

“Projection”

Wilbur N. Pickering, ThM PhD

I invite attention to Romans 6:5, that I would now translate like this: “Now since we have become united with Him through the projection of His death, we will certainly be so through that of His resurrection as well.” Instead of “through the projection”, most versions have ‘in the likeness’. Although the word ‘likeness’ is certainly in the Greek Text, I regret to have to say that my translation (on the market since 2013) omits the word altogether, reading simply ‘in His death’. I don’t remember why I did that; perhaps it was because I couldn’t make sense of ‘likeness’. Just what might ‘the likeness of His death’ mean, and how does that ‘unite’ me with Him?

While translating Romans into Portuguese I bumped my nose on this verse again. In order to translate something, you need to decide what it means. ‘Likeness’ doesn’t make any better sense in Portuguese than it does in English. What to do? I decided to analyze the semantic area covered by the term—the semantic area of a word is determined by the sum of the contexts in which it may appropriately be used. When I am working with the Text, I always ask the Holy Spirit to illumine me as to the intended meaning. In this case, I believe He gave me the word ‘projection’—it remains for others to evaluate whether I was illumined, or not.

Let us analyze the term. The sun projects heat and light, this projecting being a result of something that happens within the sun, its internal combustion. When we are impacted by that heat and light, we share in the result of what happened within the sun. A firearm projects a bullet, so much so that it may be called a projectile. The projection of the bullet is the result of something that happens within the firearm—if you are hit by the bullet, you share in the result. Images that are projected are caused by something that happens within the projector; and so on.

It is only when someone is appropriately impacted by the projection of the results of Christ’s victory on the cross that he becomes united with Him. Now then, being impacted by a projection is one thing; taking advantage of the results that are projected is something else. Although all who live on this planet are impacted by the heat and light that the sun projects, obviously not all make equal use of that heat and light. It is equally obvious that Christians take advantage of the results of Christ’s victory at very different levels.

Consider 2 Peter 1:2-4.

“May grace and peace be multiplied to you¹ through a real knowledge of God² and of our Lord Jesus,³ 3 in that His divine power has granted to us all things *pertaining* to life and

¹ “Multiplied”—not just a little, lots. In his first letter Peter ended the salutation here, but now he fleshes out the means.

² As our genuine knowledge of God grows, so the amount or degree of grace and peace we receive also grows.

³ Here the reference is to two persons, Father and Son—although the grammar could be taken to indicate a single person, in which case I would render ‘of God, even our Lord Jesus’ (or ‘Jesus our Lord’). But looking at the next verse, “His divine power” refers to the Father, because “the One who called” refers to the Son.

godliness, through the real knowledge of the One¹ who called us by glory and excellence,² 4 through which³ He has granted to us such precious and extraordinary promises, so that through these⁴ you may become partakers of a divine nature,⁵ having escaped the depravity that is in the world because of lust.”⁶

Please note verse 3: “His divine power has granted to us all things *pertaining* to life and godliness”. These are things that Christ’s victory projects toward us; it is up to us to take advantage of that bounty. I suppose that few of us would deny that we need help in that direction. That is where the Holy Spirit comes in.

Allow me to give my understanding of the sequence of events involved in receiving new life in Christ:

1) I believe into Jesus. The Text always has ‘believe into’ (εἰς) Jesus or His name, never ‘believe in’ (εἰν). A change of location is involved, from being outside of Christ to being in Him. That change involves commitment.

2) He baptizes me with Holy Spirit. Matthew 3:11, Mark 1:8 and Luke 3:16 all have the Baptizer saying that Jesus will baptize people with Holy Spirit. So when and how does Jesus do it? I take it that after Pentecost He does so from His position at the Father’s right hand (1 Peter 3:21-22), and He does it as soon as a person believes into Him. Cornelius offers a concrete example.⁷ (Please see my article, “Baptisms in the Bible”, available from my site: www.prunch.org.)

3) Holy Spirit regenerates me, giving me a new nature.

4) Probably at the same time, He baptizes me into Christ’s body. 1 Corinthians 12:12-13 explains that it is the Holy Spirit who baptizes us into Christ: “. . . so also is Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body.” The primary reference here is probably to the Church as being Christ’s body.⁸

¹ Again, we only appropriate the complete provision for “life and godliness” to the degree that we grow in our genuine knowledge of God. As Creator He made everything upon which life depends, including life itself, but our understanding of and appreciation for His provision is measured by our relationship with Him.

