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The Mystery Of Christ

T. Ernest Wilson

The last decade of the first century A.D. was critical for the infant Church. Its doctrinal foundations were being undermined by heretical teachers with pagan ideas. As Paul had foretold, the wolf from without and the false teachers from within were doing their nefarious work (Acts 20:29-30). Chief among these were the Gnostics. Their name means "knowledge", and they professed to have specialized information that the ordinary believers did not possess. Of these there were two parties. The leader of one was Cerinthus, who taught that Jesus was the natural son of Joseph and Mary, and that the Divine Spirit took hold of Him only after His baptism, but forsook Him on the cross. Another party, the Docetists, denied the reality of His manhood and of His human body. They linked evil with the flesh; therefore, they claimed His body was merely a phantom.

The Apostle John, last survivor of the Apostolic Band, lived at Ephesus where Cerinthus also lived and taught. In these adverse circumstances, toward the end of his life, John wrote two books to combat these teachings and to restate for all time the truth concerning the person of Christ.

History frequently repeats itself and today the same ideas are being taught by heretical cults. The vital center of Christianity is Christ, and as Carlyle has said, "If this doctrine of the divinity of Christ had been lost, Christianity would have vanished like a dream."

The key to John's doctrinal books hangs by the door. His Gospel defends the essential Deity of the Son of God, and in the first paragraph four pregnant sentences clearly state this fact. In a similar arrangement, his First Epistle has in the opening paragraph four verbs which specifically describe His perfect humanity. The two passages are parallel

and should be studied together.

The Deity Of Christ

In the four clauses of John 1:1-2, are four walls guarding the person of Christ from external attack. Throughout this chapter John uses four titles of Christ, "The Word," "The Lamb of God," "The Son of God," and "The King of Israel". These give four phases of His character and work. For the present we are concerned with "The Word". The term reveals our Lord Jesus Christ as the Spokesman of the Godhead. He is the visible interpreter in time of the mind and purposes of God. Critics would like to tell us that John copied this word from Philo the Alexandrian, but it is more likely that John is using an Old Testament term and is thinking of how God spoke to men in the past, and of how these revelations are now concentrated and consummated in His Son. Let us look at John's four opening clauses.

"In the beginning was the Word": This takes us back to creation. The statement runs parallel to the first sentence in the Bible, "*In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth*". These simple words have survived all the attacks of evolutionists, pantheists, and atheists. Astronomers quote fantastic figures in terms of light years for the birth of the suns, planets, and island universes. Their theories change with years, but we can put complete confidence in the inspired statement of the Word of God. At the origin of all things "The Word" was already there. John's first proposition is the **Eternal Preexistence of The Word**.

"And the Word was with God": This implies, first, a dis-

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tinct personality, and in second place, fellowship between at least two persons.

The doctrine of the Trinity is denied today, but while Scripture does not use the word, the doctrine is woven into its warp and woof. God the Father purposes; God the Son redeems; God the Spirit proceeds from and executes the purposes of the Godhead. St. Patrick's object lesson of the shamrock, the three leaves on the one stem, plainly illustrates this truth.

"And the Word was God": Here is the great essential statement. John Trapp the Puritan divine said, "This whole Gospel is a continuous demonstration of Christ's Deity, (which began to be denied, while the Evangelist lived, by Ebion, Cerinthus, and other antichrists)". We may also add, by many in our day. John goes on to demonstrate that while here on earth, Christ possessed all the Divine attributes, yet at the same time He was in complete subjection to the Father's will.

"The same was in the beginning with God": Here the three previous statements are summarized and emphasized. The four expressions give us the length, breadth, depth, and height of the essential Deity of Christ. They set forth "The Word" as being Eternal, as being a Person holding communion with God, and as being in Himself Divine. "John does not stop to define his terms, but at the end of his prologue identifies this Eternal, Personal, and Divine Word as his own Lord and Master", (A. Maclaren). The remainder of his Gospel is the marshaling of the witnesses to His Deity, climaxed by the confession of the erstwhile skeptical Thomas as he saw Christ in resurrection, "My Lord and my God".

The Humanity Of Christ

John's first epistle was written at the close of his life. In it there is a change of emphasis from his Gospel. While the Gospel was written to prove that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God (John 20:31), the epistle was written to show that Jesus Christ came in flesh, (1 John 4:1-4).

His introduction (1 John 1:1-3) gives us four verbs which clearly describe the historic Christ and His manifestation among men. This first paragraph refutes the Gnostic Docetic teachings prevalent in John's latter years which denied the true corporeal humanity of Christ. *"That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon (contemplated), which our hands have handled of the Word of Life."* The four words, "heard", "seen", "contemplated", "handled", show that He was audible, visible, intelligible, and tangible. They give a progression in the intimacy with, and in the revelation of the Perfect Man, Christ Jesus, in the same bodily senses of other men. He was manifested to the ears, eyes, minds, and hands, of the people. Note how he begins.

"That which was from the beginning": The beginning here is different from that in the Gospel. There it was the beginning of all things, the creation of the Universe; here it is the beginning of Christianity, i.e. from Bethlehem. The prepositions in the two passages are different and make clear this distinction. As far as Deity is concerned He was in (en) the beginning, but as touching His humanity He was from (apo) the beginning, i.e. from His manifestation among men. Then again the tenses of the verbs are different. The first two, "heard" and "seen" are perfect tenses and describe a series of experiences retained as a permanent possession; the latter two, "contemplated" and "handled" are aorist point tenses and indicate a definite incident in the writers mind. Let us look at them.

