



Bible Student's Notebook™

The Herald of His Grace

Volume XIII
Issue 324

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

Jesus Christ the Son of God

by — Arthur P. Adams (1845-1925)

The orthodox idea is that Christ the Son is identical with God the Father. Jesus is “the very unoriginated God” the creeds say. That Christ was absolutely the Deity Himself – that the Son was His Own Father – is not only senseless, but altogether unscriptural.

Jesus Christ is the very unoriginated God. — Binney's Theological Compend, 1875

He was the very unoriginated God, co-equal with the Father. – The Divinity of Jesus Christ, The Bible Christian Magazine, London 1880

We will proceed at once to consider the subject from a Bible standpoint.

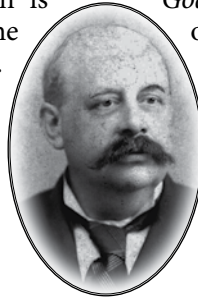
JOHN 1

The strongest passage urged to prove the absolute Deity of Christ is undoubtedly the first two verses of the first chapter of the Gospel of John.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God; the same was in the beginning with God.

By the term *Word*, Jesus undoubtedly is meant, and the declaration that “*the Word was God*,” is considered by the advocates of the orthodox view to settle the question as to Christ's deity. *Jesus was God*; here is the direct, positive statement. What appeal can there be from this? Let us see.

If we take the view that this statement teaches the absolute identity of the Son and the Father, what shall we do with the other statement in this passage, equally positive, and twice repeated, that “*the Word was WITH God*?” If the Word and God are *identical*, one and the same Being, then they could not be *with* each other, for *one* being cannot properly be said to be *with* Himself. Thus the orthodox view makes this passage contradict itself: it makes the statement, twice repeated, that “*the Word was WITH God*,” utterly meaningless. If you say that you can prove by the clause, “*the Word was*



God,” that the Father and the Son are *one*, in the sense of being identical, I say I can prove by another clause, “*the Word was WITH God*,” that they are *two*; and I have the best of the argument, since the latter statement is twice repeated, to only once of the former. But a view that thus makes Scripture self-contradictory cannot be the correct one, so we must look for another interpretation of the passage.

JOHN 10

Jesus said, “*I and my Father are one*” (John 10:30). Did He mean that they were one and the same *person*? Is there any need to take such an extreme and far-fetched view as this? Is it not more reasonable to understand the declaration to mean that they were one in spirit and purpose? That there was perfect harmony between them? Did Jesus ever claim to be God the Father? Look at the context of the passage we are considering.

Jesus said, “*I and my Father are one*.” Then the Jews took up stones to stone him. Jesus asked them why they stoned Him. They answered, “*because that thou being man makest thyself God*.” Jesus answered them, “*Is it not written in your law, 'I said ye are gods'?* (see Psalm 82:6) *if he called them gods ... say ye of Him Whom the Father hath sanctified and sent into the world, 'Thou blasphemist,' because I said ...*” – said what? That He was God? This is what we should expect from the drift of Christ's words, as though He had said, “*if God called them gods, do you call Me a blasphemer because I say that I am God?*” Yet Jesus does not say this. *He makes no such claim*, but finishes the sentence with the simple words – “*because I said I am the SON of God?*” (John 10:33-36).

That He was the *Son of God* is all Christ ever claimed. He never said one word that indicated that He considered

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- 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);
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JESUS CHRIST! (continued from front page)

Himself the absolute Deity. He was *one* with the Father in spirit, in harmony, and this declaration, thus understood, is in perfect accord with another one He made – “My Father is greater than I” (John 14:28). In harmony, then, with the foregoing, I understand John’s statement that “*the Word was God*” not in the sense of *being*, but of *purpose* and *spirit*; there was such a *unity of spirit* that the Agent could be said to be the Principle.

JOHN 17

That they all may be one; as Thou, Father, art in Me and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us ... that they may be one even as We are one. I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be made perfect in one (:21-23).

