

THE MIND OF CHRIST IN PAUL'S RESPONSES TO THE PROBLEMS IN THE CHURCH IN CORINTH

BY JOHN PESTER

In 1 Corinthians Paul addresses a series of problems in the church in Corinth, beginning with the matter of division and continuing with a broad array of other problems throughout the remainder of the Epistle. In dealing with the first problem—division—Paul establishes a pattern that governs his response to each problem in Corinth: he manifests the mind of Christ to whom he is joined as one spirit. In the context of his response to a particular problem, he often asks a question that reveals the mind of Christ and his identification with it. These questions emanate from the mind of Christ, which is active and operating in Paul's renewed mind. His thinking is not based on Christ's mind in an objective or imitative way; it is actually the mind of Christ, the mind of the person to whom he is joined. In the details of his responses, he also exposes the unrenewed minds of the Corinthians, which reflect a reliance upon the wisdom of the age rather than the wisdom of God—Christ.

Paul's Manifestation of the Mind of Christ in Dealing with the Problem of Division

In the section dealing with divisions, which extends from 1:10 to 4:21,¹ Paul begins his discussion by writing, "I beseech you, brothers, through the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be attuned in the same mind and in the same opinion" (1:10). In the middle of the section, following a seemingly tangential discourse on the wisdom of God being demonstrated through the foolishness of preaching the word of the cross, which stands in contradistinction to the wisdom of the age upon which the Corinthians relied, Paul writes, "Who has known the mind of the Lord and will instruct Him? But we have the mind of Christ" (2:16). There is an intrinsic, experiential connection between the phrase *attuned in the same mind and in the same opinion* in 1:10 and the phrase *the mind of Christ* in 2:16 because being attuned in the same mind and in the same opinion, which alone can solve the problem of division, is possible only when a believer's mind is not fashioned according to this age but, rather, is being transformed by the renewing of the mind to become the mind of Christ (Rom. 12:2).²

By bookending his discussion of wisdom with a reference to being attuned in the same mind and in the same opinion with a reference to the mind of Christ, Paul establishes a pattern for dealing with the problems in Corinth according to the mind of Christ rather than the wisdom of the age. It is impossible for unrenewed minds that are filled with the many permutations of the wisdom of the age to be attuned in the same opinion, because differing opinions, the source of these permutations, abound and are even promoted.

In regard to the initial problem of divisions in the church in Corinth, different opinions were the root cause of the divisions. Consequently, Paul points out that the same mind and same opinion that were needed to solve the divisions in the church could be

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achieved only by the believers in Corinth manifesting the mind of Christ. Paul's discourse on the contrast between the wisdom of God and the wisdom of the age is, on the surface, seemingly, only a response to the cultural tendency of Greeks to seek wisdom (1 Cor. 1:22). However, in 1:18 through 2:16 Paul more deeply contrasts the wisdom of God, which is conveyed through the foolishness of the preaching of the word of the cross (1:18), with the high-minded Corinthians' apparent appreciation for the wisdom of the age in order to establish a pattern for dealing with the problems in Corinth. He does not present a doctrinal discursive on two epistemological sources—the wisdom of the age and the wisdom of God; rather, he admonishes the Corinthians to not rely upon the persuasive words of human wisdom, which prevent them from being full-grown in Christ (2:4, 6), so that they would know the true things that had been prepared for and freely given to them (vv. 9, 12).

Paul's pattern of dealing with a particular problem involves the repeated use of the rhetorical device of asking a question that is often introduced with the phrase *do you not know* (3:16; 5:6; 6:2-3, 9, 15-16, 19; 9:13, 24). The content of his questions conveys the divine perspective, the mind of Christ, on each particular problem, whereas the phrase *do you not know* rhetorically serves to remind the Corinthians that their reliance upon the wisdom of the age has deprived them of the ability to interpret spiritual things with spiritual words and to receive the things of the Spirit (2:13-14); thus, they do not know. The questions that Paul asks are short, simple, penetrating, and direct in the principle of letting yes be yes and no be no (Matt. 5:37).

In the section dealing with the specific expressions of the divisions (1 Cor. 1:10-17), Paul asks three questions: "Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized into the name of Paul?" (v. 13). The second question speaks to the reality of Christ producing the Body through His singular and signature death on the cross (Eph. 2:16). The third question speaks to the reality of the Body's identification and union with Christ through baptism into His death to be in one Body (Rom. 6:4; 1 Cor. 12:13). It is, however, Paul's first question that is the most on point in its revelation of the mind of Christ operating in his renewed mind. It pointedly exposes the problem of factions being formed in Corinth, with some saying that they were of Paul, others that they were of Apollos, still others of Cephas, and even others who ignorantly believed that their claim to be of Christ placed them on superior theological footing above the other factions (1:12). Paul's question—"Is Christ divided?"—cuts through the opinionated preferences generated by various aspects of the wisdom of the age, including the tendency to exalt gifted persons (Paul, Acts 14:11-15), to succumb to the influence of eloquence (Apollos, 18:24), to defer to position (Cephas, 3:12), and to self-aggrandize through association (Christ, Mark 10:35-37).

In response to the many seemingly irreconcilable factional interests in Corinth, Paul's simple and direct question reveals the divine mind of Christ. His question in 1 Corinthians 1 also foreshadows his subsequent revelation of the church being the Body of the corporate Christ in chapter 12. Such a Body is composed of many members who are one in Christ, with each member having a vital and indispensable function and yet is without a modicum of independence from or disparagement of the other members (vv. 12-22). In the one Body of Christ there is simply no place for factions, because divisions run counter to the principles of the Body, and a mind renewed with the mind of Christ recognizes the fallen source of such divisions and reacts like Paul. His first question serves to remind the Corinthians of the higher reality of the undivided Body of Christ that is embedded in and exclusively expressed through the mind of Christ.

