

P.S.

All in all or some in some

GOD'S AIM is to be all in all. That much is clear enough because the Scriptures say so (1 Cor. 15:28). But what does it mean, and how does it compare with the situation prevailing today?

Perhaps the translations might help throw some light on the matter. Might they suggest a different nuance to the phrase, an entry-point into the task of interpretation?

As it turns out, they don't. The language used is as simple in Greek as it is in English; the thought that the language conveys equally profound.

Only one mainstream translation differs from the conventional "all in all", and it is the RSV, which opts for "everything to every one". But, as a brother pointed out to me recently, such a translation is a backward step. For it diminishes the equilibrium of the passage, in that it selects two terms ('everything' and 'every one') that are not precisely the same. It makes *what* God is to become different from those *in whom* He is to become.

It might seem a pedantic point, but the equal balancing of the phrase is important. God is to be *all in all*; what He is on the one side He is on the other, perfectly matched and equal everywhere. He is to become all that matters, absolutely everything.

So, a brave attempt from the RSV, but one that is ultimately unsuccessful. "All in all" is probably the best translation.

As is often the case, it can be helpful to compare what the passage does in fact say with what it might have said but didn't. If it is the case that God's purpose is eventually to become all in all, what can be said about the state of things today, the state from which God is to move forwards towards His goal? Could it be said, for instance, that nowadays God is 'all in some'?

If only it were so! The second half is right; most of the inhabitants of the world do not seek God, and so, what God is, He only is to *some* at the present time: the faithful remnant.

But to us, those who seek His face as mem-

bers of that remnant, we often do not allow Him to be our all, even if that is what we would theoretically like Him to be. We forget Him; we rely on ourselves; we turn our faces away and hide; there are areas of our lives where we ignore Him; we think we can make it on our own.

In the traditions of gospel music there is a song with the lines: "He is my only possession; He is my everything". Nice words; but they are aspirational. The reality is often much different. I need to *make* Him my everything; I need to learn the principle of God being all in everyday life.

So we are left at the present time in a position where God can only be described as 'some in some', in contrast to that goal of where He wants to be. It is not satisfactory, and this is one of the ways by which we know that God's purpose is not yet fully resolved.

These thoughts nevertheless leave us with a sense of what changes need to be made, both personally and globally. There will one day be a time when God will be the only One that matters, and we will find ourselves (or lose ourselves) totally in Him. For that to be the case our natures must be changed—as is indeed God's plan—for we shall be partakers of His nature on that fine day.

But for the present we are left with a task to accomplish, a sense of how we can better align ourselves with His great scheme. For if God is *some* in some now—some for me in my life and some for you—then it must be our goal to allow Him to become *more* in some (and, through the work of preaching, more in more).

I must open my heart wider and cast my cares away. I must increasingly cut out the notion of myself, more largely doting on Him and devoting myself to Him. He must become my everything, in my own life my all in all, in preparation for the Kingdom, in which that is absolutely what He will be for those who find grace in His sight.

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