"which we have heard": First at the Jordan, and then for about three years under His incomparable teaching. After 60 years the words were still a part of John himself. In this Epistle he quotes many expressions from the teaching of the Lord in the upper room, "Abide," "Love one another," "Eternal life," "The Word," etc. This truly is the manifestation of Christ to ears and hearts. *"Faith cometh by hearing."* The testimony of those sent to arrest Him was, *"Never man spake like this Man"*.

"which we have seen with our eyes": Here the Lord is manifested visibly to sight. John's Gospel begins with, *"Behold, the Lamb of God"*, (John 1:29), and ends with Pilate's statements, *"Behold the Man," "Behold your King,"* (John 19:5 and 14). John is careful to assert that he himself was an eyewitness. He says, *"We beheld His glory, glory as of an only begotten from a Father, full of grace and truth"*, (John 1:14 R.V.) He saw the scenes in Pilate's Judgment Hall, (chap. 18:15), at the cross, of the piercing of His side from which flowed blood and water, (chap. 19:35). Repeatedly he refers to the evidence of his eyes. It was no optical illusion but something which a sensible fisherman, a reliable witness, saw and understood.

"which we have looked upon (contemplated)": The Greek word, "etheasametha", indicates a spectacle which broke upon John's vision, says David Smith. It is a point tense looking back to a specific incident in his life. This might be invertly illustrated by the occasion when John and Peter stood in the tomb. As the two men looked at the disposition of the grave clothes, and the head-cloth lying wound around (entulisso) in the place where the head had lain, it evinced to them that a miracle had taken place. The body had passed from the clothes leaving them collapsed in the shape and position of how and where the body had been; *"And they saw and believed,"* (John 20:3:8).

"and our hands have handled": The physical body of the Lord had been made real to their sense of touch. John here employs the very word used by the Lord on Easter Day, *"Handle Me and see, for a spirit hath not flesh and bones"*

as ye see Me have", (Luke 24:39). This was the tangible evidence that Thomas wanted. Thank God! Even skeptical Thomas was completely satisfied, and he reached the highest point of adoration in this Gospel when he cried, "My Lord, and my God".

Thus the prefaces to John's Gospel and to his First Epistle are complimentary, and give us the complete truth as to the glorious Person of our Lord. Another has expressed it: "The Eternal Son, equal in power, majesty, and glory with the Eternal Father, possessing all the attributes of essential Deity, in incarnation became what He never was before. He took into unity with His Deity, perfect, sinless, holy, humanity, never more to be divided or separated. In Manhood He still possessed the full plenitude of the attributes, the outward manifestation of glory being veiled or covered. While on earth He emptied not Himself of these Divine attributes but of their independent use. He was voluntarily subject to the Father's will."

As we think of these tremendous truths, let us bow the knee and acknowledge Him as Lord of all.

What you are afraid to do before men you should be afraid to think before God.

Propitiation

Peter Simms

Read: Rom.3: 25; Lk 18:13; Heb.2:17; 1 Jn 2:2; 4:10; Ps 85:10.

The word Propitiation means to appease or satisfy, having a placating or expiating force, or to appease by sacrifice. Sin has invoked or activated the wrath of God, and if His wrath is not appeased, the human race is doomed to eternal banishment from the presence of God forever (2 Thess. 1:9). Much of Christendom's theology has removed this aspect of God's character. They say a lot about His love, but, very little, if any, about His wrath, thus detracting from the glorious message of the gospel. For if God is not overly concerned about sin, why should anybody else be? This is a deficiency in their theology despite the fact that the scripture says much about the wrath of God (Ezra.10:14; Ps. 78:31; Jn. 3:36; Rom.1:18; Eph. 5:6; Col.3:6; Rev. 14:10,19; 15:1,7; 16:1) which must be appeased, if it is to be averted. The idea of appeasing the wrath of another is also seen in Gen.32:20; Esther 2:1; Acts 19:35.

There is "a throne set in heaven" (Rev. 4:1) from which the universe is preserved and maintained as a cosmos, so preventing it from descending into chaos. Likewise, to prevent the wrath of God from obliterating the human family, there must be found a way to appease and avert the His wrath against rebellious sinful man. Every overture of grace and mercy extended to a rebellious world by God must have a

righteous basis on which this offer is extended. For this to happen, God's wrath must be appeased. On no other grounds can God pardon a sinner, and at the same time maintain His integrity. Let's consider Ps. 85:10 "*Mercy and truth have met together: righteousness and peace have kissed each other*". Perhaps a hypothetical illustration will help. Young Johnny was told by his Dad that if he was caught swearing again, he would be punished. Well the next day he deliberately challenged his dad, and swore. Suppose his Dad simply ignored it. In doing this, Dad would lose his integrity in the eye of his son, for he failed to carry out his own word. He lied. On the other hand, if he had carried out his word, justice would have been served, but, it would have been at the expense of mercy. Dad could not be just and merciful to Johnny at the same time; one or the other had to be discarded. However, with God this is impossible, for if mercy is to be shown, it cannot be at the expense of God's integrity. He must remain just in showing mercy (Rom.3:24-26) to the guilty. We must understand that God's holiness and love were reconciled concerning sin in the eternal past, through the work of His Son (1 Pet.1:19-20). It was not an after-thought to meet an unexpected disaster.