Paul's Manifestation of the Mind of Christ in Dealing with an Evil Brother

In dealing with the problem of an evil brother involved in fornication with his step-mother (5:1-13), Paul asks five questions (vv. 2, 6, 12). The first two questions ask

incredulously: “And you are puffed up? And have you not rather mourned, that the one who has done this deed might be removed from your midst?” (v. 2). These questions seem to be merely a rebuke of the Corinthians’ casual, boastful, and shameless toleration of this corrupting situation. Indeed, it is difficult to imagine any philosophical system that could rationally, morally, or ethically condone and promote such an evil act, but apparently, one was present in the unrenewed minds of the Corinthian believers. Their being puffed up, however, speaks of a even deeper attitude that is incompatible with the mind of Christ, because no flesh can boast before God (1:29). The only boasting that issues from the mind of a person manifesting the mind of Christ is a boasting in the Lord (v. 31). Not being mournful also speaks of an attitude that is incompatible with the mind of Christ because a person possessing the mind of Christ will mourn the negative manifestations that issue from following the wisdom of the age. In a footnote on the word *mourn* in Matthew 5:4, which says, “Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted,” Witness Lee writes,

Satan, sin, self, darkness, and worldliness predominate among all people on earth. God’s glory is insulted, Christ is rejected, the Holy Spirit is frustrated, the church is desolate, self is corrupt, and the whole world is evil. God wants us to mourn over such a situation. (*Recovery Version*, note 1)

The need to mourn over the negative situation in the world pales in comparison to the need to mourn when these negative elements in the world are equally present in the church. If the situation in the church is such, what hope is there for the church and the believers to serve as a salting influence to cause people on the earth to be desirous of hearing the word of the truth, the gospel of their salvation (v. 13; Eph. 1:13)? There is a divine inclination to mourn and lament when God’s people defiantly besmirch and frustrate God’s plan. In this instance Paul’s mourning is akin to the Lord’s mourning over Jerusalem, whose religious leaders killed the prophets and stoned those who were sent to her, including Himself (Matt. 23:37).

Paul’s third question reveals his deeper consideration of the impact of the boastful and shameful toleration of the Corinthians upon the church: “Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump?” (5:6). While the word *leaven* certainly refers to the sinful act of the evil brother, it can also refer to the profane inculcation of the wisdom of the age into the minds of the Corinthians, which sustained the damage of the leavening action. Although their toleration of this evil brother truly grieved Paul, he was more deeply concerned about the negative impact of this toleration upon the corporate testimony of the church’s sanctified standing as the organic extension of the corporate Christ. The term *whole lump* clearly refers to the church as the enlarged expression of the corporate Body of Christ, as typified by the Passover bread and the one bread of the Lord’s table (v. 7; 10:17). *Lump* cannot refer to Christ, who, as the One who knows no sin, can never be associated with leaven; it must refer to the church as the enlargement of Christ. When the church fails to serve as the testimony of Jesus, as the pillar and base of the truth, the mystery of godliness cannot be manifested and proclaimed (1 Tim. 3:15-16), and thus the church as the whole lump is leavened.

Paul’s final two questions, which ask, “What have I to do with judging those who are outside the church? Do you not judge those who are within the church?” (1 Cor. 5:12), reveal the reaping of divine judgment in response to the sowing of evil in the church (Gal. 6:7). In unrighteous situations, especially those involving the church, God is not mocked; rather, He judges. These two questions point to the need for the church to judge according to the wisdom of God rather than to tolerate a dangerously misguided manifestation of the wisdom of the age. Paul is appealing for the judging of Christ to be borne in this particular situation, a situation in which there is a need for divine judgment to begin from the house of God (1 Pet. 4:17), and hence, Paul manifests the mind of Christ, saying, “Remove the evil man from among yourselves” (1 Cor. 5:13).

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Paul's Manifestation of the Mind of Christ in Dealing with Lawsuits

Paul deals with the problem of lawsuits among the brothers (6:1-11) in a small and seemingly cursory manner, covering it in just eleven verses. In contrast, the section dealing with division contains eighty-two verses, the section dealing with marriage contains forty verses, the section dealing with the eating of things sacrificed to idols contains seventy-four verses, the section dealing with gifts contains eighty-four verses, and the section dealing with the matter of resurrection contains fifty-eight verses. Of these eleven verses, however, seven verses contain nine questions exposing the Corinthians' serious deviation from the mind of Christ (vv. 1-5, 7, 9).

In the three questions in verses 1 and 2, Paul contrasts two spheres of judgment available to the brothers in the church in Corinth when they confront an offense or dispute among themselves—the worldly system of adjudication or judgment that is divinely relegated to the church. Related to the former, he asks, “Does any one of you who has a case against another dare to be judged before the unrighteous and not before the saints?” (v. 1). The worldly sphere of judgment is one of unrighteousness, and it is in no position to replace the judgment that is divinely relegated to the saints who will judge both the world and angels; thus, he asks, “Do you not know that the saints will judge the world?...Do you not know that we will judge angels?” (vv. 2-3).

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Following his depiction of the vast chasm between these two spheres of judgment, Paul turns his focus to the type of persons who are involved in the judging process: “those who are of no account in the church” (v. 4) and those who are wise and “able to discern between his brothers” (v. 5). Paul's use of the word *wise* in verse 5 indicates that the settlement of disputes is, in his mind, not merely a matter of ameliorating practical problems but a choice between relying upon the wisdom of the world or the wisdom of God. *Wise* in the context of his question is clearly an implicit repudiation of the wisdom of the age and an explicit elevation of the wisdom of God that is manifested through the mind of Christ. This shows that the mind of Christ needs to be applied not only to high and lofty matters but even to the small offenses that are part of the daily and practical interactions between the brothers and sisters in the church. In this regard Paul fully presents the mind of Christ concerning the settlement of disputes by, astonishingly, asking, “Why not rather be wronged? Why not rather be defrauded?” (v. 7). A person possessing the mind of Christ will not even seek a “judicial” settlement of a dispute, either in the world or through the church. Instead, he will willingly and hiddenly bear the wrong without seeking a judgmental settlement. This is akin to the Lord's response to not revile in return when He was being reviled (1 Pet. 2:23). Since the Lord exhibited this mind when He was being wronged, those in possession of the mind of Christ will respond accordingly, not seeking judicial redress, either in the world or even through the church. The willingness to be wronged maintains harmony in the church, and the willingness to be defrauded maintains an atmosphere of forbearance in the church according to the mind of Christ.

