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An Alphabet of Christ

"B" - Beginning

Kent Hendrickson, Ontario, WI

In this brief meditation, we wish to consider another title of our Lord Jesus Christ. While a search for the word "beginning," or the words "the beginning," in the Bible will yield many results, we would like to consider the times that the expression "the beginning" could be considered a title of the Lord Jesus. We will see that this title ascribes preeminence and honor to our blessed Savior in regard to creation and redemption.

The title, "the beginning," as applied to our Lord Jesus Christ, is found at least three times in the New Testament. In Colossians 1:18 we read, "And he is the head of the body, the church: who is **the beginning**, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence." Twice in the book of the Revelation, Christ is said to be "the beginning." In Revelation 3:14 we read, "And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, **the beginning** of the creation of God." Revelation 22:13 records the words of Jesus to John, "I am Alpha and Omega, **the beginning** and the end, the first and the last." It is noteworthy that also in the book of the Revelation, God is twice referred to as "the beginning" (Rev. 1:8; 21:6). The fact that both the Father and the Son are referred to by the same title serves to remind us of the equality and the unity of purpose and action of both of

these Divine Persons, and will preserve us in our interpretation of the title, "the beginning."

While we think of "the beginning" as a starting point, that is, the origin of something, it is evident that this is not true of our Lord Jesus Christ as to His Person. We rejoice and marvel at the words of John 1:1-2, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God." Whatever time (or absence of time) we assign to "the beginning," the scripture states that "the Word was." That is, He already existed at "the beginning." Therefore, He existed before "the beginning." The Bible clearly teaches the eternal existence of the Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ. The writer of the book of Hebrews, in establishing a contrast between the Levitical priesthood linked with the descendants of Abraham and the priesthood of Christ after the order of Melchisedec, makes this striking statement concerning Melchisedec, "having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God" (Hebrews 7:3). Melchisedec, at least as to the record of scripture, was "made like unto the Son of God" in having no "beginning of days."

Hebrews 1:10 quotes the words of the Father speaking to the Son as, "And, Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands." This reinforces the truth of John

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1:1-3. The work of creation is attributed to the Son of God. As we think of the words of Revelation 3:14, "**the beginning** of the creation of God," we cannot interpret them as meaning that He was the first "thing" created by God. In order to interpret the words in harmony with the rest of scripture - a vital necessity in all scripture interpretation - we must see the statement as linking our Lord Jesus Christ with creational activity. We might link this with the statement of Ephesians 3:9, "God, who created all things by Jesus Christ." The words of Proverbs 8:21-31 have often been linked with the person of Christ. In verse 22 we read, "The LORD possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old." Verse 23 reads, "I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was." The references to "the beginning" in both verses predate creation, being qualified by the words, "before his works of old," and "or ever the earth was." While there are distinct difficulties and doctrinal dangers associated with trying to make all the elements of the description of Wisdom correspond with our Lord, there are also lovely correspondences, clearly taught in the New Testament, that have been enjoyed by many commentators and saints through the ages.

The words of Colossians 1:18, "And he is the head of the body, the church: who is **the beginning**, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence," link the title of our Lord as "the beginning" with His headship of the Church. His headship is established by the fact that He is "the beginning." All of God's eternal purposes concerning the Church find their origin in Christ. The Church owes its existence to Him. The resurrection of Christ marks Him out as the beginning of a new creation. As verses 15 through 17 declare Him to be the source and sustainer of the physical creation, verse 18 declares Him to be the source and preeminent One in a new spiritual creation. The resurrection of Christ is the beginning of a new type of resurrection in which every believer will share. This truth is developed in 1 Corinthians 15:20-23, where we read in verse 20, "But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept."

The words of Revelation 22:13, "I am Alpha and Omega, **the beginning** and the end, the first and the last," form a fitting summary for the last book of our Bible. While we are very much aware that the New Testament revolves around truth concerning the Lord Jesus, we are assured that the Old Testament is occupied with Him as well. He challenged the Jews who found fault with Him in John 5 with the words, "Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me" (verse 39). In the encounter between our risen Lord and the two on the way to Emmaus, we read, "And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself" (Luke 24:27). From the beginning of the Old Testament to the end of the New Testament, all the scriptures are saturated with truth concerning our Lord Jesus Christ.

