

## Seeing the Father and Son but Missing the Fullness of the Spirit with Our Spirit

*The Trinity in the Book of Revelation: Seeing Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in John's Apocalypse*, by Brandon D. Smith. InterVarsity Press Academic, 2022.

Academic theology suffers from a post-Enlightenment segregation of scholars and scholarship into tightly siloed disciplines (e.g., biblical studies, theology, ethics, history) and granular sub-disciplines (e.g., Pauline or Johannine studies, systematic or pastoral theology), each of which possesses unique methodological constraints and strictly defined research questions concretized by decades of ongoing (and unending) debates. The results of this artificial compartmentalization are profound. Pauline scholars may spend their careers entirely disengaged from Johannine texts; biblical specialists devote lifetimes to grammatical complexities without tying Scripture to broader questions of salvation or the church; systematic theologians may reflexively quote Barth or Pannenberg but struggle to recall Isaiah or Ephesians; and most distressingly, the grand narrative of the Bible, God's economy, is obscured, fragmented, and detethered from the practical, subjective experience of believers.

Though not primarily proffered as a remedy to such ills, Brandon D. Smith, Assistant Professor of Theology and New Testament at Cedarville University, bridges the gap between disciplines in his revised doctoral dissertation *The Trinity in the Book of Revelation: Seeing Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in John's Apocalypse* (hereafter, *Trinity*). In *Trinity*, Smith draws together historical, theological, and exegetical tools to both discover the Triune God through close readings of Revelation and utilize the Divine Trinity<sup>1</sup> as a hermeneutical lens to engage the book's perplexing passages (2-4).<sup>2</sup> Important to the latter endeavor, he suggests that "a trinitarian reading of Revelation brings clarity and coherence to a book full of diverse and disparate language, symbols, and scenes," illumines the "stark theocentric character of Revelation," and demonstrates that for John, the Father is "the source of divine activity," the Father's purposes are "concentrated upon" and "consummated in Christ," and the Spirit is "elevated above a mere angelic or impersonal agent of God" (4). Overall, *Trinity* contains praiseworthy elements. Against readings of Revelation that emphasize beasts, earthquakes, and brimstone, *Trinity* narrows his

analysis to what Revelation reveals about the Triune God and, even more, devotes over a third of his volume to what it reveals about Christ. This latter emphasis is apropos, given that John introduces his book as the "revelation" (Rev. 1:1) and "testimony of Jesus Christ" (v. 2). Additionally, *Trinity's* portrayals of the ontological equality of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit in Their divine nature, the ordered processions of the Divine Trinity in the divine economy, and the inseparability of the economical operations of the Triune God—that is, that the three of the Trinity "always act with one singular will, power, and authority as the one God" (20)—are to be commended without reservation. Moreover, *Trinity* astutely identifies the organic nature of the Triune God, noting the "life-giving nature" of the Father and the Son alongside the "life-giving role" of the Spirit (160). However, *Trinity's* portrayal of the Spirit as revealed in Revelation warrants measured critique for three reasons: (1) lacks clarity regarding the intrinsic significance of the Spirit's economical identity as "the seven Spirits"; (2) overlooks the significance of the resequencing of the Divine Trinity in Revelation 1:4-5; and (3) mistakes the mingled spirit for the Holy Spirit when interpreting the phrase *in the Spirit* (1:10; 4:2; 17:3; 21:10).

### An Overview

*Trinity* comprises five chapters. Chapter 1 opens with discussion of two scholarly debates, which form a backdrop for Smith's project. The first pertains to the oft-discussed high/low Christology spectrum—that is, whether the Scriptures portray Christ as "in some sense divine, exalted, and/or worthy of worship alongside Israel's God" or "a mere man, subordinated agent, and/or vicegerent of Israel's God" (7-8). While near ubiquitous in past biblical scholarship, *Trinity* notes that recent investigations, especially those pertaining to Revelation, focus upon "Jesus' relationship to intermediary figures, divine identity, the nature of monotheism, and the devotional practices of the early church" (8). The second debate moves in a similar direction—that is, whether Revelation portrays the Spirit as God or "an angel or some other type of divine agent" (11).

*Trinity* also delineates "tools that have been used in both trinitarian theology and biblical interpretation" to illumine the methodological assumptions informing the "trinitarian reading of Revelation" (7). Though space disallows rehearsal of this discussion, it is helpful to note that *Trinity* builds upon: (1) David Yeago, who proposes that creedal language such as *Trinity* can be biblical even if not employed

within the Scriptures; (2) Brevard Childs, who argues that the Scriptures “coerce” readers into theological readings, as opposed to purely historical-critical or reader-response approaches; (3) Wesley Hill, who notes that a low/high Christology framework fails to capture the complex relations between the Father, the Son, and the Spirit articulated in the Scriptures; (4) Lewis Ayres, who posits a “pro-Nicene” trinitarian outlook in fourth-century Christian theology; and (5) the patristic concept of redoublement, which contends that interpreters must “talk about God ‘twice over’ in biblical texts”—once to determine what the Divine Trinity shares in common (divine nature) and once more to identify what distinguishes the Father, the Son, and the Spirit from one another (processions/missions) (10-18, 20). Upon this scaffolding, *Trinity* proposes that a “pro-Nicene toolkit” comprising the trinitarian judgments of the councils of Nicaea through Constantinople may be employed as a hermeneutic for Revelation (19-21). *Trinity* further argues that close readings of passages are also necessary, as they demonstrate that a trinitarian reading is not an imposition upon the text—rather, the text itself prompts readers to “consider the trinitarian dynamics of the book” (25). *Trinity* concludes by proposing that a “theological-canonical approach” is needed to interpret Revelation—theological as it employs a trinitarian lens and canonical because it allows for a unified reading of the Scriptures, including intertextual analysis with the Old Testament (26-29).

In chapter 2 *Trinity* proposes that John describes God the Father in two ways: in His “(1) fatherhood with respect to Jesus Christ, and (2) enthronement in the heavenly realms that reveals both transcendence (exalted in glory) and immanence (interacting with people via the seer)” (37). *Trinity* thereafter traces the trajectory of these dual-themes in patristic theology from Origen through Arius and Athanasius to illumine the outlooks preceding what the author suggests are two core “pro-Nicene” commitments: (1) the Father is *homoousios* with the Son and (2) the concept of eternal relations, where “the Father is unbegotten, the Son is begotten, and the Spirit proceeds” (46). Both outlooks form the backdrop of his analysis of Revelation 1:1-8; 4:1-11; and 11:15-19. Though *Trinity* devotes significant space to detailing grammatical features and scholarly contentions, his key conclusions are: (1) the designation of the Father as Him “who is and who was and who is coming” in 1:4 is used again for the Son in 1:8, indicating that both share the same nature (55); (2) there is an “ordered relationship” between the Father and the Son “in the *taxis* and economic mission,” whereby the Father initiates the revelation, sits “on ‘his’ throne,” has salvific activity flowing from His throne, receives worship, and is identified as the “eternal creator and sustainer of history” (68); and (3) John’s portrayal of the Divine Trinity in these passages “mirrors the logic employed by the patristics,” where “the Father and Son’s nature and actions are an indication of one divine substance (*homoousios*) and yet personal distinctions (*hypostases*)” (67-68).

Chapter 3 is divided into three major sections. The first rehearses key scholarship surrounding “the definition and scope of divinity in the first century” within Jewish and Greco-Roman contexts (70), especially as it relates to whether Jesus’ divinity is merely angelic, the result of deification, or ontological, true divinity (71-76). The second section traces developments in patristic Christology leading up to the Constantinopolitan Creed of 381. This discussion contains rich historical data, but it suffices to offer *Trinity*’s summary of “pro-Nicene trinitarian grammar” in respect to Christology (76):

God the Son is fully divine and thus singular in will, power, and authority with the Father and the Spirit. He is eternally begotten of and sent by the Father (Jn 3:16; 7:28-29; 20:21) and with the Father created all things before his incarnation (Jn 1:1-3; Heb 1:10-12). Though there is no ontological or relational authority in the nature of the Trinity (*ad intra*), the Son *in the mission of his incarnation* is the securer of redemption and obedient to the Father according to his human nature and will (*ad extra*) (e.g., Phil 2:5-11). So, within the *taxis*, he is begotten and eternally generated from the Father, and the Holy Spirit proceeds or spirates from the Father. (77)

The final section of the chapter employs this pro-Nicene lens to interpret multiple passages that speak about the Son: Revelation 1:1-8, 9-20; 2:18; 3:1-6, 7, 14; 5:1-14; 6:15-17; 14:1-5; 17:14; 19:11-16; 20:6; and 22:12-13. Lucidly written and deftly argued, this is the most successful portion of the volume, persuasively dispelling modern attempts to soften or eliminate the clear articulation of Christ’s divinity in Revelation. Highlights of *Trinity*’s arguments include: (1) Jesus appearing as the embodied voice of God in 1:9-20; this is employed by John “as a building block for Jesus as having the same nature of YHWH with the culmination being his throne-sharing with the Father in Revelation 4—5” (100). (2) In 3:1-6 Christ possesses the “same right and ability as God to eternally judge and to send the Spirit by virtue of his divine nature” (108). (3) The Son receives the same worship from every being in creation in 5:1-14, entailing that He cannot be a mere angel but, rather, shares the same nature as the Father and yet, by being distinguishable from the Father, maintains hypostatic distinction (113-114). (4) Jesus is the only One worthy to open the scroll in 5:7 and thereafter receives glory for doing so in verse 12, further solidifying His divine identity (119). (5) The 144,000 in 14:1-5 have the names of both God and the Lamb on their foreheads, indicating Their shared nature and worthiness of worship (125-127). (6) In 20:6, a likely reference to Exodus 19:6, Jesus is a recipient of priestly activity, which in the Old Testament relates “only to YHWH’s relationship with his people” (134-135). In sum, *Trinity* concludes that “Jesus does not merely act on behalf of God; rather, it is clear that he is of the same divine substance by virtue of his reception

of worship and his exercise of divine prerogatives,” such as “sitting on the throne, receiving worship, ruling over creation, and dispensing the Spirit” (137).