Paul's reference to the saints being judged “before the unrighteous” in 1 Corinthians 6:1 indicates clearly that there is an unrighteous element in the judgments of the world, and by turning to worldly adjudication, the believers in Corinth were participating in this unrighteousness. Hence, in his question in verse 9, Paul asks, “Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God?” This may indicate that our place in the kingdom will be influenced by the source of the wisdom that we, as believers, choose in resolving our differences with the brothers and sisters in the church—either the wisdom of the age or the wisdom of God. The willingness to be wronged and defrauded is surely a matter of foolishness in the eyes of the world, but it manifests the cross of Christ and the mind of the One who was crucified. Furthermore, the willingness to be wronged and defrauded is not an objective decision but a spontaneous, subjective response that issues from the constituted life of Christ in a person possessing the mind of Christ.

Paul's Manifestation of the Mind of Christ in Dealing with the Abuse of Freedom

In verses 12 through 20 of chapter 6, a section dealing with the Corinthians' abuse of their freedom in Christ in regard to food and fornication, Paul confronts a practical situation involving the principle that he states in Galatians 5:13: "You were called for freedom, brothers; only do not turn this freedom into an opportunity for the flesh." The Corinthians allowed their freedom in Christ to become an occasion for the indulgence of the flesh, and they were indeed fleshly (1 Cor. 3:3), especially in matters involving food and fornication.³ There was no thought in their minds of the divine imperative for restraint, because they were lacking an understanding of the role for the human body that God wisely assigned in the fulfillment of His plan. Paul begins to establish the connection by asking, "Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute?" (6:15).

Every part of a redeemed and regenerated tripartite believer—spirit, soul, and body—is joined to the Lord. It is easier to accept the reality that we are joined to the Lord as one spirit through regeneration and that we are increasingly being joined to the Lord through the transformation of our soul (v. 17; Rom. 12:2). It is much harder to see and accept that our physical bodies are members of Christ, especially when our concepts are so deeply spiritual-centric, but the physical vessel containing our spirit and soul is just as important as its contents, and it is joined to the Lord for God's full salvation to be carried out fully in the members of His Body. By abusing their freedom in Christ, especially in their indulgence of fornication, the Corinthians were joining their bodies, according to Paul's speaking of the mind of Christ, to an illegitimate prostitute: "Or do you not know that he who is joined to a prostitute is one body?" (1 Cor. 6:16).

The significance of our human bodies being members of Christ is seen in Paul's reference to the body being a temple of the Holy Spirit: "Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?" (v. 19). The temple in the Old Testament consisted of three parts—the Holy of Holies typifying the human spirit, the Holy Place typifying the soul, and the outer court typifying the body. The body is central to the fulfillment of God's plan for full salvation because His full salvation culminates in the redemption, the glorification, of our bodies, effectively confirming that the body of a believer is a member of Christ now as it will be then (Rom. 8:23; Phil. 3:21). According to the mind of Christ, the bodily abuse of freedom is not just a matter of committing sins but a matter that impedes the sanctifying process in the soul that is initiated when one is joined to the Lord as one spirit (1 Cor. 6:17).

Paul's Manifestation of the Mind of Christ in Dealing with Marriage

In chapter 7, a section dealing with practical matters involving marriage, the circumstances that Paul addresses concern the gift not to marry (vv. 1-7), the unmarried and the widows (vv. 8-9), the married (vv. 10-16), remaining in the status of one's calling (vv. 17-24), the keeping of virginity (vv. 25-38), and remarriage (vv. 39-40). These concerns do not seem to be as glaringly problematic as the other matters that he deals with elsewhere in this Epistle. It almost seems as if he is merely responding to general considerations that have arisen in the minds of the Corinthians about common situations involving marriage, considerations that all human beings confront, including believers in the church. And indeed, he is, but his responses come from the mind of Christ, as specifically revealed in his use of the word *remain*, which is related to the human status apportioned by God. It is good for the unmarried and the widows to remain like Paul (v. 8). If a woman is separated from her husband, she should remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband (v. 11). One should remain in the calling in which he was called (v. 20), and one should remain with God in the status in which he was called (v. 24). The divine goal of remaining in the status in which we are called, whether

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unmarried, widowed, or separated, is to remain with God, to walk according to God's unique and personally designed apportionment, in order to gain God (v. 17).

God's general operation in our spirit to gain us is largely the same for every believer; that is, each one of us needs to be strengthened in our spirit with power through the Spirit with the fourfold power that raised Christ from the dead, seated Him far above all, subjected all things under His feet, and made Him Head over all things to the church (Eph. 3:16; 1:19-22). God's consummating operation in our bodies, likewise, will be manifested similarly in each one of us at the moment of our glorification. His operation to transform our soul, however, varies in its application according to the different corrupt manifestations of our natural soul-life that need to be individually adjusted by the supply of the divine life. Consequently, one's apportioned status will necessarily vary; this is to touch the specific personal obstacles that hinder us from walking and remaining with God. These obstacles are very often manifested in matters related to marriage, and so, according to the mind of Christ in Paul, to remain in our circumstantial status provides the Lord the best opportunity to gain us in the quickest and most effective way. To seek a change in status that is not initiated by the Lord is to reject the Lord's best provision for one's transformation. The wisdom of God is to remain; the wisdom of the age seeks change for the sake of convenience and escape.

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Remaining not only effectuates the gaining of God, but it also has positive ramifications for those with whom we associate. In his question to those seeking separation, no doubt because separation is a convenient means of escaping the emotional turmoil of a difficult situation, Paul asks, "How do you know, O wife, whether you will save your husband? Or how do you know, O husband, whether you will save your wife?" (1 Cor. 7:16). By remaining and not separating, there is an opportunity for the fourfold power of Christ to be specifically manifested in the unique details of an individual marriage and to influence the marriage partner to turn to the Lord and thus be gained as well. What a testimony of the benefit of remaining in God's apportioned arrangement! And this reflects the mind of Christ. We should not seek release from our status as unmarried, widowed, or separated based on the wisdom of the age (v. 27), which is the source of the questions that the Corinthians proffered to Paul related to marriage. Paul's responses to the Corinthians' questions manifest the mind of Christ related to remaining and are in contrast to the wisdom of the age, which seeks ways of release from vexing circumstances.