As we conclude our meditations on our Lord Jesus Christ as "the beginning," may our hearts bow in thanksgiving and worship to think that our Savior is the preeminent starting point of God's purposes in regard to creation and redemption. He is truly the beginning of all that now exists, both physically and spiritually, and he is the beginning of eternal blessings that we will enjoy, without end, because of His death and glorious resurrection.

The silence of scripture is the weakest foundation on which to build".

Norman Crawford

The Body of Christ-- the Local Assembly

Larry Steers

The exercise of this article is to state fundamental assembly truths which were most certainly believed among us (Luke 1:1). We are living in days of change. Alterations to old assembly practices are often based on the

silence of scripture. The reasoning often is, "If the Word of God says nothing for or against a contemplated change of order or practice, the introduction of the contemplated change must be acceptable." The writer heard from our respected brother Norman Crawford that, "the silence of scripture is the weakest foundation on which to build".

In Ezra's day a small number of exiles had been allowed by Cyrus to return to the land from the Babylonian captivity. In Nehemiah chapter 8 they gathered at the water gate longing to hear God speak to them. There had been seventy years of silence prior to this. Ezra heard the longing cry of the people, "bring the book" (Neh. 8:1). As the precepts were expounded by Ezra the people wept (Neh. 8:9). Truth was revived in the heart of a people who longed to hear from the book. They were obedient to teaching that they had not practised in Babylon. "And they found written in the law which the Lord commanded by Moses, that the children of Israel should dwell in booths in the feast of the seventh month (Neh. 8:14). They kept the feast of tabernacles "with great gladness" (Neh. 8:7).

How Saints should long for such a genuine response to the scriptures today!

Our exercise is to write clearly that we hold precious truth relative to the Body of Christ and to indicate some of the great differences between the Body of Christ and the local assembly.

With reference to the last sentence, there seems to be in the minds of some an element of confusion as to the distinctive differences between "the church which is His body" and "the local assembly gathered in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ".

With this before us, we will go back to consider afresh Matt. 16.

The Lord asked His disciples a question so vital at the time, but today as well. "Whom do men say that I the Son of Man am?" (v. 13) The response reported by the disciples also reflects the attitude of the world today, an attempt to degrade the person of Christ. "Some say that Thou art John the Baptist: some Elias: and others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets" (v.14). How interesting that the Sadducees, who did not believe in the resurrection, were

gathered with the Pharisees against Jesus (v. 1) and seem to be saying that He was one of the Old Testament saints resurrected in order to degrade his person and teaching.

The Lord was concerned about the few men surrounding Him and more specifically asked "But whom say ye that I am?" (v. 15) Do we not love Peter? He would give no one else an opportunity to respond to the Lord's question. What a precious, vital response: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" (v.16).

Peter's answer expressed the vital, fundamental truth the Lord wanted to hear. He will now use Peter's confession to introduce a profound truth with a statement all are familiar with. "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (v. 18). The Lord used two very distinct Greek words. Peter is the word "PETROS" which means a detached stone, a little stone. The word for "rock - upon this rock" is "PETRA" meaning a massive, large rock". The Lord will now introduce a great truth about the church He is building.

The foundation will not be Peter, "PETROS", but "PETRA", the rock of Peter's confession, " the Christ, the Son of the living God".

Let us take a look at the word "church" (v. 18), used in our Bible for the first time. This important word "EKKLESIA" is found 115 times in the Bible. It is translated "church" every time with three exceptions (Acts 19:32,39,41) where it is used of a secular gathering and is translated "assembly". Given the perception the world attaches to the word, a building of brick, stone etc., the word assembly is perhaps the better translation today. A local assembly is a gathering of believers meeting in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

With the exception of Acts 19, in scripture the word "EKKLESIA" is used in two very distinct ways. In Matthew 16 it is synonymous with Ephesians 1:22-23 "to be the head over all things to the church which is His body". The church He is building is "His body" of which He is "the head". But the same word identifies the local assembly in 1 Cor. 1:2, "Unto the church of God which is at Corinth". Christ is Lord relative to the local gathering, but head of the church which is His body.