Now all of this is confirmed by John 17. If we should take the extreme view that Christ is one with God in the sense of being one and the same being, “the very unoriginated God,” then we should have to conclude from passages in John 17 that those for whom Christ prays in that chapter were ultimately to be one with God in the same sense – **literally and absolutely become God**, one and the same being – for Christ prays,

That they all may be one; as Thou, Father, art in Me and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us ... that they may be one EVEN AS WE ARE ONE. I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be made perfect in one.

Now in whatever sense Christ is one with the Father, believers are to share in the same unity. Are the Father and the Son one in the sense of being identical, so that the Son is “the very unoriginated God?” Then believers are to be one in the same sense, for they are to be one in the Father and the Son *even as They are one*. Yet, can this be true? Are the redeemed to become absolutely God and identical with the Deity? It must be so if Christ is one with God in that sense. Is it not rather true that Christ is one with the Father, as we have said, in the sense of being in perfect union and harmony with Him? He prays that “*those whom the Father had given Him*” might be one with them in the same sense – that they all may be one, “*even as We are one*,” that they may be made *perfect in one*; and the purpose of this unity is “*that the world may believe*,” “*that the world may know*.”

No one would entertain so wild a notion as that those for whom Christ prayed would ultimately be incorporated into the Deity so as to become literally and absolutely God. Yet they are to be one with God, *as* Christ is one with God. Is it not plain, then, that this unity is not identity of being, but identity of *purpose* and *spirit* – *perfect harmony*? – which unity Christ has always possessed, and in which unity the believer shall ultimately share.

The Lord Jesus Christ was not *absolutely* God, but was

His “*image*” (Colossians 1:15). To say that Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of God is nonsense; the words convey no meaning to our minds, for we cannot conceive of a son being co-existent with His father, any more than we can conceive of a round square or a straight curve. However, that Jesus is the son of the Eternal God we can readily accept. All Scripture agrees with this view.

Christ spoke of Himself, calling Himself “*the Son of God*,” as we have seen. So the apostles referred to Christ, as “*the Son of God*” (e.g., see Acts 9:20) and none of them has left on record a *hint* that they considered Christ to be “the very unoriginated God.” The Father Himself bears the same testimony: at His baptism the “*voice from heaven*” proclaims, “*this is My Beloved Son*” (Matthew 3:17).

HEBREWS 1

Read the first chapter of Hebrews and notice how Christ is set forth – He is not the Deity, but is in His *likeness*. “But,” says one, “does not the Father call the Son, ‘God?’” (:8). Yes; and the Father called Moses, god, (Exodus 4:16; cf. 8:1) and He calls others gods, as we have seen; but it is the Son still that is thus styled god, and this is all Jesus Himself claimed, as we have also seen;

Unto the Son He saith, “Thy throne, O God, is for ever [to the age of the age]; a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Thy kingdom. Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity, therefore God, even Thy God, hath anointed Thee with the oil of gladness above Thy fellows” (Hebrews 1:8-9).

Is this God talking to Himself, in the person of His Son? What absurdity! It is the Father, and *God* of the Son, expressing His perfect satisfaction in His Son, and pronouncing blessing upon Him. So Jesus speaks,

... I ascend unto My Father and your Father, and to My God, and your God (John 20:17).

Your Father no less than My Father; My God as much as your God.

Perhaps someone will ask if Paul does not say that Christ was “*equal with God*” (Philippians 2:6). If he did, that would not be saying that He was absolutely identical with God; but Paul says nothing of the kind. To the contrary, he says virtually just the opposite. The clause is a mistranslation, and it should read, “*He thought it not a thing to be grasped to be on an equality with God*.”¹

1. Various versions appear to support this view:
He did not consider equality with God a thing to be grasped (Common Edition).
He did not grasp at equality with God (Goodspeed).
He did not set store upon equality with God (James Moffatt).
 However, a simpler answer may be found in that the Greek word translated “*equal*” is “*isos*” and is defined by James Strong (Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance) as “*similar*” and is translated



Now we ask, in what sense and to what degree was Christ god-like?

In Him **all** fullness dwells (Colossians 1:19).

All the fullness of the Godhead bodily (Colossians 2:9).

In Him are hid **all** the treasures of wisdom and knowledge (Colossians 2:3).

