The Doctrine of Christ

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Introduction

There exist in our days numerous undoubtedly interesting teachings within the whole scope of Christian preaching about the Word of God. And basically, every verse chosen from the Word of God can be used or misused in the attempt to build up a specific doctrine. Practically all of the false doctrines were made in this manner. Whenever such (new) doctrines are created, the consequences are more or less always the same: uncertainty, hectic, spiritual pride regarding the "greater" insight, pride and mostly severe danger of church split. What follows are false doctrines or sects.

Looking at it more closely, one can recognize that time and again the same errors are made. One takes for example any isolated biblical information out of its context, stirs it up and a new doctrine will be invented. Most of the time, a specific revelation from a higher "spiritual sphere" which apparently one has seen or heard from the LORD is mixed into it. Thereby, the biblical context is interpreted in an arbitrary manner to justify the new doctrine. From the background of such facts, unnumbered teachings and false doctrines have emerged in these last almost 2000 years – and this development in this so-called end of times is rampant. Consequently, there exist at the beginning of the 21st century hundreds and thousands of teachings, movements, sects etc., of course all of them asserting to possess the monopoly of truth and uniqueness.

Everyone who is well acquainted with the "Christian" scene is quite aware of this rather distressing situation. Therefore the only question that matters is, how to find a useful way to break through this tragic development – i.e. to find a valid doctrine which is beyond any doubt. The Word of God effectively informs us of a corresponding term: *The doctrine of Christ*. The exact meaning of this doctrine, its characteristics and how it is to be applied is expounded in more detail here below. This subject is of paramount importance to disclose the eternal thoughts of our LORD GOD, and you are well advised to check these thoughts thoroughly in consulting the Word of God and to apply them, even though you may experience drastic consequences in your life and in your surroundings.

The unique essential doctrine

In point of fact, the New Testament contains **one single** and basic doctrine which constitutes the sole centre of all so-called "Christian" proclamation. The existence of so many further teachings is bare human invention and is not based on divine inspiration by the Holy Spirit. This central doctrine is simply called the **doctrine of Christ**. The definition originates from the apostle John who in this context proclaims severe statements which are hard to understand. Thereby, it is worth mentioning that the apostle John is called by clerical circles as the so-called "apostle of love". This observation is quite important in connection with two of his declarations quoted hereafter in which we can hardly see a correlation with our humanistic understanding of love – so hard and rather incomprehensible are his sayings. In actual fact, the spiritual person detects behind these sayings the all encompassing love of God which by eternal providence just wants us to protect us from fatal consequences.

2 John 7-11: For many deceivers have gone out into the world who do not confess Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist. Look to yourselves, that we do not lose those things we worked for, but that we may receive a full reward. Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the ***doctrine of Christ*** *does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into your house nor greet him; for he who greets him shares in his evil deeds (NKJV).*

These verses sound rather tough and certainly not loving and "Christian-like", because they are totally strict and segregating. Why then does the "apostle of love" use such intense words?

Meanwhile I have been involved in counselling for more than 30 years and by experience, I have gained a good overview how the teachings are built up. Thanks to unnumbered contacts through counselling with people from many known "Christian" movements, churches and sects I must make the provoking assertion that perhaps 90 from 100 "Christian" preachers neither know the basics of the "doctrine of Christ", nor experience it and therefore are not qualified to convey the doctrine of Christ. Of course, most of the preachers, pastors or bible teachers speak of Jesus, of conversion, fellowship and all of these interesting teaching aspects contained in the Word of God. However, regretfully this does not yet match with the "doctrine of Christ"! The basis of this doctrine embraces much more significant points.

To be more precise, I refer back to a central and somehow encoded passage from the Word of God, namely from 1 John 4:1-3: 1 *Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world. By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the spirit of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world (NKJV).*

In terms of common "Christian" understanding, the true meaning of these verses is rather misunderstood. Many teachers of the Word of God adopt in a general manner the definition of the term "Christ in the flesh" to mean as: Jesus becoming man. If this definition were correct, then practically all of the known "Christian movements" and churches including

to some extent also various sects would stand on a correct foundation. They all do in no way dispute the fact of Jesus to have become man. But this can for many reasons not be the true meaning. Therefore, the deciding criterion to find a correct definition must be far more restrictive which then will be the key to a correct understanding.

The saying “Christ to have come in the flesh” does truly not mean the general incarnation of Jesus Christ, but rather the fact that the LORD Jesus Christ has come personally into the life of an individual believer. And this experience is testified by the Holy Spirit directly. As soon as the LORD Jesus Christ has come into my flesh, He will then also be in all truth: my life, which again is testified by God’s spirit. This amazing fact is exactly the key message of the apostle Paul. In other words, this signifies the mystery of Christ” that was disclosed to Paul by direct inspiration from God. And this mystery has a direct connection with the “doctrine of Christ”.