BODY OF CHRIST

The word "body" is used as a metaphor. A metaphor is a word or example used to illustrate another truth because there are similarities or resemblances. The human body is used as a metaphor to illustrate the church which is His body. As suggested already, the church which is His body is composed of two parts illustrated by the human body used as a metaphor.

1. THE HEAD Again, Eph. 1:22 "And gave Him to be the head over all things to the church which is His body". Notice Eph.4:15 "Which is the head even Christ": and Col. 1:18 "He is the head of the body, the church". As the head of the human body directs and controls so Christ as the head of the church. The head is in heaven. We will note below other activities of the head..

2. THE BODY In the metaphor, the human body, embraces every part of the human body. So the Body of Christ is composed of every believer from the day of Pentecost until the rapture. Most of these saints are in heaven, a few are still upon earth and perhaps a few yet to be saved between the present moment and the rapture.

It then is very evident that this church, which is His body, has never met in one place on this earth. In contrast the assembly is "local" and encompasses the believers in a locality who are gathered unto the Lord's name, hence the assembly at Corinth (1 Cor. 1:2).

There are many local assemblies referenced in the Bible and today spread across the acres of earth. There is only one "church which is His body". In Matt. 16:18 the Lord said "I will build my church". The word church here is singular, therefore only one. The scriptures clearly emphasize this great truth. Paul wrote, "There is one body" (Eph. 4:4). He again reminds us, "This is a great mystery but I speak concerning Christ and the church (Eph. 5:32).

Looking at the church as a building or holy temple (Eph. 2:21) we would consider

3. THE BUILDER. The builder of this edifice is the Lord. He clearly said, "I will build my church" (Matt. 16:18). No man, except the Lord, ever stood upon this earth in absolute holiness. He is a perfect builder. There are no flaws in His work. He is building as one who

accomplished what no other could. He builds based upon His death, burial, and resurrection. He accomplishes this great work by a holy spirit empowered gospel, resulting in genuine conversions. What a solemn responsibility to present a full gospel, effecting real repentance and conversion, forcefully directed like an arrow to the soul of the sinner by an unhindered Holy Spirit.

Our Lord, a perfect man, is a perfect builder. There can be nothing foreign in the church which is His body. This aspect of the church is not rent asunder, by sin or by heresies distressed. Well might we sing with all our being:

“View the vast building, see it rise
The work how great, the plan how wise”

And again:

“In Him it is ordained to raise
A temple to Jehovah’s praise
Composed of all His Saints who own
No Saviour but the living stone.”

In contrast to “the church which is His body”, the local assembly can be plagued with sin, division and error. One only needs to read the first chapter of 1 Corinthians to quickly see the fragile character of the local assembly. Two of the seven assemblies in Rev 2 and 3 were in danger of losing their lampstand of testimony. Ephesus was told, “I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy lampstand out of his place, except thou repent” (Rev. 2:5); and Laodicea was warned, “I will spew thee out of my mouth” (Rev. 3:16).

In contrast to the local assembly which can be destroyed or cease to exist, the “church which is His body” is indestructible. Our Lord powerfully and clearly stated, “the gates of hell shall not prevail against it” (Matt. 16:18). If it were possible for the gates of hell to swing wide open and unleash against “the church which is His body” all of its power and demon activity, such awesome force would not, and could not prevail. It would be futile for the hordes of hell to attempt.

Hence “the church which is His body” proclaims the beautiful truth of eternal security. While a sinning believer can be excommunicated from the local aspect of the church, never could he be removed from the church which is His body. Well might we shout with conviction:

“Once in Christ in Christ forever
Thus the eternal covenant stands”

But again, “the church which is His body” is eternal. It is the bride of Christ. The Lord has one longing that has yet to be fulfilled. He waits in heaven for us to be with Him perhaps far more than we long to be there. What a moment awaits us when, for the first time we shall see His face and sing the anthem of heaven: “And they sung a new song saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation” (Rev. 5:9).

The local aspect of the church is for a testimony to the grace of God, and the exaltation of the Lord upon this earth, and will no longer be needed after the rapture.

We have only mentioned a few of the numerous differences between the “church which is His body”, and the local assembly with the purpose of showing that there are distinctive differences.

In concluding this article two solemn questions arise and must be considered.