Chapter 4 follows the same pattern: initially tracing patristic conceptions of the Spirit and thereafter employing a pro-Nicene pneumatology to engage multiple passages such as Revelation 1:4-5; 1:10-11; and 2:1—3:22. This chapter contains three high points. First, *Trinity* recognizes and affirms the “life-giving role” of the Spirit, which it suggests matches the “life-giving nature” of the Father and the Son (160). Second, when examining 1:4-5, *Trinity* devotes significant space to discounting alternative conceptions of the seven Spirits as angels or non-divine intermediaries, demonstrating that the seven Spirits, both due to Their placement in a “triadic doxology” and Their reception of worship—the latter of which is explicitly disallowed for angels in Revelation (164-165)—possess “the same divine nature” and exercise “the same divine power, authority, and will” as do the Father and the Son (172). Third, *Trinity* notes that in 2:1—3:22 the Spirit’s speaking to the churches is co-delivered with the Son and spoken as “one voice,” further strengthening the case for the Spirit’s divine nature (170-171).

In chapter 5 *Trinity* recapitulates insights from foregoing chapters to outline a constructive account of the Trinity in Revelation. In brief, the argument is that while John’s trinitarianism is incipient compared to formalized pro-Nicene articulations, the aggregate of textual data in Revelation renders a portrayal of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit as ontologically equal insofar as They possess the same divine nature, hypostatically distinct insofar as They carry out different economic operations, and indivisible insofar as Their operations are inseparable (175-177). Thereafter, he discusses contributions that his project makes both to the academy and the church, such as: (1) broadening trinitarian theology to incorporate data from Revelation, which offers a depiction of the heavenly throne not found elsewhere in the New Testament, the fullest portrayal of Christ as the Lamb of God in the Scriptures, and a keener understanding of the Spirit’s economic operation (187-190); (2) affirming that the Bible “is to be read and received within the community of faith” and, by extension, legitimizing the use of reception history within biblical interpretation (191-192); (3) refocusing eschatology upon the Triune God’s activity as opposed to “some modern obsessions with end-times predictions” (192); and (4) confirming that the Bible is best read in a canonical, as opposed to fragmentary, fashion, where intertextual interpretation across Epistles and Testaments is both appropriate and necessary (192-193).

### The Economical Trinity in Revelation 1: the Seven Spirits of God<sup>3</sup>

The New Testament reveals that God is triune both in His essence and in His economy. While these two aspects of the Triune God may be new for some readers, Witness Lee lucidly articulates the distinction:

In the essential Trinity, the Father, the Son, and the Spirit coexist and coinhere at the same time and in the same way with no succession. There is no first, second, or third. However, in God’s plan, in God’s administrative arrangement, in God’s economy, the Father takes the first step, the Son takes the second step, and the Spirit takes the third step. The Father planned, the Son accomplished, and the Spirit applies what the Son accomplished according to the Father’s plan...The essential Trinity refers to the essence of the Triune God for His existence; the economical Trinity refers to His plan for His move. (*Elders’ Training, Book 3* 67)

In Matthew 28:19, which speaks of the essential Trinity, the Triune God is presented in a simple way, as the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. Lee notes that “the book of Revelation, however, does not touch the existence of the Trinity but the economy of the Trinity” (*God’s New Testament Economy* 212). And indeed, we find a complicated portrayal of the economic Trinity in Revelation 1:4-7:

Grace to you and peace from Him who is and who was and who is coming, and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne, and from Jesus Christ, the faithful Witness, the Firstborn of the dead, and the Ruler of the kings of the earth. To Him who loves us and has released us from our sins by His blood and made us a kingdom, priests to His God and Father, to Him be the glory and the might forever and ever. Amen. Behold, He comes with the clouds, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him; and all the tribes of the land will mourn over Him. Yes, amen.

John’s use of modifiers in this passage illumines key economic activities, processes, and identities of the three of the Divine Trinity, all of which are inextricably tied to the carrying out of the divine economy. Although Smith admirably discusses each of the economical modifiers of the Father (*Trinity* 49-55), the Son (93-96), and the Spirit (151-165)—inclusive of using them to affirm the absolute divinity of both Christ and the Spirit—he lacks clarity concerning the intrinsic significance of the Spirit’s title as *the seven Spirits* and overlooks the significance of the passage’s resequencing of the economic Trinity.

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*Trinity* follows Gregory of Nyssa when interpreting “the seven Spirits” as referencing to “the perfection or completion of God’s work...to bring all of creation to its perfected culmination” (165). This outlook aligns with a host of scholars (e.g., Henry Alford, Richard Bauckham, Richard Trench) who affirm that the number seven in the Bible represents completion; it even, in a meaningful sense, advances beyond them, as the number seven does not merely represent completion in a general sense but specifically pertains to completion in God’s move, that is, His economy.<sup>4</sup> There is, however, another aspect of how seven relates to completion in God’s economy and, in fact, makes completion possible—that is, the aspect of intensification. Per Ron Kangas,

two instances of sevenfold intensification can be seen in Daniel 3 and in Isaiah 30. When Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego refused to worship the gold image which Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up, he threatened to cast them into a blazing furnace of fire (Dan. 3:13-18). After they persisted in their refusal, he “responded and commanded that the furnace be made seven times hotter than it was usually heated” (v. 19). This was an intensification, even a sevenfold intensification, of the heat. Isaiah 30:26 says, “The light of the moon will be as the light of the sun, / And the light of the sun will be sevenfold, like the light of seven days.” Here we have another intensification—the sevenfold intensification of the light of the sun. These two instances indicate that in the Bible the number seven may signify not only completion but also intensification. (*Seven Spirits* 15-16)

**D**rawing these insights together, we may assert that the fullest interpretation of “the seven Spirits” refers to the sevenfold *intensification* of the Spirit for the completion of God’s move. Thus, the Spirit today is the life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45b) dispensing sevenfold intensified life; the Spirit of reality (John 14:17) infusing sevenfold intensified reality; the Spirit of power (Luke 24:49) transfusing sevenfold intensified power; and the Spirit of glory (1 Pet. 4:14) manifesting sevenfold intensified glory. While *Trinity* advances beyond many interpretations of the seven Spirits, even tying the notion of “completion” or “perfection” to God’s work, it lacks clarity regarding the intensified function of the seven Spirits. This fulsome interpretation of “the seven Spirits,” however, may raise a question for some readers: why did the Spirit need to be intensified?

Per Lee, “the goal of God’s economy is to have the church, which is the corporate expression of God” (*Conclusion* 163). The church had a glorious beginning on the day of Pentecost. The believers met daily from house to house (Acts 2:46), and “the heart and soul of the multitude of those who had believed was one; and not even one said that any of his possessions was his own, but all things were common to them” (4:32). However, degradation quickly followed. Many negative elements infiltrated the church, beginning

with deception inspired by Satan (5:3) and continuing with divisions (1 Cor. 1:10), immorality (5:1-13), abuse of spiritual gifts (14:2, 6-23), heresy (15:12), other gospels (Gal. 1:7), culture (Col. 2:16, 20-21), and philosophy (vv. 8, 18). The result of these and many other negative elements is the situation that we observe in Revelation: five of seven localities are rebuked for issues ranging from the loss of their first love (2:4) to upholding the deep things of Satan (v. 24), from being spiritually dead (3:1) to being “wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked” (v. 17).<sup>5</sup> In response to this dark and degraded situation, the Triune God, in His infinite wisdom and for the sake of His eternal economy, intensified His Spirit sevenfold.

**T**his intensified function of the sevenfold Spirit is paramount for the accomplishment of God’s economy, and it is for this reason that “in Revelation 1:4-5 the seven Spirits become the second,” that is, “the center, of the Divine Trinity” (Kangas, *Divine Trinity* 42). As noted, *Trinity* fails to comment upon this resequencing. It is perhaps due to this oversight that *Trinity* neglects several of the Spirit’s crucial economical activities. Specifically, the sevenfold intensified Spirit (1) directs the world situation by burning before the throne and by going forth to all the earth (4:5; 5:6); (2) burns, enlightens, exposes, judges, purifies, and refines the believers as the seven lamps (4:5); (3) observes and searches God’s people as the seven eyes of Christ so that Christ’s essence, riches, and burden for God’s building might be infused into them (Zech. 3:9; 4:6; Rev. 1:14; 5:6); (4) fills the churches, which are the golden lampstands, so that they might fully express the Triune God (1:12, 20; cf. Zech. 4:12); and (5) speaks to the churches and operates within the believers to produce them as overcomers for the building up of the Body of Christ, God’s corporate expression in this age, which consummates in the New Jerusalem (Rev. 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22).<sup>6</sup> However, after addressing the rationale for the Spirit’s sevenfold intensification, a final question remains: how do the seven Spirits produce God’s corporate expression, the goal of the divine economy?

