

Paul's Two "Ins"

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If the writers of the New Testament were to be likened to speakers at a convention, clearly Paul would be the one giving the keynote address with all in attendance agreeing that John's contribution stands as a delightfully perfect complement to Paul's, and that James, Jude, Matthew, Mark and Luke all provided undeniably necessary highlights to round out the event's proclamation, instruction and inspiration.

Any attendant listening carefully to brother Paul would come away challenged to ascertain what he means to convey by his repetitive use of the expressions, "in Christ," and "Christ in." It would be obvious to any perceptive listener that those expressions are very fundamental points of reference together providing a frame of reference for Paul's understanding of "the mystery hidden from ages past in God."

Feeling that I have for the past 53 years been, as it were, on the edge of my seat intent certainly on not missing the keynote speaker's keynote, nor even the least little nuance of insight flowing out of his impassioned mind and heart, I'm once again moved to offer the following thoughts toward the goal of the fullest possible understanding and appreciation of just what is included in Paul's two "ins."

It must be emphasized again and again that whatever Paul means us to understand concerning "Christ in," must be based upon an understanding of what he means to convey by "in Christ." The theological case that he builds has "in Christ" as its foundation, and one must have one's understanding of "Christ in" built upon the foundation of "in Christ," for in seeking to realize the glory of His indwelling, we need to know and appreciate His majestic all-inclusiveness. Majesty begins with "in Christ," and proceeds to "Christ in."

According to Paul's message in the Epistle to the Colossians, "all things were created in Him"---not "by Him," as conventional, popular translations timidly render it---but, to repeat, "in Him." This One

contains all things within Himself and in particular all humanity as its head within THE HEAD. The sphere of all being and all creatureliness is Christ and the inner constitution of the same is Christ. To fully appreciate the One Who is in us, we must see His all-encompassing transcendence.

I shall limit and devote this essay to Paul's "ins" in respect to humanity and not at this time the whole of creation. When Paul pronounces the Christian believer to be in Christ---and I must add, not exclusively, but as representing all humanity---his essential meaning is that the Person of Christ, His relationship to the Father, and all the accomplishments of the Father by and through His Son include the whole of humanity so that there can be no generic disparity between us and Christ. In Him, what is true of Him, is true of us. He is the sphere of our being traceable to eternity, and also of our space-time existence.

If we were to remove the prepositional phrase at the end of John's statement, "As He is, so are we in this world," it would not make the statement inaccurate. We are as He is---period! AND we are as He is "in this world," for we have been granted and enjoy participation in both His transcendence and immanence. I will not labor that point further, but hasten to address the question that would understandably arise in the mind of most: "If what you say is true, how do you explain the present deplorable human condition."

Addressing that question will lead quite nicely to how "in Christ," and "Christ in you," complement one another in Pauline thought. Without yielding any ground as to our above affirmation regarding the allness of Christ-inclusion, we must address the fact that, in God's wisdom, and by God's design, this relationship became, shall we say, disturbed, but not so as to lose it's intrinsic constitution.

God, it clearly appears, decided to quite violently shake things up when He sent His all-inclusive Being in the Person of His Son (in solidarity with Adam) out from the dimension of eternity into a dimension that, by some definition, and in some sense, was gut-wrenchingly disturbing to Himself and all that He includes in Himself. The eternal God---while, of course, never losing His essential eternality---became, hmmm, yeah, the timely God.

In subjecting his creation to the futility of limitation, in His immanence, He subjected Himself to the same, while still in regal splendor maintaining His eternal, unlimited and sovereign transcendence, knowing that such a decision would lead to the horror of a place called, Golgotha.

It is incontestable that the singular Seed of God's intention to multiply Himself is the incorruptible Seed, Christ; yet Christ died. Christ died for us, for our sins. DISTURBANCE: The immortal dies, the impeccable endures blemish, holiness becomes sin. He, in Whom all things exist, now exists within the unimaginable.

So we come to how "Christ in" relates to "in Christ." The Christ, in Whom all things exist, came into the existent, the deplorable, the unimaginable, the repugnant, the sphere of tears, so as to, from within it all, transform it all, using it all to challenge Himself to call upon Himself to draw forth from the depths of Himself depths of glory that would have remained eternally hidden within the depths of the Divine Nature, had He not done so.

In short, Christ in you, has been working, is working, and continues to work to overcome the impressively grand contrariness, the seductive attention-demanding deception that will bring out the best in God, the best in Christ, and the best in us in Christ. While, and though, we are encased in the contrariness of an aeonian imposter- persona, Christ in us shall demonstrate and confirm the Truth, the Reality, the Genuineness of who we are in Him.

What we are in Christ is coming forth, is unfolding, by Christ in us, making all contrariness instrumental to drawing forth from the spring of the Divine Nature that River that makes glad the city of God. I know that the following prophetic picture that forms in my mind will be disturbing and difficult to factor into our understanding of the economy of God, but I clearly see sin and death as providing the necessary firm foothold for humanity in Christ to reach into the depths of Christ in us.

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