First, are all believers in a local assembly godly believers? How we would long for such conditions to exist. But, the solemn and sad answer is “no”. The apostle Paul had to remind the Corinthians “ye are carnal” (1 Cor. 3:4). Should the Lord evaluate assemblies today as He did in Rev. 2 and 3, we fear reading what He might say. Hardly today is there genuine assembly repentance as He demanded of five of those seven assemblies.

But the second question is, “Are there godly believers, part of the Body of Christ but not in Assembly fellowship? The answer is a resounding “yes”. But we do fail to understand how they miss the local assembly in the scriptures they study and read. Searching the Word of God, why are they not like those in years past who left the systems which originated in the minds of men and gathered outside the camp? Or is it possible that the assembly has become more like the systems that the very real distinctive differences has been clouded.

May God preserve assembly testimony until the Lord returns.

The doom of apostates is no less sure than the glorification of the saints” (Jude 11).

Prepared #2

Robert Surgenor

WORSHIP - The Prince Prepared

"And it shall be the prince's part to give burnt offerings, and meat offerings, and drink offerings, in the feasts, and in the new moons, and in the sabbaths, in all solemnities of the house of Israel: he shall prepare the sin offering, and the meat offering, and the burnt offering, and the peace offerings, to make reconciliation for the house of Israel" (Eze. 45:17).

In Israel's coming day, when Christ shall reign from the river to the ends of the earth there will be certain days appointed by God for the princes to offer in the millennial temple. Just as Israel's offerings in the past dispensation were but types and shadows, pointing forward to the great sacrifice of Christ at Calvary, so in the future millennial reign of Christ there will be sacrifices offered in commemoration His sacrifice on the cross. In the Church age, God instituted the Lord's supper that His people would be held in constant remembrance of the Lord, and in the coming age God will institute sacrifices that His earthly people will be held in constant remembrance of Calvary. No matter what age, there can be no true worship apart from the affectionate calling to remembrance of our Lord and His sacrifice for our sins.

Consider the exhortation to the Hebrews; "By Him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to His name" (Heb. 13:15).

To offer, one must be a priest. Peter defines the Christian priesthood into two segments; A holy priesthood and a royal priesthood. "Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. ... But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvelous light" (1 Pet. 2:5,9).

Upon trusting Christ, we immediately became priests. There is nothing in scripture to

indicate that a person has to attend a seminary, or college to become a priest. No! No! that may be Christendom's way, but it certainly is not God's way. I know a man who came to this country to study for the Roman Catholic priesthood. It was to be a long drawn out process, but a Christian relative took him to a gospel meeting, and before that meeting was over, he walked out the door a full fledged holy and royal priest of God. He had trusted Christ as His Savior during the meeting. How great God is!

As holy priests, we enter the sanctuary with the sacrifice of praise to God for His Son. "I will praise the name of God with a song, and will magnify Him with thanksgiving. This also shall please the LORD better than an ox or bullock that hath horns and hoofs" (Ps. 69:30-31). We sing with all of our heart, and we thank him in prayer, with all of our heart. God hates halfheartedness. I have heard pitiful singing in some places, and in other places quite the opposite.

Many years ago, while holding a series of gospel meetings in Labrador, what impressed me the most was the singing. It was vibrant, and wholehearted. Even after the meeting, while leaving the hall, the saints were all singing, and it was loud. I had never seen the like before, and it left a lasting impression in my heart. An average bull on today's market will bring over \$7,000. How many times have you put \$7,000 into the offering, at the Lord's supper? Well, try singing with all of your heart, that brings even more pleasure to God.

Royal priesthood comes second. A royal priest is one who enters, not the sanctuary, but rather the street, to proclaim to their fellow men the virtues of God in the gospel. You cannot effectively project the gospel if you are not first an effective worshiper. The holy priest is a worshiper, offering up, and the royal priest is a warrior, showing forth.

In the next dispensation the priest will be instructed to "prepare the sin offering, and the meat offering, and the burnt offering, and the peace offerings, to make reconciliation for the house of Israel" (Ezek. 45:17). Included also will be the drink offering. Let us correlate those offerings with our offerings today.

The sin offering. When we worship, expressing to our Father our gratitude and

thanksgiving for Christ having died for our sins, we are offering a sin offering. How wonderful to tell God that "He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Cor. 5:21). We thank the Father for the Lord saving us. That's the sin offering.