Paul's Manifestation of the Mind of Christ in Dealing with the Eating of Things Sacrificed to Idols

In the lengthy section on dealing with the eating of things sacrificed to idols (8:1—11:1), Paul first lays forth the principle related to the inadvisability of eating idol sacrifices—that we refrain from doing anything that would stumble the conscience of a member of the Body of Christ. He then extends this principle to himself in the vindication of his ministry, a ministry that shunned partaking of what was lawfully his and yet could be perceived by the Corinthians as being self-promoting in the principle of idolatry. He extends it to himself for the sake of the building up of the Body through the gospel in chapter 9. He concludes this section by illustrating the impact of idolatry upon the church through the type of Israel in the wilderness (10:1-13), coming back to his warning about a proper eating of the Lord's table that maintains the fellowship of the Body of Christ (vv. 14-22). These sections are connected by Paul's use of the words *idol* (8:4, 7, 10; 10:19), *idols* (8:1, 4, 10), *idolaters* (10:7), and *idolatry* (v. 14).

In chapter 8 Paul begins to speak of the inadvisability of eating things sacrificed to idols in the context of knowledge, showing that either the wisdom of the age or the wisdom of God in the mind of Christ has the determinate influence in our choices related to idol sacrifices: "Now concerning things sacrificed to idols, we know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up. If anyone thinks that he knows

anything, he has not yet come to know as he ought to know” (vv. 1-2). Paul’s question in verse 10 reveals the mind of Christ: “If anyone sees you who have knowledge reclining at table in an idol temple, will not his conscience, if he is weak, be emboldened to eat the things sacrificed to the idols?” The wisdom of the age condones such an eating, even enabling a puffing up in its exhibition. However, the mind of Christ, even though it acknowledges that “an idol is nothing in the world and that there is no God but one” (v. 4), condemns such an eating because it damages the Body of Christ and sins against Christ (vv. 9, 11-13) by enabling the possibility of offending the conscience of a weaker brother and thereby stumbling him (vv. 10, 12-13).

In chapter 9 Paul then ventures seemingly into extraneous points related to the vindication of his apostolic ministry. In verse 1 he refers to his ministry when he asks these rhetorical questions: “Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are you not my work in the Lord?” His purpose in so asking is to show that even though his apostleship (vv. 2-3) grants him the liberty to eat and drink (v. 4), to marry (v. 5), to partake of the fruit of the vineyard that he has planted, and to partake of the milk of the flock he has shepherded (v. 7), he would avoid these practices if they allowed for the possibility of damaging the conscience of the weaker ones. This is because he knows that every action of genuine apostles, no matter its heartfelt intent or beneficial impact, will come under intense accusations that can be implanted in the minds of the brothers by the accuser of the brothers (Rev. 12:10) in his effort to block the supply that comes through the joints of the rich supply (Eph. 4:16). Paul’s restrictive practice comes from the mind of Christ, who seeks to build up in love by being sensitive to the conscience of others⁴ (1 Cor. 8:1). In the principle of not being subservient to idols in matters related to eating and drinking, Paul extends the principle of not being subservient to idols for the sake of building up when he asks, in the section on the vindication of his ministry, twelve detailed questions in rapid succession in 9:4-13.⁵

In verses 16 through 27 Paul points to the reward and prize that come from buffeting and limiting the body in its lawful practices that could stumble the brothers in the principle of eating things sacrificed to idols (v. 27). He mentions the reward in the form of a question, and his answer comes from the mind of Christ in him: “What then is my reward? That in preaching the gospel I may present the gospel without charge, so as not to use to the full my right in the gospel” (v. 18). This reward is one of being entrusted with a stewardship to present the gospel without charge (vv. 17-18) and of being enslaved to all that the more might be gained, both those under law and those without law (vv. 19-21). And with this entrusting and enslavement, there is an increase in the fellow partaking of the gospel in the Body (v. 23). He speaks of the prize by asking another question: “Do you not know that those who run on a racecourse all run, but one receives the prize? Run in this way, that you may lay hold” (v. 24). The prize is an incorruptible crown received at the Lord’s second coming.⁶ In the mind of many believers, receiving this prize is associated with receiving a positive appraisal by the Lord on the totality of their Christian living, but Paul here confines the receiving of the prize to the exercise of self-control in matters related to the principle of not eating things related to idol sacrifices (v. 25). How significant!

In chapter 10, which contains the final subsections on the matter of eating things related to idol sacrifices, Paul comes back directly to the matter of idolatry as seen in the type of Israel (vv. 1-13), in which the children of Israel were not pleased with eating the same spiritual food and drinking the same spiritual drink (vv. 3-4, 6). Instead, they became idolaters, sitting down to eat and drink and standing up to play (v. 7). Thus, they were strewn along in the wilderness (v. 5), which is equal to Paul’s word about being disapproved (9:27). In their idolatrous eating, the Corinthians did not keep the Lord’s table from idolatry (10:14-22), violating the fellowship of the Lord’s blood and body by not separating the Lord’s table from the demons’ table (vv. 14-18, 21). Paul introduces these points with a set of questions that is prompted by the mind of Christ

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in him: “The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the fellowship of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the fellowship of the body of Christ?” (v. 16). He then points to the condition of those who eat the Lord’s table properly with four questions that reveal the mind of Christ: “Look at Israel according to the flesh. Are not those who eat the sacrifices those who have fellowship with the altar? What then am I saying? That what is sacrificed to an idol is anything? Or that an idol is anything?” (vv. 18-19). With the proper eating—eating the foods set before us and not asking questions for conscience’ sake—there is a building up in the strengthened conscience of the weak (vv. 23-27). In our eating and drinking, all things need to be done unto the glory of God so as to not stumble the brothers, who are members of the Body of Christ (vv. 31-32); this is to imitate the apostle by manifesting the mind of Christ (11:1).