Here is where the great doctrine of propitiation comes into play relative to the gospel. It is the death of the Lord Jesus Christ as it relates first of all to God. The Lord Jesus, in dying upon the cross, exhausted the wrath of God against sin. He cried out in the darkness of Calvary "*it is finished*" (John 19:30) and in that, He gave to God a sacrifice for sin of such infinite value that God was appeased or satisfied because His just claims against sin had been perfectly met in the death of His Son. On that grounds, He is now free to extend his mercy to whomsoever He will, and be righteous in doing so. Propitiation does not inject compassion into God, but it rather secures for God the freedom to express His unchanging compassion apart from any restrictions which penal judgment would otherwise impose (Rom.3: 25-26). The question has been asked, can God save anyone apart from the sacrifice of His Son? The answer is an emphatic **NO**. Can God, on the other hand, show mercy to someone who has never heard of His Son, and His death on the cross for sinners? The answer is an emphatic, **YES**. Examples are Abraham Gen. 15:5; Naaman the Syrian 2 Kings 5:1-19; Nebuchadnezzar Dan. 4:28-37; a poor Israelite Lev. 5:11-13.

Ps. 19 is the Romans 1 of the OT and it was where God directed the eyes of Abraham the idolater. Upon believing God, he was declared just, with no knowledge of the gospel as we know it today. The same is true of Nebuchadnezzar the heathen king who looked to the heavens and worshiped God. God is free to extend his mercy to whosoever, and wherever He pleases, and to do so on the righteous basis of

the propitiatory death of His Son who settled once for all the matter of sin before Him. Justice claims have been fully met, and God has been appeased in the death of His Son.

A careful study of Ps. 19:1-6, and Rom. 1:18-23 will go a long way to help along these lines, showing us that no man will ever be in hell because he never had a chance to hear the gospel. These two chapters settle this matter conclusively. God has spoken to mankind in three ways; 1. The spoken word: revelation, Ps. 19: 1-4. 2. The Living Word: incarnation John 1:1-2,14; 3. The written word: inspiration. 2 Tim. 3:16. If anyone on our planet, whether in the past, present or future has or will respond in faith relative to either one of these three he will find salvation. Abraham did in Gen. 15:5-6; and others by faith in God's revelation in the heavens. The blind man in John 9:36-8 did so by faith in the Living word. The Ethiopian did so in Acts 8:30-37, by faith in the written word. Because God has been propitiated, all men every where can be saved.

The Returned King

Psalm 2:7

Robert Surgenor

In Psalm 1 we have the Lord Jesus portrayed in His moral glory as the happy (blessed) Man. Psalm 2 brings us farther on in time and reveals the Lord in His official glory as the honored King. In the former Psalm He is likened to a Tree, in the latter He is sitting upon the Throne. Psalm 1 begins with "*Blessed*" while Psalm 2 ends with "*blessing*". What is unique about the second Psalm is the fact that verse 7 is the only numbered reference to any O.T. passage in the N. T. (Acts 13:33), confirming the thought that even the placing of the Psalms are of a divine order. Also very noticeable is the fact that this unique Messianic Psalm is quoted seven times in the N. T. (Acts, chapters 4 and 13; Hebrews, chapters 1 and 5; and Revelation, chapters 2 and 12). It is a Psalm bringing us to "*the Day of the Lord*", when in power and majesty He shall come to reign whose right it is to reign. As in all prophecies, we have in this Psalm, a partial (near range) fulfillment and a complete (far range) fulfillment, the former being at the trial of Christ ere going to Calvary (Acts 4:25-28), the latter yet to commence at the end of the great tribulation.

This Psalm also affords us four titles of our Lord, (verse 2) the Anointed, (verse 6) My King, (verse 7) My Son, (verse 11) the Lord (Jehovah) bringing before us the absolute deity of Jesus our Saviour. Being a song, this psalm is divided into four stanzas of three verses each. (1) Verses 1-3, the raging nations assembling against God. (2) Verses 4-6, a laughing God, and His reply against them. (3) Verses 7-9, a proclaiming Christ, declaring God's decree. (4)

Verses 10-12, an advising Holy Spirit, calling for the nations to submit, thus the Godhead's relationship to man. Man's attitude toward God has not changed through the years of so called "advancement". In our day the anti-Christian confederacy is forming rapidly. The hatred of the human heart against God is only too evident, and characteristics of the great tribulation are forming now before our very eyes! "*Let us break Their bands asunder and cast away Their cords from us*" (verse 3) is even the cry today! "Let us be free to commit all manner of sin, away with restraint!" As Eve acted on the lie of the serpent and dethroned God in her heart, so today we find the same attitude in the hearts of fallen humanity. The "*bands*" are that which fasten the yoke to the neck of the animal and the "*cords*" are the reins which guide and keep the animal under control. Man seeks in his heart to cast these off individually now, but in that coming day the nations will throng together, or "*tumultuously assemble*" (the meaning of the word "*rage*" in verse 1) seeking to accomplish this very thing nationally. The kings of the earth shall "*set themselves*" (verse 2). This is in the present tense, thus a continual, deliberate and hostile attitude toward God. The rulers will "*take counsel*" (past tense) showing that this conspiracy and confederacy will precede the mustering of their armies. The whole scene is one of hatred and rebellion against God.