### The Key to God’s Economy: the Mingled Spirit<sup>7</sup>

*Trinity*’s analysis of Revelation 1:10-11—which extends and relates to 4:2; 17:3; and 21:10—interprets the phrase *in the Spirit* as referring exclusively to the Spirit of God. *Trinity* states,

John’s pneumatology bears a family resemblance to the Jewish traditions of the OT, Qumran texts, Philo, Josephus, Enoch, Ezra, and even the Greek poet Hesiod that speak of God’s Spirit or the spirit as an inculcator of divine wisdom, visions, and oracles. Further, the activity of the Spirit bringing John into the divine presence reminds us in particular of the Cappadocians’ explication of inseparable operations, wherein the Spirit’s work brings the Father and

Son's work to completion and perfection...For John, being "in the Spirit" during his visionary journey meant he was receiving divine revelation and being brought into divine presence in the same way as his cultural and spiritual ancestors; however, the placement of the Spirit in the location of the throne and not merely *around* the throne with other creatures is a notable distinction that pressures us to consider the divine nature and activity of the Spirit. (169)

While perhaps noble in his intent, insofar as his interpretation is borne out of a desire to unearth the maximum amount of textual data to affirm the Spirit's divinity, *Trinity* errs in drawing too close of a relationship between John's use of *in the Spirit* and the phrase's usage by John's "cultural and spiritual ancestors." By positing static continuity between the Spirit in the Old Testament and the Spirit in the New Testament (without commenting upon the legitimacy of assuming continuity with extrabiblical referents), *Trinity* overlooks the profundity of the Spirit's first action in the Gospels—that is, the Holy Spirit's conceiving the "holy thing" in the womb of a virgin (Luke 1:35; cf. Matt. 1:18, 20) or, stated otherwise, God's first step in His New Testament economy of joining Himself to humanity.

The Triune God stretched forth the heavens, laid the foundations of the earth, and formed the spirit of man within him (Zech. 12:1). This spirit (Prov. 20:27), produced by God's "breath of life" (Gen. 2:7), is neither the Spirit of God nor the life of God—though it is closely related to both. In a meaningful sense the human spirit may be considered as the center of the universe and the focal point of God's economy, as it is the means by which humankind can contact, worship, receive, contain, and express God. Due to the failure of humankind in the garden of Eden, however, their spirit was deadened (Eph. 2:1), and they became dead in their offenses and sins (v. 1; Col. 2:13). Thus, it was necessary for the immutable Triune God to become the processed God, that is, the God who passed through the processes of incarnation, human living, and crucifixion to become the perfect sacrifice for the sin of all humankind (John 1:29).<sup>8</sup> Even more glorious than the efficacious purification of sins accomplished on the cross, however, was Christ's resurrection to become the life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45b), even the seven Spirits (Rev. 1:4; 4:5; 5:6), so that He might dispense Himself into human beings in an intensified way to be their life, life supply, and everything. By virtue of these processes, the Triune God can now dispense Himself into man's spirit and, by doing so, fulfill His heart's desire to be mingled with humankind and become one with humankind.

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Apart from the Old Testament, the New Testament clearly reveals both the Spirit of God and the spirit of man (Rom. 8:16; 1 Cor. 2:11; John 3:6). Further, it reveals an intimate relationship between the two. When discussing regeneration, Jesus said, "That which is born of the Spirit is spirit" (v. 6), and when describing the inner sense that believers are children of God, Paul declares that "the Spirit Himself witnesses with our spirit" (Rom. 8:16). Yet the most intimate relationship between the Spirit and the human spirit is found in 1 Corinthians 6:17: "He who is joined to the Lord is one spirit." This verse particularly speaks of a mysterious, amazing, and inexhaustible truth. No longer are there two separate entities, the Spirit *and* the human spirit. Now the Spirit is in the human spirit, the Spirit is with the human spirit, the Spirit and the human spirit have truly and really become one spirit—that is, the mingled spirit.

*Trinity's* misinterpretation of Revelation 1:10-11, though perhaps not unreasonable given the nearly ubiquitous rendering of the verse as referring to the Spirit of God in English translations,<sup>9</sup> distorts the portrayal of the divine economy in the book of Revelation and its applicability to believers today. It is not by the Spirit of God alone, as it was for the Old Testament prophets, that John saw visions of the churches (chs. 2–3), the destiny of the world (chs. 4–16), Babylon the Great (chs. 17–20), and the New Jerusalem (chs. 21–22). Rather, it was by contacting the Spirit in his spirit, that is, his mingled spirit, that John both saw these visions and subjectively received them as "the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1:1). Today believers must similarly be in their mingled spirit to see and receive the revelation of the mystery of Christ (Eph. 3:3-5). Moreover, for the accomplishment of God's economy believers must continually contact the Spirit in their mingled spirit so that they can receive the dispensing of the Divine Trinity, which progressively unites, mingles, and incorporates them with the Triune God for the producing of the Body of Christ consummating in the New Jerusalem (Rev. 21:2), the eternal, corporate expression of God. This is the goal of God's economy, this is the reason for the processes undergone by the economical Trinity, and this is John's expansive revelation of "the Trinity in the book of Revelation."

## Conclusion

*Trinity* admirably bridges the artificial siloing of disciplines in the modern guild and advances a trinitarian interpretation of Revelation that stands apart from other offerings in the academy. In terms of what *Trinity* aims to accomplish—describing the trinitarian contours of Revelation, demonstrating

the utility of a trinitarian hermeneutic, defending the absolute divinity of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit—it is broadly successful. Additionally, *Trinity* rightly affirms the organic nature of the Triune God and relates “the seven Spirits” to the completion and perfection of God’s economic activities. There are three issues related to the understanding of the Spirit, however, that warrant measured critique. The first two, *Trinity*’s opaqueness concerning what the *the seven Spirits* fully entails and the neglect to note the resequencing of the Divine Trinity in 1:4-7, lead *Trinity* to neglect the Spirit’s crucial economic role in Revelation. The third, is mistaking the mingled spirit for the Holy Spirit in 1:10-11, results in a distorted portrayal of the divine economy. To be sure, these critiques are not meant to detract from the volume’s otherwise valuable contribution to biblical studies, systematic theology, and the growing body of interdisciplinary work drawing from both spheres of inquiry.

by Michael Reardon

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>Though many Christians use *Triune God* and *Divine Trinity* interchangeably, there exists a subtle but important distinction. Per Witness Lee, “*The Triune God* refers mainly to God Himself, and *the Divine Trinity* refers mainly to God’s being triune, which is the main attribute of the Godhead” (*Elders’ Training, Book 3* 70). While both terms are used in this review, it is more appropriate to say that *Trinity* is discovering the Triune God, God the person, through a close reading of Revelation and using the Divine Trinity, the main attribute of the Godhead, as a hermeneutic to interpret difficult texts in Revelation.

<sup>2</sup>The notion that the Divine Trinity might serve as an apt hermeneutic of the Bible has been previously discussed in *Affirmation & Critique* by Kerry S. Robichaux in an article entitled “A Prolegomenon to a Hermeneutic of the Bible according to the Intrinsic Being of God.” Here, Robichaux contends that God as Father, Son, and Spirit unveils three “key pillars in our hermeneutic of the Bible”: (1) the Triune God is a God of life, expressed both in the organic relationship between the Father and Son and the identity of the Spirit as the Spirit of life between the Father and Son, and thus, “our hermeneutic of the Bible must above all respect this organic aspect of God’s existence”; (2) the Triune God is a God of love, expressed intimately between the Father and the Son, with the Spirit identified by Augustine and Aquinas as the love between Them, and thus, a biblical hermeneutic must “respect the fact that God is love and that all His actions are drawn from His being love”; and (3) the Father, the Son, and the Spirit are an “incorporation,” meaning that They “mutually coinhere and mutually indwell one another,” and thus, a biblical hermeneutic must “respect the incorporate existence of God,” whereby every operation of God is the simultaneous act of all three of the Trinity (13). *Trinity* employs, knowingly or not, aspects of Robichaux’s hermeneutical pillars when underscoring the “life-giving nature”

of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit (*Trinity* 160) and affirming the “inseparable operations” of the Trinity (20). Readers would thus profit from Robichaux’s succinct and lucid discussion of “a hermeneutic of the Bible according to the intrinsic being of God” (12)—both in “Prolegomenon” and in his earlier essay, “Axioms of the Trinity” (*Affirmation & Critique*, vol. 1, no. 1, Jan. 1996, pp. 6-11).

<sup>3</sup>As space disallows adequate discussion of the economical Trinity in Revelation and, more specifically, the seven Spirits, readers are invited to read two publications by Ron Kangas: a 2017 article entitled “The Divine Trinity in Revelation I” (*Affirmation & Critique*, vol. 22, no. 1, Spring 2017, pp. 33-44) and a 1996 *Affirmation & Critique* monograph entitled *The Seven Spirits of God*. This section is heavily dependent upon both resources.