Paul’s Manifestation of the Mind of Christ in Dealing with Head Covering

Paul manifests the mind of Christ in the section dealing with head covering in 11:2-16, placing this matter in the context of the divine headship in God’s universal administration, saying, “I want you to know that Christ is the head of every man, and the man is the head of the woman, and God is the head of Christ” (v. 3). He then details the reasons for the imperative of head covering in the relationship between God and a man and between God and a woman (vv. 4-6). This imperative is rooted in the order and nature of God’s creation, described in verses 8 and 12: “Man is not out of woman, but woman out of man...Just as the woman is out from the man, so also is the man through the woman; but all things are out from God.” By focusing on the role of nature, Paul takes the resolution of the problem of head covering out of the contentious realm of adhering or not adhering to an outward practice, a contention whose source is the wisdom of the age. Witness Lee writes,

In dealing with the problem of head covering, the apostle took the headship of God, the headship of Christ, and the headship of man as strong ground for his instruction. His instruction concerning head covering was based not on any religious practice or human custom but on the headship in God’s governmental administration. Such a strong base leaves no ground for argument over the matter of head covering. (*Recovery Version*, v. 3, note 3)

Since the practice of head covering touches the inward submissiveness of the sisters in the church, Paul’s question in this section is directed toward the sisters: “Is it fitting for a woman to pray uncovered to God?” (v. 13), and his answer indicates that a woman’s long hair provides a proper covering (v. 15). Such a teaching is not a matter for contention among the churches, because it is according to the mind of Christ, which is inviolate, whereas mere religious practices and human customs are not (v. 16).

Paul’s Manifestation of the Mind of Christ in Dealing with the Lord’s Supper

In verses 17 through 34, Paul deals with the matter of the Lord’s supper, which supplements his speaking concerning the Lord’s table in 10:21. The Lord’s table is a matter of partaking of the fellowship of the blood and body of Christ, as indicated by his questions: “The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the fellowship of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the fellowship of the body of Christ?” (v. 16). In the fellowship of the blood and of the body at the Lord’s table, there is an invisible aspect that is divine and mystical. The Lord’s supper occurs simultaneously with the Lord’s table, and it involves the visible gathering of the believers, which manifests the reality of this fellowship through the corporate remembrance of the Lord in their experience of Him. Witness Lee elaborates on the corporate aspect of the Lord’s supper, saying,

In the apostle’s time the believers had a custom of coming together for supper, the main meal of the day, with the rich bringing more and better food for the mutual enjoyment and the poor, less food. This was called a love feast (2 Pet. 2:13; Jude 12), and it came from the background

of the passover feast (Luke 22:13-20). At the end of their love feast they ate the Lord's supper with the bread and the cup to remember the Lord (vv. 23-25). The Corinthians did not do it properly. They did not wait for one another (cf. v. 33). Each took his own supper first. The rich became drunken and the poor were hungry (v. 21). This caused division and parties among them (v. 18) and spoiled the Lord's supper. Thus, their eating was not the eating of the Lord's supper (v. 20). (*Recovery Version*, 1 Cor. 11:21, note 1)

In the taking of the Lord's supper by the Corinthians, there was a profligate indulgence by the rich, which Paul condemned, saying, "When therefore you come together in the same place, it is not to eat the Lord's supper; for in your eating, each one takes his own supper first, and one is hungry and the other is drunk" (vv. 20-21). The rich Corinthians' ostentatious displays were a concern to Paul, for such prideful displays of economic status reflected the wisdom of the age. However, he was more deeply concerned that these displays were indicative of a failure on the part of the Corinthians to live according to the mind of Christ, as seen in their tolerance of divisions. In verse 18 Paul says, "I hear that divisions exist among you; and some part of it I believe." These divisions were rooted in a callous attitude toward and a lack of appreciation of the church. He makes this clear in his questions in verse 22: "Do you not have houses to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and put those to shame who have not? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you? In this I do not praise you." Such an indifferent attitude toward the church could exist only in a mind permeated with and acting according to the wisdom of the age, a mind lacking experiential revelation concerning the nature and position of the church in God's eternal plan. In contrast, Paul's concern about the presence of divisions reflects a deeper knowledge of the church. These divisions are so serious that Paul feels compelled to review the divine view of the Lord's supper in verses 23 through 26 and then warn the Corinthians about not properly discerning the body according to this view (v. 29), which can bring in judgment and even sickness and death (v. 30). A proper appraisal of the church according to the mind of Christ is essential for a peaceful church life without divisions and for a healthy participation in such a peaceful church life.

Paul's Manifestation of the Mind of Christ in Dealing with Gifts

Paul devotes chapters 12 through 14—the longest section in 1 Corinthians—to the matter of dealing with gifts, and he presents a balanced and nuanced understanding of the mind of Christ, an understanding that includes the genuine bestowal of spiritual gifts to the Corinthians (1:7); Paul says, "You do not lack in any gift, eagerly awaiting the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ." According to the wisdom of God, the bestowal of gifts varies, but they come from the same one Spirit, who distributes "to each one respectively even as He purposes" (12:11). In this distribution there are distinctions of gifts (v. 4), distinctions of ministries (v. 5), and distinctions of operations, with each manifestation being given for what is profitable (vv. 6-7). These varying gifts also include a word of wisdom and a word of knowledge (v. 8), faith and healing (v. 9), operations of works of power, prophecy, discerning of spirits, various kinds of tongues, and interpretation of tongues (v. 10). All these gifts, which should be individually and particularly manifested in the varied and uniquely functioning members of the Body, are indispensable for the manifestation of the corporate Body of Christ: "The body is not one member but many. If the foot should say, Because I am not a hand, I am not of the body, it is not that because of this it is not of the body. And if the ear should say, Because I am not an eye, I am not of the body, it is not that because of this it is not of the body" (vv. 14-16).