² I take it that Peter is saying that it is the glory and moral excellence of Christ that attracts us, but there is the extraordinary promise that we can share in those qualities, as he spells out in verse 4. Instead of “by glory”, perhaps 19% of the Greek manuscripts have ‘by His own glory’ (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

³ “Which” is plural and presumably refers back to “glory and excellence”.

⁴ The promises—but of course we have to appropriate them.

⁵ There is no definite article with “divine nature”; “become” indicates a process—the more like Christ we become, the more divine will our nature be.

⁶ At times Peter’s syntax seems to be almost as convoluted as Paul’s; the first four verses form a single sentence. The precise interrelationship of the dependent clauses is not transparent. The notes above give my understanding of Peter’s intent. It is the inordinate desire (lust) for anything in this world that leads to depravity. The proper amount of food, drink, pleasure, money, power or whatever is a good thing. It is when people want more that they get into trouble.

⁷ “To **Him** all the prophets bear witness that through His name everyone who believes into Him will receive forgiveness of sins.” While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell on all who were hearing the message (Acts 10:43-44). This was the crucial bit of information they were waiting for, what they had to do to be saved. The minute Peter said, “believe into Jesus”, they did! And the Holy Spirit came upon them!

⁸ A secondary reference could be to Jesus’ physical body. If we become part of Jesus’ body, then whatever happened to that body happened to us. If that body died, we did. If it was buried, so were we. If it was raised from the dead, we will be too. Correction—we already have new life in Christ, and are to live on that basis.

5) Then Holy Spirit takes up residence within me, and my body becomes His temple (1 Corinthians 6:19). It is the Holy Spirit within me who helps and enables me to appropriate the benefits that Christ's victory on the cross projects towards me.

"Now since we have become united with Him through the projection of His death, we will certainly be so through that of His resurrection as well." I suspect that "united with Him" is supposed to mean more than people tend to think. Just for starters, consider John 14:12: "Most assuredly I say to you, the one believing into me, he too will do the works that I do;¹ in fact he will do greater works than these,² because I am going to my Father." And then there is Luke 10:19, Ephesians 1:19, Ephesians 3:20, and on, and on.

¹ This is a tremendous statement, and not a little disconcerting. Notice that the Lord said, "will do"; not 'maybe', 'perhaps', 'if you feel like it'; and certainly not 'if the doctrine of your church permits it'! If you believe you **will do!** The verb 'believe' is in the present tense, 2nd person singular; if you (sg) are believing you will do; it follows that if you are not doing it is because you are not believing. $2 + 2 = 4$. Doing what? "The works that I do." Well, Jesus preached the Gospel, He taught, He cast out demons, He healed all sorts and sizes of sickness and disease, He raised an occasional dead person, and He performed a variety of miracles (water to wine, walk on water, stop a storm instantaneously, transport a boat several miles instantaneously, multiply food, shrivel a tree—and He implied that the disciples should have stopped the storm and multiplied the food, and He stated that they could shrivel a tree [Peter actually took a few steps on water]). So how about us? The preaching and teaching we can handle, but what about the rest? I once heard the president of a certain Christian college affirm that this verse obviously could not mean what it says because it isn't happening! Well, in his own experience and in that of his associates I guess it isn't. But many people today cast out demons and heal, and I personally know someone who has raised a dead person. Miracles are also happening. So how about me? And you?

² Well now, if we cast out demons, heal and perform miracles, isn't that enough? Jesus wants more, He wants "greater things" than those just mentioned. Notice again that He said "will do", not maybe, perhaps, or if your church permits. But what could be 'greater' than miracles? This cannot refer to modern technology because in that event such 'greater things' would not have been available to the believers during the first 1900 years. Note that the key is in the Lord's final statement (in verse 12), "because I am going to my Father". Only if He won could He return to the Father, so He is here declaring His victory before the fact. It is on the basis of that victory that the 'greater things' can be performed. Just what are those 'greater' things? For my answer, see my outline, "Biblical Spiritual Warfare", available from my site: www.prunch.org.