The light of the knowledge of the glory of God (II Corinthians 4:6).

No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, Who is in the bosom of the Father, **He** hath declared Him (John 1:18).

No man knoweth the Son but the Father, and no man knoweth the Father but the Son, and he to whom the Son shall reveal Him (Matthew 11:27).

Thus Christ is the perfect image, likeness and revelation of God. So perfect is the harmony that we may say, “the Word was God”; and Jesus could say, “I and My Father are one.” So exact is the likeness that Jesus declares again,

If ye had known Me, ye should have known My Father also (John 8:19).

He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father also (John 14:9).

We will notice one more point which still further confirms the foregoing, and sets forth the wonderful and blessed relation that subsists between Christ and His

Own. *Christ* is the elder brother, and we are His brothers. *Christ* is the Head, and we are the members. Believers pass through the same experiences, enduring the same sufferings, having the same promises and encouragements, and finally sharing in the same exaltation and glory as their Lord and Savior.

Whatever promise or declaration is made of Christ, either of suffering, dishonor or humiliation, or of joy, honor or glory, the same or a similar promise or declaration is made of us. To forestall misapprehension I will say at once that the Bible teaches that there are certain particulars in which Christ differs from the unfinished race; but wherein He *did* differ it was *God* Who made Him to differ (I Corinthians 4:7), viz., the manner of His birth; He never was estranged from God through sin and guilt and ignorance.

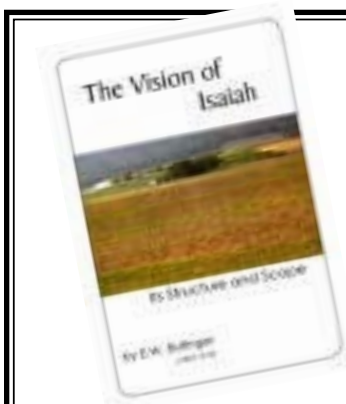
Christ was “made in all things like unto His brethren,” so His brothers are to be made in all things “like Him” (Hebrews 2:17). Jesus was made a “partaker of flesh and blood” (Hebrews 2:14) so that believers are made “partakers of the divine nature” (II Peter 1:4).

The period of “the sufferings of Christ” (I Peter 1:11) has not yet expired, for the believer “fills up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ,” (Colossians 1:24) and “if one member suffers all the members [including the Head] suffer with it” (I Corinthians 12:26). It is a precious thought that it is possible for us to know the fellowship of Christ’s sufferings (Philippians 3:10).

In this view we may be able, with Paul, to “glory in tribulations” (Romans 5:3), “glory in infirmities” (II Corinthians 12:9), “take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ’s sake” (II

“like” by the King James Version translators in Acts 11:17.

(see **JESUS CHRIST**, back page)



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“There Are Many Gods” – “There Is One God”

(I Corinthians 8:5-6)

by — A.E. Knoch (1874-1965)

Isn't it astonishing how the Scriptures [apparently] contradict themselves! Here, in the course of only two verses, we have an [apparent] flat contradiction, and this, as to one of the simplest, yet most vital of truths! It was pointed out that we also have been guilty of this same [apparent] “boggling.” In fact, on a page almost wholly devoted to the great truth that God alone is God and there is no other beside Him, we speak of “*the god of this eon!*” We are politely requested to make up our mind about whether there is one God or more; but how can we, when the Bible itself is on both sides of this question?



Herod's voice of a (Acts 12:22), (Lycaonian) descended to us (Acts 14:11), the unknown (Acts 17:23), made with hands (Acts 19:26), Paul is (Acts 28:6), those being termed gods ... many gods and many lords (I Corinthians 8:5), of this eon (II Corinthians 4:4), by nature no (Galatians 4:8), their bowels (Philippians 3:19), man of lawlessness elevates self over (II Thessalonians 2:4).

What a lot of *gods* there are! Let us make a list of the individuals who are thus designated.

First, **Christ**, with every right to be so called, to the glory of the God Whom He represents.

Then there is **Paul**, who would not allow it, at either the beginning or the end of his ministry.

Herod is thus acclaimed.