In the church in Corinth the bestowal of gifts was not a matter of the wisdom of the age, because these bestowals were conferred by the same Spirit in whom the Corinthians, through their spiritual declarations that Jesus is Lord, were (v. 3). Rather, the element of the wisdom of the age crept into the matter of gifts through the Corinthians' selective prioritization and exaltation of certain gifts, especially the gift of

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THE CORINTHIANS' EXALTATION OF ONE GIFT OVER ANOTHER, WITH ITS SUBSEQUENT DIMINISHMENT OF THE STATUS OF ALL THE MEMBERS IN THE BODY, VIOLATED THE PRINCIPLE OF LOVE; CONSEQUENTLY, PAUL ENDEAVORS TO SHOW A BETTER WAY, THE WAY OF LOVE.

speaking in tongues. For those not exhibiting this gift, there was a sense of inferiority, which is out of place with a balanced view of the necessity of the varied functions of all the members of the Body. Paul draws attention to this reality in three questions that reveal the mind of Christ, involving a metaphor about the physical body that he later applies to the mystical Body of Christ: "If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole were the hearing, where would the smelling be?...And if all were one member, where would the body be?" (vv. 17-19).

Paul's application of the metaphor of a physically functioning body with its many members to the reality of the Body of Christ can be seen in his questions in verses 29 and 30: "Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all have works of power? Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret tongues?" The Corinthians' exaltation of one gift over another, with its subsequent diminishment of the status of all the members in the Body, violated the principle of love; consequently, Paul endeavors to show the Corinthians a better way in chapter 13, the way of love, a love that should be properly understood in the context of the practice of the exercise of spiritual gifts.⁷ In verses 1 and 2 of chapter 13, Paul connects the exercise of spiritual gifts with the tempering and blending effects of love, saying, "If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels but do not have love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. And if I have the gift of prophecy and know all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing." Paul's references to "prophecies," "tongues," and "knowledge" in verse 8 further underscore the connection that he is stressing between love and the exercise of gifts: "Love never falls away. But whether prophecies, they will be rendered useless; or tongues, they will cease; or knowledge, it will be rendered useless." According to the mind of Christ in Paul, love will abide forever (v. 13), but gifts will cease (v. 8), and therefore, love should be the paramount imperative in the exercise of spiritual gifts.

Love in the exercise of spiritual gifts is necessary because it is through the exercise of the varied gifts, especially the gift of prophesying, that the church as the Body of Christ is built up. This prophesying is not principally manifested in the foretelling of future events but in the telling out of the virtues of Him who has called us out of darkness into His marvelous light (1 Pet. 2:9)—a telling out that can be carried out "one by one" (1 Cor. 14:31). The gift of prophesying is the one gift that all the members can exercise, being limited only by the willingness of the members as prophets to be subject to the spiritual promptings in their spirits to speak in the meetings of the church (v. 32).

In chapter 14 Paul connects his thoughts in chapter 13 on love to being exercised in the display of spiritual gifts in the meetings of the church, saying, "Pursue love, and desire earnestly spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy" (14:1). He does this by focusing on the different impacts that speaking in tongues and prophesying have on the building up of the church in the meetings of the church:

He who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God; for no one hears, but in his spirit he speaks mysteries. But he who prophesies speaks building up and encouragement and consolation to men. He who speaks in a tongue builds up himself, but he who prophesies builds up the church. (vv. 2-4)

The Corinthians' display of speaking in tongues was a building up of themselves; it evidenced their spiritual pride and lack of heart for the building up of the church as a whole. Their pride was an issue of living according to the wisdom of the age; their lack of heart was the issue of not touching the mind of Christ according to the wisdom of God. This contrast is seen in Paul's questions in verses 6 through 8:

Brothers, if I come to you speaking in tongues, what will I profit you, unless I speak to you either in revelation or in knowledge or in prophecy or in teaching? Yet even lifeless

things, whether flute or harp, in giving a sound, if they give no distinction in the tones, how will what is played on the flute or on the harp be known? For also if the trumpet gives an uncertain sound, who will prepare himself for battle?

Comparing it to lifeless things, Paul considers the speaking in tongues to be lifeless, an indistinctive sound, and an uncertain call for the church to display Christ's victory through His death and resurrection. From verse 2 through the end of the chapter, Paul contrasts the benefits of speaking words through prophesying that builds up the church with the limited usefulness of speaking words in tongues, which often bring in a sense of confusion into the meetings of the church (v. 33). Because prophesying is for the building up of the church (v. 4), Paul's charge in verse 12 to "seek that you may excel for the building up of the church" is a charge to exercise the gift of prophesying through speaking understandable words that are comprehensible to the mind (vv. 14-15), words that are not just spoken into the air (v. 9).

When only the spiritual gift of tongues without interpretation is on display in the meetings of the church, even a genuine display, what we have is unfruitful speaking. This was most likely the case in Corinth, based on Paul's comments in verses 11 and 13: "If then I do not know the meaning of the voice, I will be to him who is speaking a barbarian, and he who is speaking a barbarian to me...Therefore let him who speaks in a tongue pray that he may interpret." A lack of interpretation is also in sects today that openly promote the mere utterance of inchoate sounds as a genuine speaking in tongues. Such self-promoting speaking, in turn, induces an atmosphere of "insanity" that negatively influences the unlearned and unbelievers who could otherwise be receptive to the gospel. Paul stresses this point in his question in verse 23: "If therefore the whole church comes together in one place, and all speak in tongues, and some unlearned in tongues or unbelievers enter, will they not say that you are insane?"

Paul then presents a contrast: "If all prophesy and some unbeliever or unlearned person enters, he is convicted by all, he is examined by all; the secrets of his heart become manifest; and so falling on his face, he will worship God, declaring that indeed God is among you" (vv. 24-25). The former testimony is a testimony of living according to the wisdom of the age; the latter is a testimony of living according to the wisdom of God and manifesting the mind of Christ. For the building up of the church, Paul's earnest desire for the believers to engage in speaking understandable words is evident in his short question and lengthier answer in verse 26: "What then, brothers? Whenever you come together, each one has a psalm, has a teaching, has a revelation, has a tongue, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for building up." Paul does not prohibit the speaking in tongues; he only commands that it be done in an orderly fashion, governed by the wisdom of God (vv. 39-40).