<sup>4</sup>This is evident when considering the various “sevens” in the Bible. For example, the entire Bible is divided into the seven dispensations of God’s administration: (1) innocence (Gen. 1:26; 2:16-17; 3:6, 22-24), (2) conscience (vv. 7, 22; 6:5, 11-12; 7:11-12, 23), (3) human government (9:6; 11:1-8), (4) promise (12:1-3; 13:14-17; 15:5-6; 26:3-4; 28:12-15; Gal. 3:16), (5) law (Exo. 19:1-8; 2 Kings 17:1-18; 25:1-24; Ezra 6:16-22; 7:10; Acts 2:22-23; Luke 16:16; Rom. 3:19-20; Gal. 3:19); (6) grace (Rom. 3:21, 24; 8:3; 10:4-13; Gal. 3:17, 22-25; Eph. 2:8-9, 15; Heb. 9:26, 28), and (7) kingdom (Isa. 2:1-4; 11:1-10; 61:6; 65:18-25; Zech. 8:20-23; Matt. 17:11; 19:28; Acts 3:21; Rev. 20:1-6). Other examples include: the seven days of creation in Genesis (cf. 1:5, 8, 31); the land of Israel’s seventy years of desolation (seven times ten) (2 Chron. 36:21; cf. Jer. 25:11; Dan. 9:2); and, specifically in Revelation, the seven lampstands as the seven churches (1:12, 20), the seven stars (vv. 16, 20; 3:1), the seven seals pertaining to the earth’s destiny (4:2-3; 5:1-7; 6:1-17; 8:1-2), the seven trumpets of the earth’s tribulations (8:1—9:21; 10:7; 11:15-18), and the seven bowls of God’s wrath being outpoured upon the earth (15:7; 16:1; 17:1; 21:9). For further discussion, see Kangas’s *Seven Spirits*, pp. 14-15.

<sup>5</sup>It is important to note that the seven churches in Revelation possess a twofold significance. On one hand, they refer to seven localities in the first century to whom John was directly writing. On the other hand, they typologically refer to the progress of the church in seven stages. Importantly, the Lord does not mention His coming back to the first three churches. Yet to the last four (Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, Laodicea) He explicitly mentions His return. Thus, these four churches, and specifically the stages they typify (apostasy, deadness, recovery, lukewarmness/Christlessness), will exist until the Lord’s return. For further study, readers are invited to read the Fall 2019 issue of *Affirmation & Critique*, as it is devoted to the topic “The Seven Churches in Revelation.”

<sup>6</sup>*Trinity* engages surface-level discussion of some of these items. He acknowledges that the seven Spirits are the seven lamps (Rev. 4:5), the seven eyes of the Lamb (5:6) (157) and additionally, that the Spirit speaks to the churches (169-171). These points, however, are significant to *Trinity* because they advance the claim that the Spirit is God. The central role of the seven Spirits in God’s

economy, as signaled by the resequencing of the Divine Trinity in Revelation 1:4-5, is unfortunately neglected by *Trinity* in any discussion of the Spirit's identity and activities.

<sup>7</sup>For a fuller treatment of the mingled spirit, see the 1997 article by John Pester entitled "The Mingled Spirit" (*Affirmation & Critique*, vol. 2, no. 4, Oct. 1997, pp. 39-46) as well as the October 2006 issue of *Affirmation & Critique* (vol. 11, no. 2). This section draws from both resources.

<sup>8</sup>To be clear, the Triune God in His essential nature forever remains immutable, self-existent, and ever-existent. Yet in His economy He has been processed to be united, mingled, and incorporated with the believers, the many sons of God, to produce the church as the Body of Christ consummating in the New Jerusalem, His corporate expression, the goal of His divine economy.

<sup>9</sup>The NIV, ASV, ESV, KJV, NASB, HCSB, and most other English translations render 1:10 as "in the Spirit." The Recovery Version, however, rightly renders the phrase as "in spirit."

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## Finding the Central Theme in Paul's Writings

*Resurrection and Redemption: A Study in Paul's Soteriology*, by Richard B. Gaffin, Jr., P & R, 1987.

In *Resurrection and Redemption: A Study in Paul's Soteriology* (hereafter *Resurrection*), Richard B. Gaffin, Jr., addresses the question of what the central theme in the compendium of Paul's writings is. Gaffin's approach is

welcome, accurate, and worthy of affirmation and recommendation. Gaffin begins by acknowledging and challenging the first version of a central theme in Paul's writings—the Reformed teaching of atonement for sin through the death of Christ—as being too limited. Gaffin then expands this Reformed teaching to include the organic connection between a redeemed believer and the resurrected Christ. The resurrection forms the core of *Resurrection's* presentation of the enlargement of the Reformed teaching. This enlargement fills most of the subsequent content of *Resurrection*, especially Part Two: "The Resurrection of Christ in Paul's Soteriology: The Central Theme and Basic Structure" (3). Part Two includes two chapters: "The Resurrection of Christ and the Future Resurrection of Believers" and "The Resurrection of Christ and the Past Resurrection of the Believer" (3). Part Two is preceded by Part One—"Methodological Considerations"—which lays forth the principal methodological consideration that should govern any interpretive expansion of a central theme—the interpretation of Scripture with Scripture. If *Resurrection*

considered this principle in a deeper examination of Pauline text, especially Ephesians and Colossians, it could have shown that there is yet a third and even consummate understanding of the theme of Pauline writing—the central theme of the economy of God. There is a lack of discussion related to the economy of God; however, this is not a justification for criticism, because such a discussion is be-

yond the scope of *Resurrection's* focus—resurrection and redemption.

## The Proper Methodological Approach to Biblical Interpretation

In determining whether a theological interpretation is valid, one interpretive practice must be employed and honored—the interpretation of Scripture can be based only on other scriptural texts. This is akin to saying that only the Bible can be used to interpret the Bible. *Resurrection* acknowledges this, saying, "With the interpretation of Scripture...the text by virtue of its divine origin is self-interpreting" (30). *Self-interpreting* implies at least three additional responsibilities that a proper interpreter must practice: (1) All the divinely inspired text in the Word of God must ultimately conform with all other scriptural texts, no matter how seemingly incongruent or contradictory. "Open my eyes that I may see / Glimpses of truth Thou hast for me; / Place in my hands the wonderful key / That shall unclasp and set me free" (Scott, stanza 1). (2) No singular text can be the basis for a private interpretation (2 Pet. 1:20). "Open my ears that I may hear / Voices of truth Thou sendest clear; / And

REFORMED THEOLOGY IS SHORT IN ITS ARTICULATION OF A MORE COMPREHENSIVE CENTRAL THEME. AN UPGRADED VERSION THAT INCLUDES THE RESURRECTION IS NEEDED AND CLEARLY PRESENTED IN *RESURRECTION*.

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while the wave notes fall on my ear, / Everything false will disappear” (Stanza 2). (3) Interpreters cannot ignore verses that challenge their interpretations but must receive them as the speaking of the Lord, not hardening their hearts (Heb. 3:7-8): “Open my mind that I may read / More of Thy love in word and deed; / What shall I fear while yet Thou dost lead? / Only for light from Thee I plead” (Stanza 4).

**I**n principle, the entire and extensive body of interpretive teaching in the Reformed tradition willfully, blithely, and even stubbornly transgresses point 3 above by refusing to acknowledge that the works of those in the Reformed tradition, like the works in the church in Sardis, have not been “completed before My God” (Rev. 3:2). Similarly, the theme of redemption and resurrection also fails to follow the principle in point 3 above, although not knowingly or willingly. Rather, this shortage is related to a lack of a full knowledge of God’s will: “Therefore we also, since the day we heard of it, do not cease praying and asking on your behalf that you may be filled with the full knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding” (Col. 1:9; cf. Eph. 1:17; 4:13; Col. 1:10; 2:2; 3:10). Only the third understanding of the central theme—that of the economy of God—avoids the pitfalls of the above three points: it conforms to all other scriptural texts, it is not based on a private interpretation, and it does not ignore verses that challenge its interpretations but receives them as the speaking of the Lord.

### **The Reformed Focus on the Atonement for Sin Limiting the Central Theme**

The Reformed tradition’s sole focus on the atonement for sin limits a subsequent unveiling of a further understanding of the central theme in the Scriptures. “Western theology since the time of Anselm, particularly in its dogmatic reflection, has concentrated heavily, if not exclusively, upon the death of Christ” (Gaffin 15). In his Introduction, Gaffin provides a succinct summary of the Reformed tradition, condition, and focus:

Reformed theology has always thought itself to be distinctively Pauline, more sensitive than other traditions to the deeper motives and trends of the apostle’s teaching and more consistent in its expression of them. In the course of its development, however, it has not found particular *dogmatic* significance in Paul’s statements regarding Jesus’ resurrection. The convergence of two factors explains this state of affairs. On the one hand, Paul’s distinguishing interest has been seen to lie in the area of soteriology, i.e., the application of redemption to the individual believer. Forensic aspects, the doctrine of justification by faith in particular, have been judged to be *central* [emphasis added]. In other words, access to the structure of Paul’s teaching has been sought in terms of the *ordo salutis*. On the other hand, in the locus of christology or the accomplishment of redemption,

dogmatic reflection has tended to concentrate almost exclusively on the sufferings and death of Christ understood as an atonement for sin. Interest in the resurrection for the most part has been restricted to its apologetic value and as a stimulus to faith. (11)

**A**ccording to its tradition, Reformed theology “has not found particular *dogmatic* significance in Paul’s statements regarding Jesus’ resurrection” (11). According to its condition, Reformed theology considers itself as being “more sensitive than other traditions to the deeper motives and trends of the apostle’s teaching and more consistent in its expression of them” (11). Like Sardis, it regards itself as having a name that is living, but it is dead and in need of becoming watchful to establish the things which remain (Rev. 3:1-2). According to its focus, “forensic aspects, the doctrine of justification by faith in particular, have been judged to be central” (11). Reformed theology is short in its articulation of a more comprehensive central theme. An upgraded version that includes the resurrection is needed and clearly presented in *Resurrection*.

