

"I AM HE."

"I am he that liveth and was dead." – Rev. 1:18.

Here the risen Lord identifies himself with the crucified One; yet how different from the crucified One. Now he is a divine being, while previous to his crucifixion he was human. Yet the identity is clearly established, though it is written that as the heavens are higher than the earth, so is the one higher than the other. (Isa. 55:9.) The Son of God experienced existence in three different natures – first, a very high order of spiritual nature, higher than angels; secondly, the human nature, a little lower than the angels; and thirdly, the divine nature, which is superior to all others. And in the last two of these states, or natures, he clearly affirmed his personal identity from first to last. As a man, he freely spoke of the glory which he had with the Father before the world was. (John 17:5; 8:42,58.) And as a divine being, he tells how he recognizes himself as the same one who was a man, and who as such died, became extinct. The identity, therefore, of the Son of God is clearly stated by himself. And while, therefore, not for a moment doubting it, it may be profitable to inquire, How can this be? for some fail to see how a being could know himself under such radical transformations.

The philosophy of this fact is clearly seen, however, when we remember the statement that man was created in the image of God (which is true also of angels as well as of our Lord before he became a man – all of God's intelligent and responsible creatures are made in God's mental and moral likeness): that is, their mental and moral faculties are facsimiles of the divine nature. The difference, then, between them is in the range and scope of these corresponding faculties: the one is finite, the other is infinite. The range of the human nature is confined to the earth, while the range

and scope of the divine is wider than the universe, boundless as space and unlimited as eternity. The divine nature is immortal, incorruptible, and could not become infirm, or die, since of itself it is above all those conditions upon which other natures must depend. All other natures are mortal, corruptible – not that they must of necessity corrupt, or die, but that they could die and would die if God did not continually supply to them the necessary sustenance. Thus the Divine Being holds the reigns of universal government as an Absolute Monarch, having the life and property and every interest of every creature in his hands – under his providence and complete control.

The wonderful favor of a share in this divine nature, originally pertaining only to the Emperor and Lord of the Universe – Jehovah God – was, as we have heretofore seen, granted to our Lord Jesus as a reward for his humiliation and sacrifice for our redemption; and we are assured that it shall also, in due time, be granted to a chosen little flock of redeemed men who follow in his footsteps of sacrifice, even unto death. We also, therefore, if counted worthy, shall, in the resurrection, experience a change similar to that of the Lord at his resurrection. Shall we, therefore, know ourselves and each other? Assuredly, yes! We will recognize in ourselves the same personality – the mental and moral character – that now exists; but these same reasoning faculties will then be able to grapple successfully and promptly with the weightiest, deepest and most intricate problems; these perceptive faculties, now sometimes so dull, but then expanded immeasurably, will quickly take in at a glance all the varied conditions of every creature and all the minutiae of the great work of establishing universal order and peace. And so it will be with all our faculties which constitute us now an image (though greatly marred) of the divine nature – of what we shall be then.

And yet the same will, the same character, now possessed will then be ours; that is, the same aims and ambitions will actuate us

then as now. The plan of God, which is now the theme of our constant thought and the motive power of all our efforts, will then also be our theme and motive power. It will be our pleasure and privilege, then, to carry on to completion the great work begun now, in which all the faithful are heartily and zealously engaged. But then we will find ourselves perfectly free and unfettered by any infirmities or adverse circumstances.

What a glorious change! Think you, brethren, that when changed to that glorious likeness of our Lord and Head, with all these present interests of the great work still the absorbing theme of our thought, but with increased ability and power to carry it on, with all these same hopes, ambitions and aims still keen and active, shall we not recognize ourselves and each other? Will your glowing zeal, your confident faith, your ardent love and your present knowledge of truth not be recognizable again? Yea, verily! The personal identity, *the character*, of each of us will be clearly recognizable both by ourselves and by others.

And the same may be said of every human being, as well as of those changed to the divine nature. The individual character* is that which we call our identity. It is the character of an individual, not his flesh and bones, which we love or hate, and which God loves or hates and counts either worthy or unworthy of continued existence. Flesh and blood is only associated with our ideas of *character* or personality, just as a coat habitually worn is associated with our mental pictures of a human form. The character of our Heavenly Father and of our Lord Jesus is what we know and love, though we have never seen their glorious bodies under any conditions; and the same may be said of many of our human friends.

