

OF UNITY IN PREACHING CHRIST

(By Daniel Sommer)

→ If Jesus the Christ, as revealed in the Bible, be as fully preached as he is there revealed, the unity of all true believers in Christ will soon be accomplished. The God who created man knew what kind of revelation to make and kind of book to give in order to make of man an obedient believer in his God. He knew what kind of physical light to give to man, also what kind of spiritual light he would need. He knew how to arrange man's eyes and ears, with all other of his powers, in order that he might learn how to live in this world; and we cannot justly doubt that He knew how to arrange man mentally so he could learn the divine will and do it. But in order for man to live and enjoy this life he must conform to the divine arrangements in regard to eating, drinking, exercising, breathing, sleeping. Same is true in regard to man spiritually while here on earth and in preparing himself for eternity. Everything on the divine side is all right.

→ God made the sun, moon and stars for natural lights. And if the theory be correct, that the sun gives light to the moon and every star, then that arrangement would illustrate Christ as the light of the world. Besides, the moon and stars are, on that supposition, inseparably connected with the sun, and the sun is inseparably connected with them. And this illustrates the fact that every book in the Bible is inseparably connected with Christ, and he is inseparably connected with every book therein—both individually and collectively.

→ A preacher of Christ was having an interview with an elder of the same church with himself. But that interview was interrupted. A lady of that church approached that elder with a book in hand and requested him to examine it and give to her his opinion of it. That elder said he was "a very busy man" and did not have much time for reading, and he would like to know what was in that book concerning which she wished his opinion. She said, "This book advocates the doctrine that we are saved by Christ and not by ordinances." That elder then turned to the preacher and asked, "What would you say of that doctrine?"

The preacher took the book and asked that lady, "Do you believe in Christ?"

"I certainly do!" was her response.

Then he asked, "Do you believe in Christ as revealed in the Bible?"

"I do," was the answer.

→ The next question was, "Are you aware that Christ is revealed in connection with his ordinances, and as inseparably connected with them? (Think before you answer.)"

"Of course he is revealed as connected with his ordinances," she said after a brief silence.

→ "Then," said that preacher, "don't you see the doctrine which declares we are saved by Christ and not by ordinances is erroneous; for the truth is, we are saved by Christ by means of his ordinances?"

"I never saw that before," said that lady; and with an expression of thanks took the book and left that preacher and elder to turn again to their interview.

Now the subject for this essay is clearly introduced, and we should consider it with all the honesty and

seriousness of which we are capable. We have thus far learned Christ is inseparably connected with the entire revelation made of him in the Bible. This means, preaching Christ and the oneness of his disciples for which he prayed in John 17th chapter are inseparably connected. In proportion as we preach him we preach the revelation made in the Bible of him. This needs only to be stated in order to be understood and admitted. With these general statements made and accepted we are prepared to specify:

1. Christ is inseparably connected with the first chapter of Genesis, for the apostle John so declares in first part of his first chapter: "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."

2. Christ is inseparably connected with the 12th and 22nd chapters of Genesis, where he was promised as the one "in whom all nations should be blessed."

3. Christ is inseparably connected with every other chapter in the book of Genesis; for while here on earth he endorsed that book without a criticism, even as he endorsed all other books of the Old Testament.

4. Christ was foreshadowed by the ordinances of the Old Testament, and specially by the national sin-offering made every year, and fulfilled in him and by him when he died on the cross for the sins of the world.

5. Then he was foreshadowed by the high priest of the Jewish law, as the apostle Paul indicates in Hebrews 8th and 9th chapters.

6. Christ was foreshadowed also by Moses, as we are informed in Deut. 18: 18, 19, also in Acts 3:22,23.

7. Christ is inseparably connected with the book of Psalms, for the second division of that book is entirely concerning him. Besides, much else is found in that book in regard to him.

8. Certainly Christ is inseparably connected with Isaiah 9: 6, where he is referred to as the "Prince of Peace"; also in the 53rd chapter where he is described as our suffering Savior.

9. Same may be said of all other prophecies concerning Christ in the Old Testament. He is inseparably connected with them.

10. Finally we may safely say Christ is inseparably connected with all else found in the Old Testament, for he certainly endorsed that Testament as a whole and never offered a criticism on any part. This does not mean he endorsed evils there recorded, but that he endorsed it as a record.