Now the second stanza breaks in. "*He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord (Adonai) shall have them in derision*" (ridicule, scorn) (verse 4). It is not as Jehovah, the covenant God of Israel, but as Adonai, the sovereign ruler of the world that He will look upon all their efforts with contempt. How futile all their attempts will be, enough to cause the Almighty to laugh. God laughs, then speaks. Unlike mortal men, divine Persons accomplish their desires simply by speaking. "*God will vex them in His wrath*" (verse 5) seen in the final series of judgments of the Book of Revelation. God has determined, and all the forces of hell cannot stay it, that He will set His King upon His holy hill of Zion (verse 6).

Christ in the third stanza speaks. "*I will declare the decree*". He makes a public announcement of what has been eternally predestinated and appointed in the everlasting covenant. "*The Lord hath said unto Me, 'Thou art My Son; this day have I begotten Thee'*" (Verse 7). In other words, "*This day I have declared and manifested Thee to be my Son by investing Thee with Thy kingly dignity and placing Thee on Thy throne*". Thus Christ proclaims the Father's counsel concerning Him. He always was the eternal Son, but in that day ere He sets up His earthly kingdom, God, in His salute, will make public manifestation of His Sonship. His second coming will be the most complete vindication of His Sonship. Before the Lord went to Calvary He prayed not for the world but for His own children (Jn. 17:9), but when His redeemed are finally at home with Himself (the

rapture), His priestly ministrations will cease and then He will ask for the world, and receive from His Father's hand, its kingdoms. With a rod of iron He will subdue the rebel nations with stern, irresistible rule. Like a potter's vessel He will dash them in pieces, their ruin will be certain, irresistible and complete. Then with a golden scepter He shall rule His people, as a priest upon His throne, in righteousness and peace.

The Holy Spirit completes the song with the fourth stanza (verses 10–12) exhorting men to be wise, to serve the Lord with fear and to rejoice with trembling. A mingled experience as also found in Matthew 28:8, "*fear and great joy*". "*Kiss the Son*" Judas bestowed upon Him the kisses of deceitfulness and disloyalty. The kings of the earth and their rulers will be called upon to give expression of their homage and loyalty to the Son. The word "*Son*" in verse 7 is "*Ben*" (Hebrew, such as "*Ben-jamin*", son of the right hand) while the word "*Son*" in verse 12 is "*Bar*" (Chaldee, such as "*Bar-sabas*", son of rest or return). Thus we have His relation to God (verse 7) and to the Gentile governments (verse 12) as Son. What a wonderful day for our blessed Lord is yet to come!

In Acts 13, Hebrews 1 and 5, and Psalm 2, we see the superiority of God's Son over David, angels, present-day saints and nations. Let us adore Him brethren for His grace, His greatness, His glory and His coming day of governmental rule over all.

Good men are more tender over the reputation of Christ than over their own good name; for they are willing to lose the world's favorable opinion rather than that Christ should be dishonored.

Order in the House of God

1 Tim. 4:12-16

Joel Portman

Paul comes now to exhortative directives for Timothy's service in the assembly in Ephesus. He had a heavy responsibility to "command and teach" these things (that which goes before) in the assembly. A similar expression is in ch. 6:2. Both are in the context of godliness; this charge is for protection against the expected departure from the faith. That one is in relation to their conduct toward masters. These exhortations and instructions apply to all those who have an exercise to function honorably in a local assembly and to be an asset to the work of God in that locality. Let's not pass them off to Timothy and ignore their application to us!

Paul exhorts, or charges, Timothy to

Be an Example in his Testimony (v. 11-12)

Being a younger man (likely in his 30's), older men in the assembly who were opposed to his teaching might try to push him aside and show contempt for his ministry. It is not easy to resist that kind of opposition, and it requires a sterling example of conduct that would overcome any opposition to his teaching. Paul is not exhorting Timothy to assert himself as most would, but rather to overcome any contemptuous attitude by manifesting to them a high level of spirituality. How they were behaving was certainly wrong, but Timothy had no authority to personally resist them, not being an apostle. Rather he is to present himself as a pattern to the faithful believers in that assembly, and they would heed his ministry as a result.

This shows the proper means by which a younger person should seek to gain the confidence of older saints; it is not by self-assertion or aggressiveness, but rather by developing and displaying a spiritual pattern in behavior before others so that they recognize the qualities that display spirituality, or the control of the Holy Spirit. The only effective public ministry is that which is supported by a life that displays its reality. Those who desire to teach believers must manifest a personal character conforming to it.

Timothy will do this by being an example, or pattern in at least five (or six areas in the A.V.) of life.

"**In Word**", or by his speech. Careless talk that is more occupied with material things, worldly activities, or selfish occupation will certainly undermine the effectiveness of one's ministry. It must be guarded.

"**In Behavior**" indicates the overall tenor of his life, how he conducted himself and what he would be occupied with, his pursuits, ambitions and desires.

"**In Love**" means more than a sentimental emotionalism, but it is rather an evidence of Christian character that seeks the welfare of others and is willing to sacrifice to seek to enhance their well-being. It is expressing the pattern of the Lord Jesus in His willing, sacrificial work on our behalf (1 Jn. 3:14-18). Phil. 2:20-21 tells us that Timothy was marked by that kind of selfless interest in others and their blessing.

"**In Spirit**" is omitted in many manuscripts, but it is a term that certainly indicates his attitude and inward condition that should be seen in outward behavior and would regulate the other qualities of his life.