The **man of lawlessness**, at the end time, will take a place above the other gods.

Perhaps the strangest is that of the **believers** over whom Paul lamented that they made a god out of their bowels.

Besides these there are the **Judges in Israel**, the **unknown God at Athens**, and the **many gods** of our text.

Is there any term too humiliating for the logic that tries to prove that every one of these must mean the Deity? For centuries, theology has quoted a few passages from this list to prove that Christ was “very” God; but it is left to modern ratiocination¹ to insist that, since there is only one God, therefore Paul and the god of this eon must be the Deity. Indeed, they do not say that Paul was; but some do say that God must be the god of this eon or else there would be more than one God!

Outside of the Bible we are more sane. Whatever is worshiped by a people is its god, whether it is Thor or Zeus, or even the many millions of gods of India. Yet who would contradict any statement to this effect on the

1. To think or argue logically, *Websters*.

However, we are just reading the proofs of the *German Keyword Concordance*, and though we really cannot spare the time to write an article just now, it has the matter all worked out for us. Let us see what it gives as a definition of God. We quote:

God (PLACER) corresponds to the Hebrew *Elohim*, literally the “Disposer,” God in reference to space and power, while Jehovah is God with reference to time. The One out of Whom, through Whom, and for Whom all is. His visible Image, Christ, is His revelation to the creation, through Whom He creates and carries out all. *Figuratively*, one who stands in God's stead or performs some of His functions, such as the judges in Israel, Satan as the object of worship in this eon, or Christ as His Image.

Figuratively – there's the rub! Yet the concordance goes further than this. It groups together all of the occurrences in which another than the real God is mentioned. A translation follows:

God as the designation for those who stand in place of God:

CHRIST: My Lord and My God (John 20:28), blessed for the eons (Romans 9:5), Thy throne (Hebrews 1:8), this is the true (I John 5:20).

OTHERS: you are gods (John 10:34, 35), make us (Acts 7:40), star of your god Raiphan (Acts 7:43),

ground that there is only one God? The Scriptures, as well as the common language of many peoples, apply the term to one God in *fact* and to many gods in *figure* – but nowhere is this so clearly done as in the Word of God. Like most figures it has led to untold misunderstanding, and still does. That is why we wish to clarify this, one of the simplest, yet one of the most notable figures in the whole range of revelation.

It is quite probable that the doctrine of the Trinity is due to a misunderstanding of this everyday figure. An *image* is regularly called by the name of that which it represents. In Rome, standing before a large statue, a tourist asked the guide, “Who is that?” The reply was “That is Jupiter.” Of course it wasn’t, for it was made of marble, but no one was bright enough to object.

Even a photograph is referred to in this way. “Who is that picture on the wall?” “Why, that is David, my grandson.” Yet he is many thousands of miles away. “Who is that on the postage stamp?” “That’s Washington.” So, in our everyday speech we constantly speak of an image as if it was the person himself.

Like Thomas of old, we exclaim in adoration when we think of Him Who was wounded for our sakes, “*my Lord and my God!*” We *worship Him*, just as if He was the Deity. His is the throne of God for the eons. We bless Him as *God* for the eons – but we do not deduce from this that He is the One Only Disposer, for He always insisted that That One was *His* God as well as ours. Nor do we seek to violate our sane sense by trying to make three one.

Here Christianity has descended into the realms of insanity and has produced a monstrosity which has neither revelation nor reason to support it.

Ultimately, all things are of God. Yet proximately many good things are through Christ, and many evil things are by way of the Adversary. When we insist that *Christ* is our Savior, we do not deny that salvation is sourced in God alone. When we declare that the Adversary (Hebrew, “Satan”) will deceive the nations at the close of the thousand years, we do not doubt that he is simply a tool of the Deity. He is not allowed to deceive them during the thousand years, but he “does” deceive them *now*, throughout this eon, and he succeeds in getting the worship of this eon, as is clear at its close. Hence he may well be called *the god of this eon*. Through him God blinds “*the minds of unbelievers, lest the illumination of the evangel of the glory of Christ, Who is the Image of God, should irradiate them*” (II Corinthians 4:4).