Now we are prepared to consider Christ's relation to the New Testament. He is inseparably connected with every book, chapter, paragraph, sentence and clause of the New Testament, either directly or indirectly, closely or remotely. This means he is inseparably connected with all his commands, promises, warnings, threatenings, sayings, appointments. This means, also, he is inseparably connected with water baptism and the baptism of the Holy Spirit, the baptism of suffering, the baptism of fire. Yes, and he is inseparably connected with eating of bread and drinking of wine in memory of him.

Now we are fully prepared to consider that preaching of Christ, as revealed in the Bible, is inseparably connected with the oneness or unity of believers in Christ. For in proportion as Christ is preached fully

by preachers they will all preach the same doctrine and discipline, church government and church order, worship and work. They will preach the same baptism in the same form and for the same purpose, the same communion to be attended to on the same day and for the same purpose.

Besides all this, preachers of Christ who preach him fully will preach his personal character as Jesus of Nazareth, also his official character as the Son of God, the atoning sacrifice, the supreme prophet, the great high priest, the King of kings and Lord of lords; and finally will preach him as the crowned Christ and Lawgiver for his people. Moreover they will preach Christ as the one who must rule till he will have subdued all earthly powers.

This means unity in preaching and unity in results! Therefore it means if Christ is preached as revealed in the Bible, and his own example of preaching is followed, then unity must result. (His example in preaching is here mentioned because seekers of popularity generally try to avoid reproving and rebuking. But Christ reproved in severest manner when occasion demanded. The 23rd chapter of Matthew's record of the-gospel is an indication of this and same is evident by other chapters of gospel records.)

In view of all this, evidence is abundant that preachers of Christ should be careful to preach him as revealed in both Old Testament and New. And as the record we have of Christ reveals only one church, which he called "my church" in Matt. 16: 18, therefore we should not speak nor write as if he had many different churches or bodies! And as he caused one of his apostles to write of "one Lord, one faith, one baptism," we should not speak of several baptisms or "modes of baptism". Certainly we should avoid preaching of "baptism by sprinkling"! Christ was baptized by suffering, to which he referred in Matt. 20: 22; and certainly he was not sprinkled on by his sufferings, but was overwhelmed by them. And certainly the apostles on the day of Pentecost were not sprinkled on by the Holy Spirit, but were overwhelmed by that Spirit. (See Acts 2nd chapter.) And certainly the wicked will not be sprinkled by fire when they will be cast into the lake of fire! (See Rev. 20: 15.)

Therefore preachers of Christ should not speak of being "baptized by sprinkling". Water baptism is the only appointment we are commanded to obey into the name of the Godhead and into the death of Christ. Therefore it should not be ignored, misplaced, nor pronounced a "non-essential"—if we wish to be certainly acceptable to God and finally receive the sentence, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant"; or that other sentence, "Come, ye blessed of my Father!"

Christ is inseparably connected with all he has commanded, promised, threatened, said. And we cannot ignore any part of what he has said without ignoring that much of him. In harmony with what has thus far been offered a certain poet wrote—

Jesus my Shepherd, Guardian, Friend,  
My Prophet, Priest and King;  
My Lord, my Life, my Way, my End,—  
Accept the praise I bring.

The apostle Paul began his exhortation for unity by an appeal to speak the same thing, as we learn by reading 1 Cor. 1: 10. And if we preach Jesus the

Christ as he is recorded fully, we shall find ourselves united. The doctrine—"In faith unity; in opinions liberty; in all things charity"—that doctrine might be all right if we would keep our opinions to ourselves, and never express them publicly or privately! But if we express them, and specially if we advocate them publicly and privately, then we are like the advocates of "personal liberty" who blow their tobacco smoke into your face! They enjoy "their" personal liberty,—but where is "your" liberty?

And thus with those who have thrust their missionary, musical, evolutional or educational opinions on their fellow mortals:—They have enjoyed "their" liberty, but what of those who did not wish to hear nor read of such opinions?

And same may be said of all others who have been immodest, urgent, obtrusive with their opinions. When "their" opinions have been resented, then controversy and division have resulted. "They chose new gods; then was war in the gates!" (Judges 5: 8.)