Next mentioned is the meat (meal) offering, consisting of fine flour mingled with oil. Scripture says; "And when any will offer a meat offering unto the LORD, his offering shall be of fine flour; and he shall pour oil upon it, and put frankincense thereon" (Lev. 2:1). This offering typifies the life of our blessed Lord. The flour was to be fine, for there was no unevenness in Him. Every attribute was in perfect balance, blended evenly in His manhood by the Spirit. How beautiful to trace the manhood of our Lord in our worship, expressing to the Father the perfections of the Man Christ Jesus, as He moved among men.

The meat offering was blended together with oil, an emblem of the Holy Spirit, pointing to the fact that our Lord was endowed with power from on high. "And John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon Him" (Jn.1:32). "For He whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto Him" (Jn. 3:34). Christ acknowledges the operation of the Spirit in His life: "But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you" (Matt 12:28). "And He came by the Spirit into the temple" (Lk. 2:27). "And Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness" (Lk. 4:1).

Finally there was the placing of frankincense on the meat offering, indicating the fragrance of our Lord Jesus Christ. Very often I hear brethren in their worship quote these words; "And there came a voice from heaven, saying, Thou art My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Mk.1:11). That's placing the frankincense on the meat offering. "He that sent Me is with Me: the Father hath not left Me alone; for I do always those things that please Him" (Jn. 8:29).

The prince was also to prepare the burnt offering, typifying the total consecration of our Lord to His God. This was an offering of a sweet smelling savor, accompanied by the meat offer-

ing. Unfortunately in our worship there seems to be more emphasis on the sin offering than the burnt offering. Yet in the burnt offering we have the highest aspect of our Lord. Only He could say, "I restored that which I took not away" (Ps. 69:4). Commencing with the first Adam, God was robbed of glory, but the last Adam (Christ) restored glory to God. "I have glorified Thee on the earth: I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do" (Jn. 17:4). Rightfully so, we hear brethren praising God for what Christ has done for them, but wouldn't it be refreshing to also hear much of what Christ has done for God?

Another offering prepared was the peace offering. The unblemished animal was to be offered as a sweet savor. This offering was not offered to procure peace, but rather to declare that peace had already been made. Thus today we gladly exclaim to the Father that our Lord has "made peace through the blood of His cross, by Him to reconcile all things unto Himself" (Col.1:20). We rejoice in the fact that, "being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. 5:1).

The drink offering was the pouring out of wine, giving expression of joy. Truly, like Mary we can say; "My soul doth magnify the Lord, And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Savior" (Lk. 2:46-47). The Spirit, through Peter, says to us; "Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see Him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." (1 Pet.1:8).

These are the offerings that were to be prepared before their offering to the Lord. What carefulness and diligence was seen in the prince before he offered. The selection of the animal and its preparation involved much work. "My meditation of Him shall be sweet: I will be glad in the LORD" (Ps. 104:34). However, meditation takes time. I have observed saints entering the gathering at the last minute, huffing and puffing, and plopping down in their seat. Can one say that they are meditating? Hardly! Rush, rush, rush, with hardly any time to breathe, is a poor way to come into the presence of an holy God to present an offering. Uttering a multitude of memorized and worn out statements is hardly presenting an offering worthy of God's acceptance.

Without careful preparation, our offerings are but empty words. Remember, God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence (honor, respect) of all them that are about Him" (Ps. 89:7). Where is the reverence, honor, and respect, rushing in at the last minute? Where is the reverence, honor, and respect, dressing casually in His gathering? May the Lord stir us up to realize the august holiness of God, that His fear might grip our souls to show Him His due respect and honor, for He is holy. Remember His searching words to you; "Be ye holy; for I am holy" (1 Pet. 1:16). Let us prepare to offer scripturally, intelligently, and fervently.

(continued)

Murmuring by Israel three days after passing through Red Sea with victory over enemies proves that miracles do not result in great faith. Rather it is the result of absolute confidence in God's trustworthiness.

MINISTRY ACCORDING TO THE PATTERN

Order versus Confusion

A. P. Klabunda, Indiana, Pa.

Read 1 Cor. 14:26, 40; 16:14

There are three similar expressions used here, yet each has its own distinctive ministry to fulfill in the "perfecting of the saints, in the work of the ministry, in the edifying of the body of Christ," and when each is observed by those who minister in the Church, the beauty and harmony of God's order is enhanced, and is in contrast to that seen as of man in our day.