### **The Organic Resurrection of Christ Expanding the Theme beyond Atonement for Sin**

Following its brief overview of the Reformed tradition, *Resurrection* states, “It is essential to begin by showing that running through the relevant material is a *central theme* which governs the whole: the unity of the resurrection of Christ and the resurrection of believers” (33). Gaffin illustrates the impact of the resurrection by referring to Paul’s use of the word *firstfruits* in 1 Corinthians 15:20, saying, “Firstfruits’ expresses the notion of organic connection and unity, the inseparability of the initial quantity from the whole” (34). “The occurrences of ‘firstfruits’ elsewhere in Paul all express the notion of organic connection” (35). “Verse 22 clearly expresses the idea of solidarity by contrasting Christ with Adam (cf. vv. 45 [emphasis added], 47-49)” (36). This solidarity can be seen in linking the last Adam with the life-giving Spirit in 1 Corinthians 15:45b: “The last Adam [a genuine and perfect man] became a life-giving Spirit [the resurrected Christ].” *Resurrection*’s introduction of the life-giving element to the resurrection is a welcome and long overdue expansion of the central theme promulgated by the Reformed tradition. Nevertheless, a further consideration of the economy of God is needed in order to arrive at a consummate and comprehensive version of the central theme Paul’s writing and, indeed, in the Bible.

### **Seeing the Economy of God as the Fullest Development of the Central Theme in Paul’s Writings**

The fullest and consummate development of the central theme in the Bible involves the economy of God, particularly a revelation of the economy of God (Eph. 3:3). This claim may seem implausible, since only three verses in the



New Testament contain the word *economy*—Ephesians 1:10; 3:9; and 1 Timothy 1:4. Such a seeming lack of support, however, is not problematic, especially given Isaiah’s word in 28:10: “His words are: Rule upon rule, rule upon rule; / Line upon line, line upon line; / Here a little, there a little.” Gaffin provides further support for not judging a seeming paucity of scriptural support by speaking of support that lies beneath the surface of the Pauline text:

A special difficulty besets the interpretation of Paul. His writings and preaching clearly provide a coherent body of teaching. Yet the bonds of this cohesiveness frequently lie beneath the surface of the text...Consequently, it is essential to begin by showing that running through the relevant material is a *central theme* which governs the whole...Such an approach may initially seem a bit contrived, but its validity and value will become increasingly apparent as the discussion develops. (33)

We apply this approach when considering the economy of God to be the fullest development of the central theme in Paul’s writings. Ephesians 1:10, the first verse containing the word *economy*, says, “Unto the economy of the fullness of the times, to head up all things in Christ, the things in the heavens and the things on the earth, in Him.”

The Greek word, *oikonomia*, means *house law, household management or administration*, and derivatively, *administrative dispensation, plan, economy*...The economy that God, according to His desire, planned and purposed in Himself is to head up all things in Christ at the fullness of the times. This is accomplished through the dispensing of the abundant life supply of the Triune God as the life factor into all the members of the church that they may rise up from the death situation and be attached to the Body. (Lee, *Recovery Version*, v. 10, note 1)

Elsewhere, in *The Economy of God*, Witness Lee speaks of a deeper connection between the economy of God and the Triune God. In essence, the economy of God is the Triune God operating economically within humanity. The economy of God and the Triune God cannot be separated. The two are one and the same, such that God is not only economic essentially but also One who manifests Himself economically. (See “Axioms of the Trinity” by Kerry S. Robichaux in vol. 1, no. 1 of *Affirmation & Critique*, available online at [affcrit.com](http://affcrit.com).) Witness Lee writes,

The three persons in the Godhead are for God’s economy, the divine distribution, the holy dispensation. The Father

as the source is embodied in the Son, and the Son as the course is realized in the Spirit as the transmission. God the Father is a Spirit (John 4:24), and God the Son, as the last Adam, became a life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45). All is in God the Spirit, who is the Holy Spirit revealed in the New Testament. This Holy Spirit today, with the fullness of the Father in the riches of the Son, has come into our human spirit and dwells there to impart all that God is into our very being. This is God’s economy, the divine dispensation. The Holy Spirit of God, dwelling in our human spirit to dispense all that God is in Christ into our being, is the focus, the very mark, of this mysterious distribution of the Triune God. (*Economy* 7)

Ephesians 3:9, the second verse containing the word *economy*, says, “To enlighten all that they may see what the economy of the mystery is, which throughout the ages has been hidden in God, who created all things.” In this verse Paul speaks of the ultimate goal of his ministerial calling—to enlighten all to see the economy of the mystery.

The economy of God does not overlook the need of redemption for the atonement of sin through the death of Christ or the need for an organic connection between Christ and redeemed and regenerated humanity through the resurrection of Christ; rather, it incorporates these elements. Without these two elements, the dispensing of the divine life of the Triune God would not be possible, given that this dispensing

takes place in the regenerated human spirit of a redeemed believer. The regeneration of the human spirit by the Spirit, thus, opens the way for living waters to flow (John 3:6; 7:38). Still, because it is related to the goal and not merely the procedure, the central theme of the economy of God should be elevated above the themes of atonement and resurrection.

First Timothy 1:4, the third verse containing the word *economy*, says, “Nor to give heed to myths and unending genealogies, which produce questionings rather than God’s economy, which is in faith.” In this verse Paul stresses the priority of the theme of the economy of God in his exhortation to Timothy, having urged him in the previous verse to charge certain ones not to teach differently: “Even as I exhorted you, when I was going into Macedonia, to remain in Ephesus in order that you might charge certain ones not to teach different things.” *Different things* refers to any teaching that deviates from the economy of God, not just false doctrines: “To teach different things was to teach myths, unending genealogies (v. 4), and the law (vv. 7-8). All such teaching was vain talking (v. 6), differing from the apostles’ teaching, which was centered on Christ and the

WHILE BEYOND ITS SCHOLARLY FOCUS, *RESURRECTION* WOULD HAVE BENEFITED FROM A FURTHER CONSIDERATION OF THE HIGHEST VERSION OF THE CENTRAL THEME IN THE BIBLE—THE ECONOMY OF GOD.

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church, that is, on the economy of God” (Lee, *Recovery Version*, v. 3, note 3). For example, the teachings of the Judaizers in Galatia (Gal. 1:6-7), the teachings of the ascetics in Colossae (Col. 2:4, 8, 18, 20-21), and even the teachings of Apollos, a man powerful in the Scriptures, in Ephesus (Acts 18:24-28) all fall into the category of being a different teaching. In contrast to the examples above, however, the most subtle and pernicious forms of different teachings are those that are scripturally based but, nevertheless, still fall short of the full scriptural scope of the economy of God, lacking a full knowledge and utterance of the mystery of God; there is a need for hearts to be comforted and knit together in love “unto all the riches of the full assurance of understanding, unto the full knowledge of the mystery of God, Christ” (v. 2). In principle, the designation of being a different teaching can be ascribed to even the teachings in the Reformed tradition. Having full knowledge depends on spiritual revelation, not just on mental comprehension. The spiritual content of a received revelation, subsequently, becomes the content of a gospel based on the economy of God.

### *The Economy of God Revealing the Mystery of Christ and the Church*

The economy of God is not revealed through an acknowledgment of discreet and objective biblical doctrines. Revelation from God is received in the regenerated human spirit; this is the prerequisite to seeing and participating in the economy of God: “That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the full knowledge of Him” (Eph. 1:17). This was Paul’s experience: “That by revelation the mystery was made known to me, as I have written previously in brief” (3:3). The making known of the content of the mystery of God’s will to Paul was “according to His good pleasure, which He purposed in Himself” (1:9). Paul then wrote of the mystery’s content: “By which, in reading it, you can perceive my understanding in the mystery of Christ” (3:4). Through his writings Paul fulfilled God’s will “to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Col. 1:27), involving Christ in the believers for the producing of the church, which ultimately is manifested as a great mystery: “This mystery is great, but I speak with regard to Christ and the church” (Eph. 5:32). Paul not only wrote of this great mystery in the economy of God but also preached it as the content of his gospel.

### *The Economy of God Being the Content of Paul’s Gospel*

In his preaching Paul announced the mystery of God: “I, when I came to you, brothers, came not according to excellence of speech or of wisdom, announcing to you the mystery of God” (1 Cor. 2:1). In Romans he refers to his speaking

as his gospel: “Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel, that is, the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which has been kept in silence in the times of the ages” (16:25). Furthermore, he prays for utterance: “That utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known in boldness the mystery of the gospel” (Eph. 6:19). He also prays for its reception, with God opening “a door for the word, to speak the mystery of Christ (because of which also I am bound)” (Col. 4:3). Paul was bound to preaching the economy of God as the gospel, validating it as the highest central theme in the Bible.

### Summary

In *Resurrection and Redemption: A Study in Paul’s Soteriology*, Richard B. Gaffin, Jr., argues extensively and convincingly for an enlargement of the central theme in the Reformed tradition—the atonement for sin through the death of Christ. Gaffin accomplishes this by stressing the impact of the resurrection on the establishment of an organic connection between the resurrected Christ and redeemed believers. And although it falls beyond the scope of *Resurrection’s* scholarly focus, *Resurrection* would have benefited from a further consideration of the highest version of the central theme in the Bible—the economy of God. This theme is sourced in revelation and is the full content of Paul’s ministry and gospel.

by John Pester

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## Falling Short of the Divine Revelation of God’s Glory

*The Glory of God and Paul: Texts, Themes and Theology*  
by Christopher W. Morgan and Robert A. Peterson.  
Apollos, 2022

In *The Glory of God and Paul* (hereafter *Glory*), Christopher W. Morgan, a professor of theology, and Robert A. Peterson, a seminary teacher, seek to elucidate the breadth

of Paul's revelation and teaching on the grand theme of the glory of God. Considering its scope and ambitious undertaking, *Glory's* survey of God's glory in the Epistles of Paul is largely accurate and helpful. Nevertheless, it misses the deepest significance of the divine glory, the clarity of which could be perceived only through the revelation of God's eternal purpose. The glory of God is intrinsically intertwined with His ultimate purpose and goal to have a corporate expression in and through His chosen, redeemed, regenerated, transformed, and eventually glorified people. To this end God's organic salvation, His salvation in His life, works out His economy to constitute His people with His attributes as their life and nature for His glorious, eternal expression. By failing to connect God's eternal purpose with the divine glory, *Glory* falls short of seeing crucial aspects of the complete biblical revelation of God's glory, especially as presented in the Pauline Epistles.