Paul's Manifestation of the Mind of Christ in Dealing with Resurrection

In chapter 15 Paul deals with the Corinthians' questioning of the resurrection; he does this by employing arguments that emanate from the mind of Christ, including the relationship between the proclamation of Christ's resurrection through witnesses and the history of resurrection (vv. 5-28). He then stresses the moral influence of resurrection, arguing that expecting there to be the resurrection of the dead would intrinsically influence how a person lives his life (vv. 29-34). After establishing the certainty of resurrection, Paul defines resurrection as the organic issue of the sowing of a spiritual body, a sowing made possible through the last Adam, Christ, becoming a life-giving Spirit in resurrection (vv. 35-49). The operation of the life-giving Spirit as righteousness in the spirit, as sanctification in the soul, and as redemption in the body produces a victory that is both inwardly and outwardly manifested in the resurrection of the believers (vv. 50-58; cf. 1:30). Through these arguments Paul establishes the matter of resurrection as a culminating expression of the wisdom of God in the lives of the believers.

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The impetus behind Paul's defense of the preaching and reality of resurrection was a heresy circulating among some of the Corinthians who said that there is no resurrection of the dead (15:12). Such a claim was as common then as it is today, because resurrection does not conform to the wisdom of the age; instead, it is sourced in the wisdom of God. Paul begins his defense by simply stating the truth that he preached, delivering what he had received: "That Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; and that He was buried, and that He has been raised on the third day according to the Scriptures" (vv. 3-4). Acknowledging that Christ has risen from the dead, a fact witnessed by "over five hundred brothers at one time" (v. 6), is the starting point of belief, a belief that includes the resurrection of the believers (v. 11). Paul builds upon this starting point with a more detailed rebuttal to the heretical assertion by asking, "If Christ is proclaimed that He has been raised from the dead, how is it that some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?" (v. 12). He answers this question according to the mind of Christ, saying, "If there is no resurrection of the dead, neither has Christ been raised" (v. 13). He repeats this assertion for the sake of emphasis in verse 16, saying, "If the dead are not raised, neither has Christ been raised." The logical corollary to these statements is that if Christ's resurrection has been preached as being the fulfillment of the Scriptures and affirmed by many witnesses, there must be a resurrection of the believers. Without such a resurrection, the believers would possess a futile faith, remain in their sins, and be of all men most miserable (vv. 17, 19). The history of this resurrection process begins with Christ being raised from the dead as the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep (v. 20). *Firstfruits* infers that many others will follow Christ in His resurrection by sharing His resurrected organic life and nature and by sharing in His resurrected status. This history of resurrection culminates with Christ delivering up the kingdom to His God and Father after He has abolished all contrary rule, authority, and power (v. 24) and after He has abolished death as the last enemy, putting it under the feet of the resurrected believers as the church (vv. 25-26; cf. Eph. 1:22).

To further bolster his argument for the resurrection of the believers, Paul then speaks of the Corinthians' practice of being baptized for the dead, asking, "Otherwise what shall they who are baptized for the dead do? If the dead are actually not raised, why then are they baptized for them?" (1 Cor. 15:29). Paul's reference to such baptisms in support of his argument for resurrection does not mean that he sanctioned baptisms for the dead; rather, he uses the Corinthians' own practice to gently hint to the Corinthians that their actions in this regard come from an intrinsic recognition of and inclination toward the reality and moral influence of resurrection, even if they do not overtly recognize this inclination within themselves. This intrinsic inclination produces positive responses that Paul alludes to in the questions he poses in verses 30 and 32. In verse 30 he causes his readers to conclude by inference that it is the moral influence of resurrection which enables a believer to brave dangers, asking, "Why also do we brave danger every hour?" In verse 32 he causes his readers to conclude by inference that it is the moral influence of resurrection which enables a believer to face the opposition of "wild beasts," asking, "If after the manner of men I fought with wild beasts at Ephesus, what does it profit me?" (cf. Acts 19:23-32). The moral influence of resurrection empowers the believers to brave dangers in their environment and from the opposition of "wild beasts"; it also empowers them to avoid a morally corrupt life of eating and drinking with evil companions who reject a belief in the resurrection (1 Cor. 15: 32-33).

After establishing that there is the resurrection of the dead through showing that it is the fulfillment of scriptural promises, through the witnessing of many disciples, and through the intrinsic moral witnessing within those who believe, Paul defines the process of resurrection by responding to a question that emanates from the operation of the wisdom of the age in the minds of the Corinthians: "But someone will say, How are the dead raised? And with what kind of body do they come?" (v. 35). His response, in contrast, comes from the mind of Christ and is according to the wisdom of God. He defines resurrection as a spiritual process of sowing the divine life as a seed in a believer (v. 38),

a sowing that changes a corruptible body into one of incorruption, a dishonorable body into one of glory, a weak body into one that is raised in power, but most importantly, a soulish body into a spiritual body (vv. 42-44). This sowing process is carried out through Christ, who, as the last Adam in His death on the cross, became a life-giving Spirit in His resurrection from the dead (v. 45). The use of the word *defines* here is not a reference to a lexicological term; instead, it is a reference to a person—Christ—who, as the life-giving Spirit, is the living definition and exemplar of resurrection. The operation of the life-giving, indwelling Spirit is necessary, a prerequisite, for the believers' resurrection; this is because flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, which is manifested only in the sphere of resurrection (v. 50). Therefore, the corruptible must put on incorruption, and the mortal must put on immortality (v. 53). The end of this life-giving operation is victory over death which is the very antithesis of resurrection (v. 55) but which is also evidence of the believers' participation in this life-giving process.