FIRST: "Let all things be done unto edifying", or **THE PURPOSE OF MINISTRY**. The

context shows the various gifts ministering in the Church as governed by the Head through His Spirit for the edifying, the building up of the Church which is His Body. The gifts here employed are men with spiritual enablements, each functioning according to his several ability unto edification. There is the possibility however, of some attempting to give ministry which is not of a constructive nature, hence the exhortation follows: "Let all things be done unto edifying." Anyone holding views and practices contrary to sound doctrine is unfit to minister in holy things, the overseers are responsible before God to prohibit all such. Great care and wisdom is needed to guard against men who have, not only removed the ancient land-marks and walk no longer in the old paths, but rather encourage not alone toleration, but association with, loose principles in church fellowship teaching new things and things that are not "most surely believed amongst us". Regarding such who cause occasions for stumbling (to trip up) contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned, there is one command, **AVOID THEM**.

When the purpose of ministry is for the use of edifying and not for party spirit, exaltation of self or gain, it always exalts the Head through the members; thus ministry that exalts Christ is not a great flow of beautiful words **ABOUT HIM**, but ministry coming **FROM HIM** that searches the heart, corrects our ways, and leads in paths of holiness; fitting us to enjoy communion with Him and enabling us to appreciate and adore His excellent worth. No believer who is out of fellowship with the Lord can exalt Him, either by words or by actions. How needful then for ministry to correct, reprove, rebuke and instruct us in our erring ways. Such ministry comes through gifts operating in subjection to the Head, which will then react on the members. No doubt the apostle had this in mind when he wrote those words in his first epistle: "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God, if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth, that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever" (1 Pet. 4:11).

SECOND: "Let all things be done decently and in order", or the **ORDER OF MINISTRY**.

Here we have that which, if recognized, would control both the time and order in which such ministry is given. To minister "decently", is to do so in a becoming manner, worthy of the Head from whence it comes. To minister "in order", is to minister in keeping with God's mind and arrangement, being led by the Spirit into all truth. In Corinth disorder marked the day, and confusion followed; among some of the evils current was the diversity of words and opinions. It became so pronounced that the apostle beseeches them to "all speak the same things", and to be "all perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment." What could be more out of order than when one ministers after this manner and another after that, agreeing neither in doctrine nor in practice. Is there a remedy? Yes, "let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus," one of humility, esteeming others better than ourselves. (R. V. "counting others better than ourselves"). This would in a definite way result in unity of thought and action. The observance of this practice would highly commend the order of our meetings, locally or at conferences, to every man's conscience. Instead of that rush to the platform (which has resulted in man supplanting the Holy Spirit by appointing those who are to minister, whether he be an Ahimaaz or a Cush), there would be a waiting on God, a fear upon those to whom the burden of the Lord is committed; a fear, not that another will step up before him, but a fear lest he err either as to time or as to a message. Ahimaaz ran and was first to David, but he had no tidings ready; Cush was not as fast on foot but he had the message, though not to David's wishes. Thus invariably, a message that comes from God first kills and then makes alive, wounds and then binds up. May God deliver us from ministry that does not reach our life. To transgress the exhortation then can only result in confusion, for such ministry is unprofitable, and tends to disrupt rather than to build up, and is likened unto the talk of the lip which tendeth only to penury; but ministry given "decently and in order" is like a "word spoken in his season, how good is it;" yea, it is like "apples of gold in pictures of silver".

THIRD: "Let all your things be done with charity", here we have the **POWER FOR MINISTRY**, the love of Christ constraining. It was

love that moved the heart of God to give His Son to the death of the curse; it was love that led Him on to deep poverty, shame and the cross. This love is shed abroad in our Hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us, and if not restrained will direct ministry that will reach the hearts of the Lord's people, in every circumstance. "Love seeketh not its own," therefore ministry that seeks not the good of others comes from a selfish motive. Sometimes ministry is given which is more like a battle of words, using the people of God for the battleground; and the man that can speak great swelling words, having men's person in admiration because of advantage often carries away the greatest spoil Paul the apostle kept back nothing that was profitable, a help to God's people, ministering the whole truth without fear or favor, yet mingled with tears and temptations, *speaking the same things in all the churches*. It is this kind of ministry that will give morale to individual believers and assemblies so that they will not be deceived by "good words and fair speeches", tossed to and fro, and "carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;" "for of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them."