### The Glory of God throughout the Scriptures

In its introductory chapter *Glory* previews what will be covered in the subsequent chapters—the “panorama of God's glory” (1)—outlining the general definition and features of the subject in the divine revelation. *Glory* agrees with Sverre Aalen that the word *glory*, which is *doxa* in Greek and *kābôd* in Hebrew, refers to “God's manifestation of his person, presence and/or works, especially his power, judgment and salvation” (5). *Glory* asserts that God's glory is fundamentally both intrinsic and extrinsic: God's intrinsic glory can be seen as “an attribute, or as some sort of summary of his attributes, or even more broadly as God's essence, or nature,” while it is best to understand God's extrinsic glory as “the communication of his intrinsic fullness and sufficiency” (11). *Glory* continues to explain that God's glory is spoken of or is referred to in at least seven senses in the Scriptures: (1) as a “designation for God himself”; (2) as “an internal characteristic, an attribute or a summary of attributes of God”; (3) as God's presence; (4) as the “display of God's attributes, perfections or person”; (5) as the “ultimate goal of the display of God's attributes, perfections or person”; (6) as connoting “heaven, the heavenly or the eschatological consummation of the full experience of the presence of God”; and (7) as the “appropriate response to God in the form of worship, exaltation or exultation” (4-7). Having established a working definition, *Glory* goes on to summarize the biblical panorama of the divine glory:

God, who is intrinsically glorious (glory possessed), graciously and joyfully displays his glory (glory displayed),

largely through his creation, image-bearers, providence and redemptive acts. God's people respond by glorifying him (glory ascribed). God receives glory (glory received) and, through uniting his people to the glorious Christ, shares his glory with them (glory shared)—all to his glory (glory purposed, displayed, ascribed, received and graciously shared throughout eternity). (8)

In the second chapter *Glory* traces God's glory in relation to the entire Scriptures, from creation to the consummation, according to the panorama set forth above: the Triune God reveals His glory through His creation but especially in “his creation of humans as persons made in his image,” having invested His “image-bearers with glory, honour and dominion” (33). In the fall sin rendered His created image-bearers incapable of glorifying Him and thereby bringing Him disrepute. Through His redemption God began to fully restore His glory in His image-bearers so that they can reflect His glory. *Glory* correctly teaches that “the Father plans salvation, the Son accomplishes it and the Spirit

applies it,” and that “God makes his people increasingly holy and glorious in Christ” (37). *Glory* explains that by God's grace and through the believers' union with Christ, He eventually “restores believing image-bearers to participate in and reflect his glory” (40).

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*Glory* should be commended for its understanding of the glory of God with respect to

His creation of humanity as His image-bearers, to man's fall, and to God's salvific plan. However, *Glory's* views of the church and of its consummation veers away from the divine revelation in the Bible. *Glory* observes that Paul “depicts the church in glorious language,” as being “the fullness of him who fills all in all” (Eph. 1:23) and as “a dwelling place for God” (2:22) (37); *Glory's* underlying thought, however, is decidedly extrinsic, whereas the divine revelation in the New Testament unveils the divine glory as a profoundly intrinsic matter. *Glory* sees the church as the “theatre of and witness to God's glory” (37) and explains that “the church glorifies God through its worship and character” (38). *Glory* further states that He is “reflected and thus glorified” in the church's characteristics, such as “love, holiness, goodness, justice and faithfulness” (38). However, the statement that “God made us to glorify him by knowing, loving and serving him as his creatures” (204-205) further exposes *Glory's* incomplete seeing of God's eternal purpose. God did not intend mankind to be mere subservient creatures. Instead, He purposed to gain a glorious, corporate expression of Himself in and through His redeemed, regenerated, transformed, and glorified people, who are the church as the Body of Christ in the present age and who

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will consummate as the New Jerusalem in the coming ages (Eph. 1:3-23; 3:8-10; 2 Cor. 3:18; Rev. 21:1-2, 10-11). The Triune God brings forth His glory by means of the Spirit saturating and permeating His people with His divine attributes through the processes of His organic salvation (Eph. 1:13; Rom. 8:2, 6, 10-11, 21; Eph. 3:14-21; 2 Cor. 3:18; 4:16).

### The Glory of God in Paul's Teachings

The bulk of *Glory's* presentation (chapters 3 through 6) concerns Paul's various teachings (including salvation in Romans, resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15, the new covenant ministry in 2 Corinthians 3—4, and the church in Ephesians) as they relate to the divine glory. *Glory's* deficiency as regard to seeing the full picture of divine glory is evident in its assessment of these teachings.

### The Glory of God and Salvation in Romans

In the third chapter *Glory* delves into the glory of God and salvation, which it regards as the theme of Romans. *Glory* notes that, for Paul, the "essence of human sin" is mankind's rebellion against his Creator in whose image he was made; by such a rebellion mankind renounced the dependence that he, the image-bearer, had upon God, embracing, instead, "the lie of human self-sufficiency and independence from God" (44). Being made in God's image, humans possess the capacity to be for God, to do His will, and to obey His law, but sin caused them to lose their "image-bearing integrity" (44-45). However, God glorifies Himself in Christ's saving work through His death and resurrection to "accomplish propitiation, reconciliation, and obedience as the basis for justification and inaugurate the new creation" (47-48). *Glory* correctly states that as the new creation, believers are joined to Christ in His death to be freed from the tyranny of sin, and they are joined to Him in His resurrection to live a godly life of holiness and love (50).

Equally accurate, *Glory* indicates that Paul is concerned for both the Christians' righteousness before God, which is the issue of their justification, and their living for God through their "progressive sanctification" (54). Acknowledging the inability of the law to effect righteousness and sanctify fallen human beings, Paul shows that the power of God's grace breaks sin's tyranny over the believers, that their union with Christ in His death annulled the power of sin, and their being raised with Him in His resurrection empowers them to walk in newness of life (Rom. 6:4-6, 11) (56). For God's redeemed people to maintain the freedom from the power of sin, they must rely on the Spirit's power, which operates to renew their mind so that they "believe in and love the truth" and to gradually transform them from glory to glory (57-58). According to *Glory*, this transformation produces "character traits, thoughts, and actions" that glorify God (58). *Glory* reaffirms this thought with a section

on the role of Christian suffering in giving glory to God, stating that Paul taught that "God uses suffering to build character" for the hope of eschatological glory, the "hope of resurrected life on the new earth under the new heavens" (58). In short, *Glory* sees that God's work of improving the believers' character increases their hope of future glory, that is, the hope of a glorious life in heaven (58).

*Glory's* view of salvation in Romans is short of Paul's presentation of God's full plan of salvation. Paul's Epistle presents God's complete salvation in two aspects—judicial and organic (Rom. 5:10, 17-18). Based upon Christ's efficacious death, the judicial aspect of God's complete salvation satisfies His righteousness, allowing Him to forgive sinners, to redeem them, and even to reconcile them to Himself (4:7; 5:10). Thus, on the basis of Christ's redemption, believers are justified, approved according to God's standard of righteousness (3:24). Through the impartation of the resurrection life of Christ into the believers (5:10, 17-18, 6:4; 8:6, 10; John 10:10), the second aspect of God's complete salvation is organic in nature. These aspects of God's complete salvation are revealed in Romans 5:10, which says, "If we, being enemies, were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more we will be saved in His life, having been reconciled." *Saved in His life* indicates the crucial need for the divine life to change the believer from within. Whereas judicial redemption is objective, issuing from the application of Christ's redeeming death, organic salvation is subjective, causing a living change from within the believer's inner being. Our being saved in Christ's life begins with regeneration (receiving the divine life into our human spirit; 8:10), continues with dispositional sanctification (changing from the natural disposition to a spiritual one; 6:19), renewing (the divine element being wrought into our inner being; 12:2), transformation (inward metabolic change; v. 2), conformation (changing both our inward essence and outward form to match the image of Christ; 8:29), and ultimately concludes with glorification (complete saturation of our mortal body of sin with the divine life and nature; v. 30). That these steps of organic salvation conclude with glorification, the transfiguration of our body into the glorious body of Jesus Christ (Phil. 3:21), proves that God's process for us to glorify Him is primarily by His work in our being. God does not merely share glory with or bestow glory upon His believers; rather, they are constituted as image-bearers by the inner working of the divine Spirit. Therefore, *Glory's* jump from Christ's initial salvation to the future hope of glory with our resurrected body, bypassing this crucial process of God's full salvation in the divine life, evinces a shortsighted view of salvation and of God's glory.

### The Glory of God and Resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15

God's eternal purpose is not satisfied through a myriad of

individual image-bearers. On the contrary, He desires to be expressed by the church, which is the Body of Christ (Rom. 12:4-5). Before ushering the readers into the focal point of God's glory in the divine purpose seen in Ephesians, *Glory* considers two foundational matters that constitute the church as God's corporate expression—the life-giving Spirit in 1 Corinthians 15 and the Spirit-giving ministry in 2 Corinthians 3 and 4.