"**In Faith**" or in his complete confidence in God and assurance of God's Word being dependable. Through faith, he would be able to accomplish a work for God, knowing

that God would use him as a channel of blessing.

“**In Purity**” is last, but is very important. Purity and holiness mark a life that is separated from evil and occupied with seeking to do the will of God and to honor His Name. Ephesus was not much different from our world today, and in the evils that abound, a man of God must walk very carefully and with great exercise to keep himself/herself pure and free from contamination that will ruin one's life and effectiveness for God.

Be Attentive in his Activity (v. 13)

Paul emphasizes three vital areas of ministry: (The) Reading (publicly) of the Word, (the) Exhorting the saints, and (the) Teaching the Doctrines. These are joined together and all center on the importance of God's Word. It must be read in the gatherings of the saints. Not having Bibles as we do, this reading was essential so that all could hear and receive Divine truth. Evidently there were some of the epistles available along with the writings of the O.T. They were to be read, and from them, Timothy must give exhortation that is based on sound doctrine. The basis of exhortation (stirring the hearts and moving the will of the hearers to obey and practice) must depend on the solid foundation of the truth expounded and explained. Without that basis, such exhortation has little weight since, if the hearers do not understand the reasons, it will not affect them as strongly.

All three aspects of ministry are important in an assembly. Even though believers today have their own Bibles, there is great value in reading God's Word publicly in our gatherings. It should be read reverently, clearly, and plainly, and in a way so that all can understand what is said. But then it must be applied and taught so that the meanings of the passage are made plain. Application and exhortation outside of the context of Scripture is often wrong, and discerning saints can recognize that it has no relation to the contextual truth and will not accept it. How we handle the inspired Word of God is very important; careless use of and attitude toward the Holy Scriptures will breed contempt for it and our use of it in the minds of the hearers.

Be Useful in his Exercise (v. 14)

To fulfill the work that God had given him, Timothy had evidently received a gift that had been recognized by the elders of his local assembly, and he was responsible (as we all are) to exercise that gift in a spiritual manner. God gives spiritual ability for His work to be done, and in this case, it seems to be an ability connected with the reading, exhortation and teaching in v. 13.

This gift was personally given (“in thee”) and had been received, as are all spiritual gifts, as an expression of God's grace (Rom. 12:6). No one has any reason to boast in any

particular gift, but everyone has a responsibility to exercise that gift and to use it for the purpose intended. So Timothy is not to neglect the gift, or to fail to see its importance and not exercise it. If a believer does not concern himself to use the gift God has given, he is neglecting it and not allowing it to accomplish its purpose. This gift had been given along with a prophetic indication to others that Timothy had such a gift, and the elders had identified it and recognized that Timothy had received this ability. Now the responsibility to stir up and keep using this gift was his, and this emphasizes the personal responsibility of each believer in the same way. Local assemblies depend on believers being exercised to put whatever gift they have into practice, to use it in fellowship and harmony with other saints, and to seek to further God's work in that area through its use.

Be Diligent in his Service (v. 15)

“Meditate” is better understood as “be carefully attentive to” and it is the counterpart of “neglect” in v. 14. Do not neglect the gift on one hand, and be completely occupied in these things. This is not a part time work to be engaged in now and then, but it should occupy one's full time as much as is possible, since it is a work that is far greater than any occupation of earth. Timothy is to “be entirely in this work” and to immerse himself in it so that it might be accomplished toward the greatest results for God and His people. In this way, his profiting (or progress) would be evident to all. He would not need to “blow his own horn” or to advertise himself so as to gain the attention of others, but as they observed him in this kind of work and exercise, it would be very clear to them, even though he was a relatively young man and possibly somewhat diffident or timid in his attitude. We should be like those of a past day whose main occupation was to serve the Lord in whatever capacity they were given and to support themselves in that work by the means that they had in gainful employment. All believers are “the Lord's servants” and should be living with that privilege in view.

Be Vigilant regarding Dangers (v. 16)

His continuation in the teaching of God's Word and receiving its truths to himself would have a saving effect on his life and on the lives of his hearers. The chapter begins with Paul's warning about the character of departure that began in his days and has continued. What will preserve the saints? Only the clear teaching of the Word of God coupled with a heart exercise to obey and enjoy its truths. May the Lord help us in our day to emulate Timothy's example and seek to faithfully serve the Lord.

To pursue union at the expense of truth is treason to the Lord Jesus.

Ammon, Moab, and Amalek

By L. Shel Drake

God, by Moses, gave Israel instructions, in Deuteronomy, as to their future relations with these three peoples. They were enemies to Israel “by the way”, and their wickedness was not to be forgotten. Deut. 23:3-6 declares the sin of Ammon and Moab to have been, “*They met you not with bread and with water, **in the way**, but hired Baalim to curse thee*”. An Ammonite or a Moabite was not to come into the congregation of the Lord unto the tenth generation forever. Deut. 25:1, 7, tells us the sin of Amalek. “*He met thee **by the way** and smote the hindmost of thee, even all that were feeble behind thee, when thou wast faint and weary; and he feared not God. Thou shalt utterly blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven; thou shalt not forget it.*”

Israel neglected to carry out these instructions: and the time came when both Ammonites and Moabites were found in the congregation of the Lord: and Amalek lived to work destruction in God's inheritance.