The question may be asked, "How are we to know or discern if ministry is given with charity?" Ministry that is not according to truth is destructive, and ministry which does not lead the people of God in a path of separation religiously, socially and politically from that which tends to mingle the holy seed with the unholy, and weakens our power for God, leaving no clear and definite tone of testimony unto His name can readily be discerned as carnal. Ministry given with charity has a threefold responsibility: love for Christ, love for the truth, and love for the brethren. Love for the truth is to minister the word in uncorruptness, not handling it deceitfully, nor holding it down in unrighteousness; love for Christ is to minister Christ to the heart, unfolding His person, work and worth; love for the brethren is to so minister as to reach the heart and conscience, effecting a more godly life and walk, and greater devotion to Him. Love is so closely associated

with keeping His commandments that they are not to be divorced. "He that hath my commandments and keepeth them he it is that loveth Me." It is said that we should love all the people of God, and have fellowship with those who are clean in life and sound in doctrine. To this we most heartily agree. Love for the brethren is one of the marks of the Divine nature within, and should be in evidence toward the whole family of God at all times, regardless of race or creed. As for "fellowship with them all", that depends not alone on life in Christ and light from the Word, but upon the measure in which they walk in the light. "Can two walk together, except they be agreed?" There is but one Divine principle by which fellowship is enjoyed, as John the apostle says: "If we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John 1:7).

As to being "sound in doctrine", could it be said of one who denies both His Word and His name, that he is sound in doctrine and in practice? Obedience means denial of self, that the life of Christ might be lived over again through us before the world. It is, written of John the apostle that he was in the "Isle of Patmos for the Word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ." Also it is written of others in Rev: 20:4 who were "beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the Word of God". It was love for Christ and His Word that took away the liberty of some, and the heads of others, whereas many today have not obeyed the first principles of Christian obedience, among which are: baptism, gathering in His name alone, and the keeping of the feast. Thus it becomes self-evident, that fellowship with all the people of God is restricted and restrained, due to the lack of practiced light. In the Lord's message to the church of Philadelphia in Rev. 3, who was it the Lord was going to make a pillar in His temple, having the name of His God and the city of His God upon him? Was it not to those who had "kept His Word and had not denied His name"? After Moses had made the tabernacle in all things "according to the pattern showed to thee in the mount", we read, "The glory of the Lord filled tabernacle"; so when we carry out all things after the pattern given us in His Word, men will say: "God is in you of a truth", and God will be glorified through the

Church. Thus there is a reward in the keeping of His commandments.

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Claiming All That Is Ours in Christ

A. W. Tozer

Those spiritual blessings in heavenly places which are ours in Christ may be divided into three classes: The first is those which come to us immediately upon our believing unto salvation, such as forgiveness, justification, regeneration, sonship to God and baptism into the Body of Christ. In Christ we possess these even before we know that they are ours, such knowledge coming to us later through the study of the Holy Scriptures. The second class is those riches which are ours by inheritance but which we cannot enjoy in actuality until our Lord returns. These include ultimate mental and moral perfection, the glorification of our bodies, the completion of the restoration of the divine image in our redeemed personalities and the admission into the very presence of God to experience forever the Beatific Vision. These treasures are as surely ours as if we possessed them now, but it would be useless for us to pray for them while we journey here below. God has made it very clear that they are reserved for the time of the manifestation of the sons of God (Romans 8:18-25). The third class of blessing consists of spiritual treasures which are ours by blood atonement but which will not come to us unless we make a determined effort to possess them. These are deliverance from the sins of the flesh, victory over self, the constant flow of the Holy Spirit through our personalities, fruitfulness in Christian service, awareness of the presence of God, growth in grace, an increasing consciousness of union with God and an unbroken spirit of worship. These do not come to us automatically nor must we wait to claim them at the day of Christ's coming. They are to us what the Promised Land was to Israel, to be entered into as our faith and courage mount.