*Glory's* interpretation of the divine glory in 1 Corinthians 15 is primarily eschatological, stating that Christ's "glorious resurrection fulfils Old Testament expectation and points to the resurrection of his people to life and glory when he returns" (75). With mainly the future glory in view, *Glory* also sees the divine grace and Christ's person and work as being central and foundational to the understanding of 1 Corinthians 15, stating that "the main subject of the 'resurrection chapter'" is "the ultimate triumph of God's sovereign grace for his glory" (77). God's grace that springs from His love operates in all Christian experience, including making Paul, a former vehement persecutor of Christians, into an apostle laboring by grace (76). Quoting Gordon D. Fee, *Glory* makes the point that Christ's resurrection not only solves the problem caused by death but also utterly defeats death itself, the last enemy of God, and allows His saving acts to reach their consummation (77). *Glory* indicates that the risen Christ being also the firstfruits of resurrection guarantees the believers' "resurrection to life and glory at his return" (78). *Glory* further says that just as the firstfruits are of the same nature as the rest of the harvest, the resurrection of Jesus, "our representative," will grant us the same "glorious resurrection bodies" as His (78).

*Glory* incorrectly explains why Christ is the "second man" (v. 47) and the "last Adam" (v. 45). According to *Glory*, Christ is the second man because He is the "second human being made without sin," and He is the last Adam because He is the "saving representative of humanity, whose work of death and resurrection eliminates the need for any other deliverer" (79). Witness Lee provides an alternative and proper understanding:

Christ is not only the last Adam (v. 45) but also the second man. The first Adam (v. 45) is the beginning of mankind; the last Adam is the ending. As the first man, Adam is the head of the old creation, representing it in creation. As the second man, Christ is the Head of the new creation, representing it in resurrection. In the entire universe there are only two men: the first man, Adam, including all his

descendants, and the second man, Christ, comprising all His believers. We believers were included in the first man by birth and became a part of the second man by regeneration. Our believing has transferred us out of the first man into the second. In regard to our being part of the first man, our origin is the earth and our nature is earthy. In regard to our being part of the second man, our origin is God and our nature is heavenly. (*Recovery Version*, 1 Cor. 15:47, note 2)

Furthermore, *Glory* also fails to identify or articulate the tremendous significance of Christ as the last Adam becoming the life-giving Spirit (v. 45b), a vital step commensurate in import to the Word becoming flesh (John 1:14). Instead, *Glory* interprets 1 Corinthians 15:45b merely as the risen Christ's ability to give "spiritual life to others"—in the same way that God gave the first Adam physical life (83). *Glory* indicates that Christ, as the life-giving Spirit, creates a new, eschatological life in which spirituality is the dominant feature (84). *Glory* then elaborates on

GLORY ALSO FAILS TO IDENTIFY THE TREMENDOUS SIGNIFICANCE OF CHRIST AS THE LAST ADAM BECOMING THE LIFE-GIVING SPIRIT, A VITAL STEP COMMENSURATE IN IMPORT TO THE WORD BECOMING FLESH.

these misconceptions, expounding much on God's raising the believers in glory with a resurrection body, a body that is imperishable, raised in glory and in power, and that is spiritual. This "transformation of the believers' bodies" from the decaying, dishonorable, weak, natural bodies into a "heavenly body of glory" is necessary to inherit the kingdom of God and to "enjoy eternal life on the new earth" (94). Based on

this, *Glory* argues that transformation "signals the ultimate defeat of death" (95).

While the body of the believers will indeed be transformed to assume a spiritual body by the Lord's death-defeating resurrection in the future, it is imperative that believers are first transformed in their soul—mind, emotion, and will—by the indwelling Christ as the life-giving Spirit (Rom. 8:9-10; 12:2). Verse 2 says, "Do not be fashioned according to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of the mind that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and well pleasing and perfect." Lee explains,

Transformation is the inward, metabolic process in which God works to spread His divine life and nature throughout every part of our being, particularly our soul, bringing Christ and His riches into our being as our new element and causing our old, natural element to be gradually discharged. As a result, we will be transformed into His image (2 Cor. 3:18), that is, conformed to the image of the first-born Son of God as His many brothers ([Rom.] 8:29). (*Recovery Version*, 12:2, note 3)

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It is for this reason that the central revelation in 1 Corinthians 15 is seen in verse 45, specifically: “The last Adam became a life-giving Spirit.” *Glory* undervalues not only Christ’s resurrection but also the crucial significance of His being the life-giving Spirit in our present Christian life and living prior to our future resurrection. In His resurrection Christ was glorified, entering into a new mode—that of being the One who gives life as the Spirit (2 Cor. 3:6; Rom. 8:11). Before Christ’s resurrection, the divine Spirit was the Spirit of God possessing only divinity, but through Christ’s resurrection the divine Spirit became the Spirit of Christ (v. 9) and the Spirit of Jesus Christ (Phil. 1:19), that is, the Spirit of the incarnated, crucified, and resurrected Jesus Christ. This Spirit of the glorified Jesus, possessing the elements of divinity and humanity, was anticipated in John 7:39, promised in 14:16-17, 15:26, and 16:13, and breathed into the disciples to be their life, life supply, and everything in 20:22. As the Spirit of life, this Spirit indwells the believers through regeneration and continually imparts the divine life into them to save them in life (Rom. 5:10; 8:2, 9-11). This inward transformation by life is the factor of the growth in life by the increase of Christ as life in the believers (1 Pet. 2:2; 2 Pet. 3:18; Eph. 4:15; Col. 2:19; 3:4). The increase of the divine element of Christ as life simultaneously saturates and permeates the inner being of the believers with His glory, causing them to be transformed from one degree of glory to a higher degree of glory until they are conformed to the glorious image of the glorified Jesus (2 Cor. 3:18; Rom. 8:29). Although there are eschatological implications in 1 Corinthians 15, the vital significance of this chapter is the present operation of the Spirit in the inner being, particularly the soul, of all believers to produce that glorious outcome (Eph. 3:16-17; 2 Cor. 4:16).

### *The Glory of God and the New Covenant in 2 Corinthians 3—4*

The bulk of the fifth chapter of *Glory* is devoted to Paul’s defense of the supremacy of the new covenant ministry over the fading Mosaic covenant. For the most part, we can affirm *Glory*’s understanding of Paul’s new covenant ministry. *Glory* states that the glory of God is abundantly revealed in the new covenant; in contrast to the old covenant, which Paul calls the ministry of death and of condemnation and which was brought to an end, the new covenant is the ministry of the Spirit who gives life and surpasses in glory as the ministry of righteousness (98). Paul argues that letters of recommendation for his apostleship are unnecessary because the Corinthian congregation is his letter, inscribed with the Spirit of the living God as the ink, revealing that “the Spirit writes the new covenant ‘on tablets of human hearts’” (102).

Based on 2 Corinthians 3:6, *Glory* notes that *letter* and *Spirit* “stand for two different covenants with different

descriptions, demands and results” (104). *Glory* correctly points out that *letter* refers to the demands of the Old Testament law, which, when disobeyed, brings bondage and death and that *Spirit* stands for “the Holy Spirit and his power to transform human lives from within, resulting in freedom and life,” by virtue of His (here *Glory* quotes Murray J. Harris) “principal characteristic” to “perpetually [grant] the physical and spiritual life of which he is the source” (104). The letter of the law kills, slays, the disobedient, but the Spirit gives life “in regeneration in this age and in resurrection to life in the age to come” (104). *Glory* concludes that the ministry of the Spirit is more glorious than Moses’ ministry because “the Spirit, fulfilling the promise of the new covenant, regenerates sinners and inclines their hearts to obey God’s law” (109).

*Glory* also argues that, according to verses 10 and 11, if there were any glory in the ministry of condemnation, then the ministry of righteousness must even more abound in glory, eclipsing the former covenant in glory (109). *Glory* goes on to say that “the glory of this ministry of free justification and life far exceeds the glory of the law’s death-dealing character” and that this new covenant ministry confirms Paul’s apostleship and ministry (110). Paul, having the hope of an eternal weight of glory, is confident that this glorious new covenant permanently fulfills God’s plan and will shine supremely in glory (111). Paul’s confidence and boldness in the new covenant ministry contrasts with Moses’ veiling himself to hide the fading old covenant (vv. 12-13). *Glory* then asserts that unbelievers, who are hardened in their hearts by the deceitfulness of sin, are as veiled as those who read the Mosaic laws; however, if they would turn to Christ and believe in the gospel, the Lord as a life-giving Spirit will give freedom to them, enabling them to “behold his gospel glory and will transform them fully when he comes again” (115). In this way, with their beholding and reflecting like a mirror the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, the believers in Christ are being transformed from one degree of glory to another (3:18; 4:6) (116).

### *The Glory of God and the Church in Ephesus*

*Glory* elucidates the topic of the glory of God in Paul’s Epistle to the Ephesians along five aspects: God’s ultimate goal, His eternal plan, Christ’s saving work, the believers’ union with Him, and the church as His showcase. Regarding the first aspect, *Glory* states, “God’s plans have many goals or ends, but his supreme goal is the display and recognition of his own glory” (127). According to Ephesians 1:3-14, the “three trinitarian persons” (133) and Their work of salvation—the Father’s choosing, the Son’s redeeming, and the Spirit’s sealing—are not for the goal of redemption but for the greatest goal of His own glory (vv. 6, 12, 14). According to 2:7, even His saving a people for Himself is intended for the goal of displaying the immeasurable riches of His grace for all to see (130).

