned to a resurrection of judgment, those who are not found written in the Book of Life are cast into the Lake of Fire which is the Second Death. Behold them now at the consummation, with death the *“last enemy”* abolished because its work is done, *“MADE ALIVE”* in their *“own order,”* to own the Lordship of that One through the merits of Whose cross they have been brought in a glad subjection to His feet.

Thus the drama of creation begins with a scene in which the first Adam takes a step that leads all of his posterity into ruin and death. It closes with a vision in which the last Adam presents to the Father, as a fruit of His Cross and Throne, a universe of beings delivered from sin and death, and worshiping in adoring wonder at His feet. This is the *“purpose of the ages”* (Ephesians 3:11). This is the goal of creation.

God in Creation, Redemption, Judgment and Consummation
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God's Will and Man's Will

by – Aaron Locker

Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth (I Timothy 2:4).

Does God have a will? Of course.

Do men have wills? Of course.

When God's and man's wills agree, it is a good day, but what happens when they don't agree? Whose will takes precedence over the other's? Most Christians believe that man's will takes precedence over God's. They won't say it that way, but that is their belief. Most Christians will tell you, "God gave men free will, and because of that, God won't interfere with our wishes." This, of course, only goes so far. The will of a being extends as far as his power. A dog may wish to go outside, but his will can not be carried out until someone capable of opening the door lets him out. Even then, the dog requires help to carry out his will, for a being that is powerless to perform cannot be expected to do so unless there is direct intervention from a superior being. It is foolish to assume that a man's will can carry him to any extent that surpasses his power, however, being that God is all-powerful; it is accurate to say that God can do whatever He wishes.

Clearly, God cannot be omnipotent if all it takes to stop Him is for man to say "No. Sit. Stay." This is why the doctrine of "Free

Will" is a doctrine of creation over Creator. We can either believe that God's plans will be carried out no matter what man says (Job 23:13; Isaiah 46:10; Ephesians 1:11), or we can believe that God must ask permission before carrying out His will. Either way, the belief that God would be foolish enough to leave the salvation of a creature that cannot save itself up to that creature is not true or even reasonable. If God wants all men to be saved, then it shall be; regardless of the size of the box in which man believes he can put God.

So, how far does man's will extend? As far as God wills it to extend. Only a fool would entrust a helpless creature with its own salvation. God, being the Governor of the universe, knows that it is His responsibility and His place to choose whom He will save, how He will save them, and how quickly man will return to Eden. Man has no choice in the matter; and even if God asked for man's opinion, man does not have the power to back his will with any meaningful action.

May we all trust in the Lord fully. May we trust in Him, as the all-powerful Governor of the universe, to do what we cannot; but more importantly, to do what He wishes whether or not He first consults with us.