Should not this short study in figures of speech unfold to us the vast value of such an investigation? Everywhere are [apparent] inconsistencies, contradictions, conten-

tions and even the otherwise intelligent are snared by them. How easy is it for an unsympathetic critic to cast contempt and contumely on the head of one who uses figures of speech! He only needs to be in darkness himself and the words of the Bible will not escape the sting of his tongue. Yet we are not of this spirit. We are sure that the Scriptures are true, and no less certain that we are in error when we imagine that we see an inconsistency in the Sacred Text. Let God be true, and every man a liar!

To clear up the whole subject there is nothing we could write equal to Psalm 82. In it we have all of the gods there put into their proper places. The Deity is there, over all. Christ is there, subject to Him. The other gods are there and their place in this eon is made very clear. The main point we wish to press is this: *God Himself* calls them “gods.” He *Himself* addresses our Lord as “God.”

God judges those who represent Him, Who take His place in relation to His creatures, and He calls them “gods.” *Therefore there are many gods*. As this Psalm throws so much light upon this theme, we give a tentative concordant rendering here:

A Psalm. Asaphic.

*God is stationed in the congregation of Deity. Among the gods is He judging. “Till when are you judging with iniquity, and lifting up the faces of the wicked? Judge the poor and the orphan! The humble and the destitute justify! Escape let the poor and needy! From the hand of the wicked rescue them!” (They know not and they are not understanding. In darkness are they walking. Slipping are all the foundations of the earth). “I say, ‘gods are you, and sons of the Supreme are you all. Surely as Adam shall you die, and as one of the chiefs shall you fall.’ Rise, O God! Judge the earth, For **Thou** shalt be allotted all nations!”*

Here we have the One God, His Image, and the many gods, all assembled together. First we have the Deity. He takes the gods to task for their misjudgment of the earth in this eon, and then passes His judgment upon them. Notwithstanding our firm belief in monotheism, this passage compels us to believe in a kind of polytheism as well in this eon. Now the faces of the wicked are lifted up. The poor and the humble are not “judged.” It is clear that these gods do not understand, and are walking in darkness.

These are the world might of this darkness (Ephesians 6:12) with whom we come into conflict; but in the next eon they will be gone. Another God, our Lord Jesus Christ, will rise and judge the earth, and be allotted all the nations.

From all of these facts it should be clear to us that both “monotheism” and “polytheism” are true, one as to fact, the other as to figure. There is only one God, the Supreme Deity; yet He Himself has installed others to exercise some of His functions in regard to His creatures. He it is Who calls these gods, because of their playing that part in the drama of humanity. They exercise the power and receive the worship which is His due. All but One are failures. One is a success. The Adversary’s messengers are in power now. Christ will be the God of the coming eons.

In His judgment of the gods the Deity charges them with sin, and judges them accordingly. It is our privilege to do the same.

We charge *the god of this eon* with blinding the minds of unbelievers. In doing this we are merely following God’s example and the plain sense of Paul’s epistles. We are not unaware of the fact that the One Supreme God does this *through* these gods. We may be sure that God does not forget this when He judges them. We do not even forget this when we speak of the rule of Christ in the last eons. All is of God, yet He does it *through* His creatures, and He speaks of it as if they did it, and so must we, if we are to receive and believe His revelation, and be understood by His saints.

The *figure* lies in the use of the term “God.” Like so many other figures, it may be classified as an omission. Instead of saying “*Image of God*,” “*representatives of God*,” or something similar, the explanatory words are left out, just as we do so often when speaking of pictures or statues. The offices and functions of these “gods” are not “figurative” in the sense of unreal or fabulous. Their *name* is a figure, and it applies to them only when and inasmuch as they are found in the place of Deity. They are His tools, the hands, as it were, by means of which He works, or His perceptible expression by which our senses can perceive what He is.