*Glory* presents a partial understanding of the mystery, spoken of in 3:8-10, that had been hidden throughout the ages in God. The book reasons that one definition of this mystery could be the Jews and Gentiles becoming one people as they become members of Christ's Body (132). Paul's thrust, *Glory* asserts, quoting Frank Thielman, is that "the mystery of Christ's church as composed of Jews and Gentiles reveals to the universe the 'beautifully complex' wisdom of God, revealing his glory" (132). *Glory* states that God's eternal plan as revealed in Ephesians is to have eternal glory and encompasses the salvation of His people, whom He had predestined, the uniting of the Jews and Gentiles into one new man, and the reconciliation of the cosmos (133).

In showing that God's glory is magnificently displayed in Christ's salvific work, *Glory* explains that Christ redeemed us through His blood, was victorious over all His foes, reconciled the Jews and Gentiles to Himself and to each other, offered Himself as the unique sacrifice, and sanctified the believers individually and the church corporately (142-150). Based on the sanctification in 5:25-27, *Glory* proceeds to elaborate on the three aspects of sanctification—initial, progressive, and final. The initial sanctification is the "Spirit's work of setting apart unclean people to God"; the progressive sanctification is the "Spirit's continuing work of building holiness into Christians' lives," referring to an outward sanctified living, such as abstaining from fornication; and the final sanctification is the "Spirit's work of confirming believers in complete holiness" at the coming of the Lord (150).

*Glory* then states that God created one church to "[showcase] God's plan of cosmic reconciliation" (1:9-10) (233) and to display and thus to glorify Himself (2:7; 3:10). Accordingly, God's plan (Gk. *oikonomia*) in 1:10 was to unify the universe, to sum up all things, in Christ (160) in order to bring in order, unity, peace, and freedom from the bondage of corruption for all creation. Central to this plan is the church's participation in being summed up or headed up. More than a "visible display of unity," the church is a "display people" (224) of God's grace (2:7), wisdom (3:10), oneness (4:1-6), love (5:2), and holiness (4:24).

*Glory* falls short of clearly seeing the divine revelation of the glory of God chiefly by not relating the divine glory to the divine purpose and economy. Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians contains the clearest revelation in the Bible of God's eternal purpose and His economy for His glory, His

corporate expression. Ephesians 1:9 says, "Making known to us the mystery of His will according to His good pleasure, which He purposed in Himself." God has an eternal purpose to accomplish His will according to His good pleasure. God's purpose was a mystery, but it was "revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in spirit" (3:5). Furthermore, 1:10 says that God's eternal purpose is "unto the economy of the fullness of the times, to head up all things in Christ, the things in the heavens and the things on the earth, in Him." For the accomplishing of His purpose, God has an economy (Gk. *oikonomia*), an administration or arrangement, to head up all things in Christ, that is, to bring all things in the universe marred by rebellion, darkness, and death under the absolute administration and authority of Christ. This will ultimately take place at the fullness of the times, in the new heaven and the new earth in eternity. In the present time God is operating as the Spirit with and in His people, the church as the Body of Christ and the one new man, to accomplish His purpose. For this reason verse 22 says, "He subjected all things under His feet and gave Him to be Head over all things to the church."

GLORY FALLS SHORT OF CLEARLY SEEING THE DIVINE REVELATION OF THE GLORY OF GOD CHIEFLY BY NOT RELATING THE DIVINE GLORY TO THE DIVINE PURPOSE FOR GOD TO BE EXPRESSED BY HIS CHOSEN PEOPLE.

Chapter 3 of Ephesians also reveals the mystery of God's eternal purpose and economy and His desire for His glory. Verses 9 and 10 say, "To enlighten all that they may see what the economy of the mystery is, which throughout the ages has been hidden in God, who created all things, in order that now to the

rulers and the authorities in the heavenlies the multifarious wisdom of God might be made known through the church." Comparing Paul's thoughts in chapters 1 and 3, we see that God obtains His glory by being made known, expressed, through the church. God is expressed, glorified, not merely by His external works of creation and redemption but more so by His intrinsic work of constituting His people with "the unsearchable riches of Christ" (v. 8). Lee says, "The riches of Christ are what Christ is to us, such as light, life, righteousness, and holiness, what He has for us, and what He accomplished, attained, and obtained for us. These riches of Christ are unsearchable and untraceable" (*Recovery Version*, v. 8, note 3). When these riches of what Christ is are dispensed into the believers to saturate and permeate their inner being, they are gradually transformed from glory to glory, from one degree to a higher degree of the expression of Christ. The believers' gradual growth and transformation in life spontaneously issue in a sanctified living. Thus, the Spirit builds holiness into the believers primarily in their inward parts, not from external works, although He sovereignly allows situations and afflictions to further work out in them "an eternal weight of glory" (2 Cor. 4:17).

God's eternal purpose and plan can also be seen by considering the two mysteries in Paul's Epistles—the mystery of God (Col. 2:2) and the mystery of Christ (Eph. 3:4). The mystery of God is Christ, and the mystery of Christ is the church. This thought is confirmed in 5:32, which mentions both of these two mysteries in a single mystery: "This mystery is great, but I speak with regard to Christ and the church." Hence, this great mystery is Christ (as the embodiment and expression of God) and the church (as the Body and expression of Christ). The context of this great mystery is a marriage, showing that Christ and the church are typified by a married couple. Christ as the Husband is the Head of the church as the wife (v. 23). As the loving Husband of the church, His corporate people, He is sanctifying her by saturating her with His divine element so that He might present the God-expressing church to Himself as a glorious bride (vv. 25-27). The eternal, glorious expression of the Triune God is the New Jerusalem, which John saw "coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband" (Rev. 21:2). Lee says,

In both the Old Testament and the New Testament, God likens His chosen people to a spouse (Isa. 54:6; Jer. 3:1; Ezek. 16:8; Hosea 2:19; 2 Cor. 11:2; Eph. 5:31-32) and a dwelling place for Himself (Exo. 29:45-46; Num. 5:3; Ezek. 43:7, 9; Psa. 68:18; 1 Cor. 3:16-17; 6:19; 2 Cor. 6:16; 1 Tim. 3:15). The spouse is for His satisfaction in love, and the dwelling place is for His rest in expression. Both of these aspects will be ultimately consummated in the New

Jerusalem. In her, God will have the fullest satisfaction in love and the utmost rest in expression for eternity. (*Recovery Version*, Rev. 21:2, note 1)

## Conclusion

Although *Glory* identifies and connects many parts of the "jigsaw puzzle" of the grand theme of God's glory, it is missing pieces that are essential for the full picture. Intrinsically, glory is God Himself, the expression of the essence of His Divine Being. Glory is God expressed, or manifested, in His attributes (Exo. 33:18; Heb. 1:3; 2:9). In His divine economy and for His eternal purpose, God desires to be expressed by His chosen people, which is the church as the Body of Christ and the one new man, whom He redeemed judicially and is saving organically to be saturated and permeated with His glorious essence (Eph. 1:9-10; Rom. 5:10; Phil. 3:21). Through God's complete salvation, the redeemed, regenerated, transformed, and glorified believers will eventually become the bride of Christ, which consummates in the New Jerusalem, His universal and corporate expression for eternity.

by Kin Leong Seong

## Work Cited

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### Footnotes from the *Recovery Version of the Bible*

Whenever God is expressed, His glory is seen. Man was made by God in His image that man might express Him for His glory. But man has sinned and has contradicted the holiness and righteousness of God. Instead of expressing God, man expresses sin and his sinful self. Hence, man falls short of God's glory. This falling short of God's glory and expression is sin. Sinners are not only under the requirements of God's holiness and righteousness but also under the demand of God's glory. All have offended God's holy being and have broken God's righteous law, and all are short of God's glory. Therefore, all are under God's condemnation. (Rom. 3:23, footnote 1)

The cloud covering the Tent of Meeting was the outer part, the outer covering, of God's glory. Those who were gathered around the Tent of Meeting could see the cloud, whereas the high priest who eventually entered into the Holy of Holies (Lev. 16:15; Heb. 9:7) in the tabernacle could see the inward glory of the tabernacle. This indicates that in our experience of the church life we need to advance by entering into the tabernacle—Christ as the embodiment of God—to enjoy the bread at the table and to intercede at the incense altar, that we may experience the glory in God's dwelling place. (Exo. 40:34, footnote 2)

Glory is God expressed (Exo. 40:34). *The glory of His grace* indicates that God's grace, which is Himself as our enjoyment, expresses Him. As we receive grace and enjoy God, we have the sense of glory. (Eph. 1:6, footnote 2)

In Ephesians 1 there are seven crucial things requiring the same basic factor for their accomplishment: God's selection that we should be made holy and without blemish (v. 4); God's predestination that we may become His sons (v. 5); the sealing of the Holy Spirit that we may be fully redeemed (vv. 13-14); the hope of God's calling; the glory of God's inheritance in the saints (v. 18); God's power that causes us to participate in Christ's attainment (vv. 19-22); and the Body of Christ, the fullness of the all-filling Christ. All these are accomplished by the Triune God being dispensed and wrought into our being. The issue of such a divine dispensing into our humanity is the fullness of the One who fills all in all and the praise of God's expressed glory. Actually, this chapter is a revelation of God's marvelous and excellent economy, from His choosing of us in eternity to the producing of the Body of Christ to express Himself for eternity. (Eph. 1:23, footnote 3)