These things have their teaching for us. They are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. The old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, is represented by Ammon, Moab, and Amalek. The first two had neither bread nor water for the people of God, and would sooner hire the false prophet to curse Israel than to lose what they desired for themselves alone. This is always true of the loathsome and covetous flesh. Amalek knew no mercy: destruction and misery were in his ways, the way of peace he did not know; there was no fear of God before his eyes. Thus it is with the unmerciful flesh; it is the sword of the devil to kill and to destroy all the vessels of mercy wherein is the testimony of God.

The Moabite is seen oppressing the congregation of the Lord in Judges 3:12-20. “*Israel did evil again in the sight of the Lord*”, evidently in the matter of idolatry; and God strengthened Eglon, the king of Moab, against them because of their evil-doing. Eglon, the king of Moab, was a very fat man, and he sat in a summer-parlor which he had “*for himself alone*”. What a sad plight when this principle—for self alone—oppresses the congregation of the Lord! This is the Moabite flesh that grows very fat on the portion that should have been for God and His glory. How different from the principle that prevailed at the beginning of the church's history when no one said that ought of the things that he possessed were his own! What blessing then, both in the Gospel and amongst the people of God! The love of money is a root of all kinds of evil: and the love of this present world hinders many a servant of Christ.

In Neh. 13, no less a person than Eliashib, the High Priest,

was allied to Tobiah, the Ammonite, and had prepared him a great chamber in the house of the Lord where aforetime they laid the meat-offerings, the frankincense, and the vessels, and the tithes of the corn, the new wine and the oil which was aforetime commanded to be given to the Levites, and the singers, and the porters, and the offering of the priests. God's servants were robbed of their portion; and were fled every man to his field. The Ammonite was getting it all. How prevalent unfaithfulness in the unrighteous mammon is! It is one thing to sing “Naught that I have mine own I'll call; I'll hold it for the giver”, but it is quite another thing to act it out. How often the Ammonite—for self alone—gets the portion that aforetime was laid in the temple of the Lord for the service of the Gospel! Possibly the unholy alliance of Eliashib with Tobiah accounts for the former not helping to build the wall, not even at his own house, (Neh. 3:20). The other priests repaired every one by his own house (ver. 28). But for the diligence of Baruch and Meremoth each repairing another piece beside their own portion, by the house of Eliashib, that part of the wall might have remained broken down, as far as he was concerned. The wall of separation is not often builded by men who are allied to the Ammonite: and so the shirking of some increases the burden of others.

Amalek is an enemy of another character; and perhaps even more to be dreaded. In the first place, when not able to defeat and destroy the whole congregation, he followed Israel by the way and **cut off all that were hindmost**, the faint and feeble. Haman, the last of Amalek on record, an Agagite, wrote a decree to destroy, to kill, to cause to perish all Jews. Agag might walk delicately, but his sword made women childless (1 Sam. 15:32-33). Amalek, as a master, left his servants to die, when sick and of no more use to him, (1 Sam. 30:13). Bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, evil-speaking, etc., are Amalekites (Eph. 4:30). They must be put to death or else Israel will be destroyed. God will have war with Amalek from generation to generation. The sick, the feeble, the weak, the uncomely, and the less honorable are necessary to our God. They are the objects of His unceasing care. The strong should bear the infirmities of the weak. The more advanced should make straight paths lest that which is lame should be turned out of the way. The less honorable members should have the more abundant honor bestowed upon them. This is the way of grace, and the way of God. Only hateful Amalek would destroy the feeble, and leave the sickly to perish. God's command to Saul was “*utterly destroy the sinners, the Amalekites*”. Rule for God, and according to God, is impossible if Amalek is allowed to live. Saul spared the best. Agag the king was evidently one of the best. His name means “princely” or “warlike” suggesting that he was a strong, noble-looking man, head and shoulders above the people, like Saul himself; but he was an Amalekite, and should have been slain

by Saul. Self defense, self justification, standing on my dignity, how these things are admired in the world!

The silence and meekness of Christ was despicable in the eyes of His murderers. *“Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not”* (1 Pet. 2:23): this was counted abject weakness when He was led as a lamb to the slaughter. Even the bold assertiveness of John the Baptist was lacking in Him, so Herod and his men of war set Him at naught. That which men would call warlike was wholly lacking in Him, though Himself the mighty One. He never once left the place of absolute dependence upon Jehovah. He has left us an example *“that we should follow in His steps”* (1 Pet. 2:21). How easy to call anger and malice, righteous indignation: or excuse our evil speaking, and thus spare Agag. The flesh objects to the humiliation of being counted weak. But God uses weak things, and things that are despised. Amalek must have no place though he be counted princely in bearing, and warlike in character. This is where Saul, and his kingdom, failed. He was the people's choice, and according to their heart. Saul's principle of rule by might is still highly esteemed amongst men. In David was seen that weakness that leaned upon God, and wrought victories by the might of Jehovah alone. God will not have the flesh and its workings in the congregation of the Lord. Ammon and Moab, if spared, will eat up His inheritance: and Amalek will utterly destroy all testimony for God, if allowed to live amongst us. WIS Feb 1922

Complicity with error will take from the best of men the power to enter any successful protest against it.

Spiritual Hints From 1 Corinthians 14

John Gray

The written ministry of Paul in 1 Cor. 14 is both corrective and instructive. Disorder in relation to priesthood and the functioning of spiritual gifts had to be dealt with. In dealing with such things he lays down God's order for ministry in the assembly and how spiritual gifts should function to the edification and building up of God's people. This pattern is wisely followed by every scriptural assembly that wants to carry out the Word of God.