If we wish to be absolutely “logical,” after we learn that all is of God, we should no longer speak of anyone doing anything. [That] I am not writing this is the only deduction possible in the sphere of “pure reason.” Every statement in the Scriptures which attributes any action to a creature must be false according to such unreasonable reasoning. We wish once more to warn against reasoning. It is most illogical and inconsistent when used by mortals. It is exceedingly mischievous when introduced into revelation. The basic fact that all is of God does not deny the further *facts* that He works through His creatures and that *He* attributes these acts to them and makes them answerable for them. Such a great revelation can be made the basis of insane reasoning as well as sound, and no one knows the boundary between these. The only safety is to abide by the words of God and *be-*

lieve, not reason. We plead with all who have learned the great truth of God’s Deity, not to segregate it and allow it to unbalance their minds, but to hold it in harmony with all of God’s revelation.

Again, figures are not logical premises for reasoning. All we need to do is to treat the statement that Christ is God as a fact, and reason loses its balance. Either there must be more than one God or something no one can understand, like a “Trinity.”

“Monotheism” is not possible. Reasoning has tried its best to deal with this problem and has utterly failed. The moment we treat the matter sensibly, and refuse to reason from a premise which in reality does not exist (for these “gods” are not the Deity, but only like Him), the confusion created by illogical ratiocination vanishes.

We fear that the extreme deductions made by the friends of this great truth may do more harm than the opposition of its enemies. It will lead to the absurdity which may be expressed in the high-pointed language of the street, “Nobody don’t do nothing,” which, though it contains one vital truth, denies another. It is through His creatures that God is working and will work until they come to the realization of their own creature-hood and His supremacy. They must be made to fail so that they consciously repudiate themselves and realize that God is All.

I plead with my brethren, who have a glimpse of the Deity of God, not to make deductions from it contrary to revelation. God, Who made all, also made the Scriptures, and He understands the subject well enough not to be mistaken about who the actor in any given situation is.

Occasionally He tells us of His part. Now we know that these were not exceptions, but examples; but He did not revise the record to conform. Joseph’s *brethren* sold him. That is God’s *revelation* to us, so that we may learn to love Him. That He did it Himself is another revelation *which does not conflict with the former, but amplifies it*. The whole story is an enigma, but becomes clear, not contradicted, when we know the real power behind it all. So with this figure. Christ is God in order to show us His beneficence. The other gods reveal to us His wisdom and power. They do not “prove” polytheism but the opposite. Christ is God, another is the god of this eon; but they both do, or will, recognize the One and Only God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

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JESUS CHRIST (continued from page 2944)

Corinthians 12:10), because thereby we are “made partakers of Christ’s sufferings” (I Peter 4:13), that ultimately we may be partakers of the glory that shall be revealed (Romans 8:18). Suffering with Christ is a part of our calling:

for even hereunto were ye called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example that we should follow in His steps (I Peter 2:21).

Again, Paul says,

Unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake (Philippians 1:29).

Thus it is our privilege, a gift of God, to share with Christ in His humiliation and afflictions; and if we thus share with Him, we shall also share in His honor and glory and to as full an extent as Christ Himself (II Timothy 2:12). Though this may seem almost too much to say, yet it is no more than is fully warranted by plain Scripture.

Christ and believers are perfected by suffering (Hebrews 2:10; I Peter 5:10). Both are appointed to the same destiny.

Is Jesus the “Son of God”? Believers are also sons; Jesus is “the first born among many brethren” (Romans 8:29) – one among

“many sons” (Hebrews 2:10; cf. John 1:12; Romans 8:14).

Is Jesus the “heir of God”? Believers are “joint heirs” with Him (Romans 8:17; Galatians 4:7).

Does there dwell in Christ all of the “fullness of the Godhead bodily” (Colossians 2:9)? Believers are to be “filled with all the fullness of God” (Ephesians 3:19).

Whatever He is, or may be, we also must be, are, and shall be. Oh! how near this great truth brings Christ to the believer! He is our elder Brother, sharing with us and we with Him in all of the experiences of fallen man, and still mutually sharing in all of the exaltation and glory of “the perfect man” (Ephesians 4:13).

He is “the image of the invisible God” (Colossians 1:15), and,

We all with open faces beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the spirit of the Lord (II Corinthians 3:18).

For,

As we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly (I Corinthians 15:49). ■



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