*Webster defines character as "*the sum of qualities* which distinguish one person or thing from another."

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It is plain, therefore, that though an individual may die, become extinct, pass out of actual existence, his character still exists in the memory, the mind of God, even the very minutest features of it. And, therefore, when in his own time God creates another body, either of the earthly or of the spiritual nature, and stamps it with all the lines of that character just as it exists in his memory, and awakens it to life, instantly that character, that identity, will recognize itself. And not only so, but it will be recognized again by former friends and acquaintances from whose memory it had not perished. Thus the Lord Jesus recognized himself when his character was transferred from a spiritual body to a body of clay; and again, when he died and his identity was completely lost to himself for three days, it still existed in the memory of God, and as soon as God transferred, from the tablet of his mind to an actual, glorious, divine body, those mental characteristics, our Lord Jesus recognized himself again – with the same ardent love for God, the same devotion to the accomplishment of his great work, the same pitying love for the fallen human race, the same tender love and solicitude for his precious elect ones, every one of whom then living he remembered personally and distinctly. And with all this knowledge of himself and his great work came the glorious realization of "all power in heaven and in earth" for its accomplishment. And so will it be with us, praise the Lord! While we are reckoned dead already, and must sooner or later pass under the dominion of death actually, it matters little; for our life is hid with Christ [as associate members of his body] in God. (Col. 3:3.) The character of man receives impressions from his thoughts and actions like as the wax cylinder of a phonograph receives and preserves an impression from every sound; and the mind of God, the book of his remembrance, is like a great cabinet in which are preserved the exact record of the thoughts and sentiments or characters of all the world (as in the wax cylinders), and from which each character can at his will be reproduced. He keeps the record of every soul that passes out of the present existence until it is reproduced in the resurrection

morning. His mind is the great "book of life," in which the names of the consecrated ones are all written in a special list as worthy of lasting life, and from which, if we are faithful, they will not be blotted out. – Rev. 3:5.

And herein we find a good illustration of the difference between Adamic death and the Second death. The Adamic death is well illustrated by the removal and preservation of the wax cylinder, with a view to the reproduction of the thoughts thus preserved. So the dissolution in Adamic death stops the making and expressing of character; but through the *ransom* God has made provision for, and has promised the preservation of, our characters – and a resurrection or reproduction of them in his due time, in such instruments or cases (bodies) as it pleases him – as the same cylinder can be fitted to any sort of phonograph instrument, of wood, iron or other case. But the Second death is one in which there is no preservation of the character, and from which there will never more be a reproduction – just as when the wax cylinders are done with, all the impressions are obliterated – *as though they had not been*.

It is plain, therefore, that though in death the human soul loses its own identity, yet never, excepting in the case of those who die the second death, is the identity of a single soul lost to God – blotted out of his book of remembrance. There they all live unto him, though they are actually dead. When the death sentence passed and was executed upon Adam, his identity was not lost to God; for in God's purpose he was redeemed by Christ and must in due time be restored. And when our Lord Jesus died, his identity, his personality or character, which included all his powers, was completely lost to himself, though it was never lost to God, in whose mind every feature of his character was clearly legible; and in due time it was reproduced in a glorious body of the divine nature and "the express image of the Father's person."

The humanity which he took for the suffering of death, and which he accordingly laid down in death, remains, therefore, a sacrifice forever – it was the price laid down for our redemption, and never taken back; but that glorious *character, the ego, the identity* of the blessed Son of God, "who was before all things," and by whom all things were created, who in loving obedience to the Father's will gave himself as a man for our redemption, still existed in the book of God's remembrance and in due time was reproduced or raised to life again for our justification – not to a human existence again, which was laid down forever as our ransom price, but to a higher nature, through the instrumentality of which he will be able to bring to us [R1264 : page 7] actually all the blessings purchased by his great sacrifice for us. And so he still lives, our great high Priest and King, our adorable Lord Jesus, Jehovah's Anointed; and if we be dead with him, in due time we also shall live with him, as his bride and joint-heir, and shall reign with him who liveth and was dead. Amen; and is alive forevermore.

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