The book of Acts records the first things of this dispensation. Assembly meetings are mentioned for ministry at Antioch in Acts 13, for prayer at Jerusalem in Acts 12, and for breaking of bread at Troas in Acts 20. All such meetings were open and operated according to the plan of 1 Corinthians 14. There was room for the exercise of priesthood (1 Pet. 2:5), also liberty for the exercise of spiritual gifts. The Spirit of God forms and indwells the assembly (1 Cor.

3:16) and enriches and equips it with spiritual gift (1 Cor. 12:7-11). The names of these nine gifts suggest their Divine use under the control of the Holy Spirit. The subject of 1 Cor. 14 is the operation of these gifts.

Ministry in the Assembly

Ministry in the assembly is Godward and saintward. Words such as pray, sing, thank and bless indicate the Godward aspect of ministry. Through these four channels prayer, praise, thanksgiving and worship ascend to God. This is also the priestly aspect of ministry. The word speak, is used a number of times. This is oral ministry through the channel of spiritual gifts, by which the assembly is edified and built up. This is the saintward aspect of ministry.

The assembly at Corinth did not pre-arrange or appoint the speakers for assembly meetings. This would have been impossible. The prophets did not have the New Testament then for ministry as the teacher has today. The Spirit of God who managed the first assemblies of God had the ability and right not only to choose the speaker but also the message that was needful for God's people. The prophets, understanding this, waited in a dependent way upon God for guidance and help. The wise counsel of the apostle to the prophets is seen in verses 29 and 30 of this chapter. The prophets were to speak "two or three" in an orderly way and thus be saved from the existing disorder at Corinth. He also points out the possibility of one getting a message while another was speaking. This prophet was to be silent until the first one had finished, thus manifesting subjection to Divine authority and the Apostolic plan for ministry. This was Paul's solution for the problem.

The gift of prophecy was superior to the gift of tongues (verse 5). The latter was a sign to the unbelieving Jew (verses 21,22). Both were temporary and have passed away; the former with the completion of scripture. Paul did not condemn speaking in tongues but in spiritual appraisal he gave it the place of a lesser gift (verse 5). The Corinthians sought after it as the greater gift. Paul's teaching would relegate speaking in tongues to its proper place and bring into prominence the gift of prophecy which was more important because of its edifying virtues and values. The gift of prophecy was used by God in a double sense, first to impart a message to meet the present needs of His people and secondly to unfold the unknown future. Today we have the prophetic word (2 Pet. 1:19) but not the prophetic gift. The full revelation of the future is contained in the Word of God.

Paul refers to the church or assembly about six times in this chapter. We gather from this that the teaching should govern the assembly when together or in session for prayer, praise, ministry or worship.

There is a difference between the tongues spoken at Corinth and those of Acts 2 at Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost. Both were miraculous. The speakers in Acts 2 did not understand their utterance, which was from the Holy Ghost (verse 4), the audience did, and this is borne out in verse 8. At Corinth an interpreter was required (verse 5). This was different from Pentecost. The speaker in the assembly at Corinth spoke a language he did not understand. The interpreter who explained the message got the interpretation from the Spirit of God. This was a Spiritual gift. Through this double medium of communication the assembly understood the message. The Apostle forbids speaking in tongues unless the speaker can interpret or there is an interpreter present. Proper understanding was essential to spiritual edification. The edification from speaking was more important than the exercise of speaking.

In grouping together all that is said about ministry by the Apostle we learn a number of important things. The purpose is the edification of God's people. The channel is through spiritual gift. The order is important, not all at one time, but in turn they were to speak, thus maintaining Godly order. The sphere is the assembly, the only place where such an order or pattern will operate.

Priesthood in the Assembly

In the exercise of priesthood, prayer and praise are referred to in verse 15. The singing, like public speaking, must be understandable. No mention is made of a musical instrument, as first assemblies did not have such. In Eph. 5:19, Paul refers to the songs that should be sung. Praise individually or collectively should be unto the Lord (Col. 3:16; Acts 16:25). This is a very important feature of assembly worship. Religious entertainment was foreign to the early believers.

One would assume from verse 16, where the writer mentions "bless or thanks", he is referring to an exercise of priesthood at the Lord's Supper. This is very important. We would again suggest that 1 Cor. 14 is the order or plan that should be adopted for the Breaking of Bread meeting. No where else in the New Testament have we any suggestion given as to how the meeting should be conducted. In Acts 20:7, when the disciples came together to break bread the day is given, and in 1 Cor. 11:26 the purpose, to proclaim His death till He come. Careful reading of this chapter will give proper understanding of the method adopted by the Holy Spirit of God in any meeting that is an assembly meeting. It would be wise to distinguish between an assembly meeting and a meeting arranged by the assembly which would be public and could be for gospel or ministry.

The woman's place in the assembly is important but not prominent. Where the point of public speaking is raised she

must be silent (verse 34). In 1 Cor. 11:5, her double covering is referred to. Long hair is her glory. To cut this is a shame. The outer veil or hat is the sign of subjection. This must be seen and maintained in the assembly. Paul states in 1 Tim. 2:11-15, she must not usurp authority over the man but be in subjection. The covered woman in the assembly is an object lesson to angels (1 Cor. 11:10).