Paul's Manifestation of the Mind of Christ in Dealing with the Collection of a Gift

Chapter 16 contains a short section of just three verses that reveal the mind of Christ in Paul related to the collection of a gift and its subsequent transmittal to another local church (vv. 1-3). Paul provides what appears to be only a practical suggestion related to the collection of monetary gifts on the first day of the week. But his suggestion is more deeply reflective of the principle of extending the fellowship among the local churches in the Body of Christ. He illustrates this necessity for such fellowship through his admonition to the church in Corinth to send a gift to the church in Jerusalem.

The Mind of Christ Being the Mind of Paul in 1 Corinthians

In every section of 1 Corinthians Paul addresses a specific problem by manifesting the mind of Christ. Rather than responding to matters with answers spawned by an adherence to the wisdom of the age, he responds with questions that enlighten the believers in Corinth of their ignorance of the mind of Christ in relation to His desire to produce the church as the full expression of the Body of Christ. In 1 Corinthians the mind of Paul is aligned with the corporately focused mind of Christ. In particular, his responses turn the believers from their individualistic and misplaced notions of spirituality. He turns them from their individualistic preferences, which produce divisions in the Body of Christ; from their puffed-up attitude of tolerating an evil brother, which leavens the whole lump of the church; from their reliance on judgments from the world to resolve legal disputes that should have been forborne for the sake of maintaining peace in the Body; from their abuse of the body in the eating and fornication that mars the corporate indwelling of the Spirit; from their selfish desire for a change in the God-ordained status apportioned to them for increasing their portion of Christ in the Body of Christ; from their eating of things sacrificed to idols, which eating stumbles the brothers, the other members of the Body of Christ; from their lack of respect for the headship of Christ over the Body in God's governmental administration; from their disorderly eating and drinking of the Lord's supper, which eating and drinking foster further divisions in the Body of Christ; from their puffed-up prioritization of the gift of tongues, which brings in confusion and thus hinders the building up the church; from their careless circulation of heresies related to the resurrection of the believers, which circulation undermines the corporate subduing of death under the feet of the church; and from their lack of understanding the need for material giving that encourage a practical fellowship among the local churches as the aggregate of the universal Body of Christ. In all his responses Paul manifests the mind of Christ in his renewed mind. AFC

Notes

¹The section divisions in this article are derived from Witness Lee's outline of 1 Corinthians in the *Recovery Version of the Bible*.

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²It is significant that Paul first speaks of the renewing of the mind in Romans 12, which contains his first reference to the corporate Body of Christ: “Just as in one body we have many members, and all the members do not have the same function, so we who are many are one Body in Christ, and individually members one of another” (vv. 4-5). This speaks to the mind of Christ being thoroughly focused on the corporate Body of Christ. This same focus is present in all of Paul’s dealings with the problems in Corinth. Paul’s corporate focus is implied in his use of the word *divided* in the section dealing with divisions (1 Cor. 1:13), his use of the word *lump* in the section dealing with an evil brother (5:6), his use of the word *brothers* in the section on dealing with lawsuits (6:5), his use of the word *members* in the section dealing with the abuse of freedom (v. 15), his use of the word *churches* in the section dealing with marriage (7:17), his use of the word *one* in the section dealing with eating things sacrificed to idols (10:17), his use of the word *churches* in the section dealing with head covering (11:16), his use of the words *come together* in the section dealing with the Lord’s supper (vv. 17, 20), his use of the words *same, one Body*, and *building up* in the section dealing with gifts (12:4-6, 8-9, 11, 13; 14:5, 12, 26), and his use of the words *bear the image* (referring to the image of the corporate second man out of heaven) in the section dealing with resurrection (15:49). The mind of Christ, when operating through a renewed mind, is clearly corporate in its evaluations and discernments.

³It is disconcerting to hear the brothers and sisters involved in blatant cases of adultery and fornication refer to the Lord’s grace and forgiveness when justifying the acts. These justifications foolishly ignore Paul’s unveiling of the fallen and renewed mind in Romans 6:1-3: “What then shall we say? Should we continue in sin that grace may abound? Absolutely not! We who have died to sin, how shall we still live in it? Or are you ignorant that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death?” Our baptism into His death applies the effectiveness of the His death to both our sinful nature and to the sins that emanate from this nature, sins that are carried out in our bodies, especially the sin of fornication. There is no excuse that can justify fornication among believers; there will only be an inevitable negative reaping of what has been negatively sown: “He who sows unto his own flesh will reap corruption of the flesh” (Gal 6:8). Genuine repentance and confession result in efficacious forgiveness; a pro forma “repentance” with continued abuse will not. The sin of the abuse will remain, being covered by a conscience branded as with a hot iron (1 Tim. 4:2).

⁴For the sake of the conscience of His disciples and that of the temple-tax collectors, the Lord Jesus took care of paying the temple tax, even though He was not required to pay it (Matt. 17:24-27).

⁵“Do we not have a right to eat and to drink? Do we not have a right to take along a sister as a wife, even as the rest of the apostles and the brothers of the Lord and Cephas? Or do only I and Barnabas not have the right not to work? What soldier ever serves by his own wages? Who plants a vineyard and does not partake of its fruit? Or who shepherds a flock and does not partake of the milk of the flock? Am I speaking these things according to man? Or does the law not also say these things?...Or does He say it altogether for our sake? Yes, for our sake it was written because the plowman should plow in hope, and he who threshes, in hope of partaking. If we have sown to you the spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap from you the fleshly things? If others partake of this right over you, should not rather we? Yet we did not use this right, but we bear all things that we may not cause any hindrance to the gospel of Christ. Do you not know that those who labor on the sacred things eat the things of the sacred temple, that those who attend to the altar have their portion with the altar?” (1 Cor. 9:4-8, 10-13).

⁶See note 1 on Hebrews 10:35 in the *Recovery Version of the Bible*.

⁷Contrary to its popular use, especially in weddings, chapter 13 is not about the application of principles related to love for fostering a successful relationship. Rather, it is about the building up of the Body of Christ in love through the proper exercise of the spiritual gifts bestowed by the Spirit (cf. Eph. 4:16).

Works Cited

Lee, Witness. Outlines and footnotes. *Recovery Version of the Bible*, Living Stream Ministry, 2003.