It has been stated already that the gifts of tongues and prophecy have become obsolete. They are no longer required, they have served their purpose, so have passed away. Now the question can be raised; Is the original pattern of operation, given by Paul to the Corinthians also obsolete? No, this is God's pattern for every local assembly, gathered by the Spirit of God, unto the name of The Lord Jesus Christ. (Matthew 18:20). The absence of certain gifts in no way affects the pattern of operation.

The higher a man is in grace, the lower he will be in his own esteem.

Buried with Him by Baptism

William McBride

Realizing that many Christians, at the time of their baptism, gave little serious thought to the deep meaning of that ordinance, it is purposed, not to refer to the Lord's command regarding baptism, nor to consult passages which deal with the practice of the early Church, but to consider carefully the words of the Holy Spirit in the Epistle to the Romans chapter 6, and to draw attention to their teaching.

Verse 12 of chapter 5 deals with the principle of sin rather than with the practice of sins; these latter embrace the fruits of that original root, sin. In this passage the subject is traced back to one man, Adam, by whom sin entered the world bringing in its wake death for all human beings. In marked contrast to this dark picture, another Man is presented, even the man Christ Jesus, by Whose grace the gift of life is made available to all who desire it. Chapter 6 opens with the question, "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?" The Apostle intimates that there might have been some who reasoned that since grace abounded where sin increased that they might just go on sinning the more. Consequently he raises the question, "How shall we that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" The clause, "We that are dead to sin", is worthy of our serious and prolonged examination, for only in the measure that it penetrates into our minds and hearts, taking hold upon them, shall we be enabled to understand the true meaning of baptism, and lead a life that corresponds with

that public confession of our Christian faith.

We shall do well while studying this chapter prayerfully to note every reference made by the Apostle to “sin” and to “death”. The first of these is found seventeen times, and the second, in one or another of its forms, the same number of times. At the outset we become conscious of being associated with a large number of dead persons, and then we become conscious of their burial, their resurrection, and the new joyous life that they have through Christ. They now live in a manner so different from formerly when they were alive to sin. By the grace of God they have been saved, they live in Christ Jesus their Lord; and, consequently, are dead to sin. Once we were all dead in trespasses and in sins, separated by our iniquities from God and the life which is in Him, but now the opposite is true, for we have passed from death unto life, and have become dead, separated from that which formerly characterized us, from that which held us in bondage.

Recognizing ourselves to be dead, we request burial, for in the spiritual sphere as well as in the natural this is necessary. Of this burial Paul speaks in verse 3, *“Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death”*. How clear this makes the mode of baptism; it shows that only by immersion can we give expression to the truth of our death and burial together with Christ. If through the gospel one has learned that Jesus died for him, and if through believing that glorious message he yields himself to the Saviour, he will desire to identify himself with Christ on the cross in recognition of the fact that the death of Jesus has separated him from his sins and from the surrounding world; therefore, he will obey the command of the Lord in baptism.

We shall now raise several important questions, and seek an answer to them in this chapter. The first question is, When did the believer die? The answer is stated, *“Knowing this, that our old man is (better translated was) crucified with Him”* (v. 6). That day long ago, when Jesus was nailed between two thieves, you and I, dear Christian, were put to death. While some may not yet understand this fact clearly, much less feel that it is so, it must be accepted by faith. God says it, therefore it must be true. So corrupt is our old man (our carnal nature) that he cannot possibly be improved; moreover, God did not attempt to improve him, but nailed him to the cross of shame. The Lord now instructs all His children that they have died together with their Saviour.

Why were we put to death? This is another important question, and the equally important answer is given. We have already seen that our old man cannot improve for *“that which is born of the flesh is flesh”*. Consequently we have been put to death, *“that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin”*. Every

unconverted person is a servant of sin, some in greater measure than others, but concerning all, it is true that *“they that are in the flesh cannot please God”*. The Lord Jesus expresses it in the Gospel of John, *“Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin”* (8:34). Not only the openly ungodly serve sin, but many a born-again Christian, through the lack of yieldedness to his Lord, is, to a degree, ruled by that old taskmaster. One of the great reasons for the death of God’s Son was to deliver us from the power of sin. We can only enter into the blessedness of this liberty from sin as we believe the word of God.

The exercised believer will doubtless raise another question, for he is conscious of the struggle of the two natures within him, the spiritual and the carnal. He will ask, *“How may I overcome sin and make good in my daily life this truth of my death with Christ?”*

The answer is clearly and plainly stated, *“Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord”* (v. 11). Every child of God should become acquainted with himself, and be brought to realize that in the old nature there never has been and never can be anything good or even permissible. This is often learned only through painful experiences, but when once one is convinced of his own complete corruptness, he will welcome the good news of his death with Christ, and be happy, with the help of the Holy Spirit, to reckon himself dead indeed unto sin in the daily struggle against evil. In like manner he will rejoice in the reckoning of himself as alive unto God.

As this article draws to a close let us glance at verse 13, *“Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God”*. At Calvary, our old man was crucified with Christ Jesus; in our baptism we proclaim our identification with His death, burial, and resurrection; professing to have completely renounced the old self-life and also that we are the exclusive property of God. We must therefore not submit our bodies to be lightly used for self and sin, but rather we must yield them unto Him, recognizing ourselves to be a people *“alive from the dead.”*

Should these reflections be perused by any unbaptized Christian, it is hoped that they may present to him a real challenge, and that he may obey the wish of our Lord, *“In Whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ: Buried with Him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with Him through the faith of the operation of God, Who hath raised Him from the dead”* (Col. 2:11-12).