Basically, the “mystery of Christ” is just another compatible term of the subject matter which is defined by Paul as the “doctrine of Christ”. After all, both terms go exactly into the same direction. Thus we can confirm that the apostles Paul and John perfectly complement each other. Paul transmitted to us by inspiration of the Holy Spirit the basics of the “doctrine of Christ”. His prayers expressed in his epistles show evidence in many places of his strong longing that the hearers might get a clear revelation of the “doctrine of Christ” (e.g. Eph. 1:15-19; 3:14-21; Col. 1:9-14).

The apostle John instead described the practical application of this “mystery of Christ” and declared its substance as the “doctrine of Christ”. Thus the “mystery of Christ” and the “doctrine of Christ” have in common: that we should have the LORD Jesus Christ “indwelling in our flesh“, so that we are *“of God”*. This highly interesting subject has been dealt with in the first epistle of John. In this epistle, you will find a kind of a check list enabling an upright person to find out whether the LORD Jesus Christ is truly his life, thus really indwelling in his “flesh”.

Three test questions

To illustrate, I should like to mention hereafter three test questions. You will then readily understand what they are intended for. All of these test questions imparted by John in his first epistle start seemingly monotonous by: *He that says*… or in other translations: *Those who say*… Quite obviously, these test questions were inspired by the Holy Spirit because they are so phenomenally distinctive that every reader can find out in the shortest time whether he lives in the “doctrine of Christ”, respectively whether he has well understood the “mystery of Christ”, or not.

Test question no. 1 – 1 John 2:4: *He who says, “I know Him (i.e. Jesus Christ),” and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.* This statement is so precisely and perfectly well defined that no upright person can escape. Either we lead daily a life in obedience of faith and as such perform what the Word of God tells us to do – or we are simply religious liars and have basically missed the point.

Test question no. 2 – 1 John 2:6: *He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked.* It is well understood that by this verse, the walk of the LORD Jesus Christ is meant. The question arises then immediately how at all could it be possible for man to walk like the LORD. How should this work practically? The answer is given by the LORD in His word – not by human experience and opinions. There is only a single solution: We must stay in the "doctrine of Christ" – then it must surely be possible to fulfil this requirement! There is no other "Christian" way possible at all.

Test question no. 3 – 1 John 2:9: *He who says he is in the light, and hates his brother, is in darkness until now.* To this sentence, there is no need of a further comment for every sincere follower of the LORD. People who tend to compromise may try to define hatred and make distinctions. But the divine answer is very simple: If there is a place in our human relationships where divine love is not fully expressed, it is automatically considered as hatred! There is no room left for any other interpretation; neither is there any exception possible for particular situations. If someone pretends to be a "Christian", he affirms at the same time *"to be in the light"*. And this fact has succeeding consequences for all practical relationships. Thus one can make a simple conclusion.

If one considers carefully these three examples, there remain basically just two options: Either I find myself truly in this so-called "doctrine of Christ" so that the practical fulfilment of the requirements of these verses is but simple logic. Or I live obviously outside of this central doctrine of the Word of God. Should this be the case, I would then have, in a way not understood anything; regardless whether in my eyes I would consider myself to be a well behaved "Christian".

But how can these explanations be so truly fundamental? From the examples quoted above, every sincere believer can easily recognize the fruits in his daily modern life. And it is exactly in this area that the average "Christian" fails totally in observing these check list – always provided he sincerely acknowledges the true facts – and does not sneak out of his responsibility with flimsy "Christian" excuses.

Thus the three passages quoted above do nothing else than to shed light on the fruit produced in the normal course of our daily life. It is in fact our conduct and our fruit in everyday life that refers directly to the "doctrine of Christ". In other words, we can fulfil these high expectations of the Word of God (e.g. to walk as the LORD Jesus Christ did Himself) only, if we truly have Jesus Christ indwelling in us! Outside of "Christ in us" or of "Christ dwelling in our flesh", it is according to the divine requirements totally impossible to fulfil the divine holy standards (e.g. the three questions already quoted). This virtual impossibility is expressed by God's assessment – and if we do not agree, we spend our life in an enormous and disastrous religious illusion, blinded in hypocrisy.

Whoever keeps seriously to the basics of the "doctrine of Christ" and applies them in daily practical life, can confirm the three test questions of John with a Yes without any reservations. And thus we would be right on track with the eternal divine objectives for mankind. Consequently, it becomes quite obvious that the apostle John, by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, made a clear distinction against every teaching which stands outside this "doctrine of Christ" in declaring them as delusion, an invitation to fall apart, or as false doctrine – which again corresponds exactly to the nature of the "*spirit of the antichrist*!" In a same manner, we

should consistently reject any doctrine which is not based on the “doctrine of Christ” – and this is valid nowadays with the majority of the available teachings in our “Christian” society.

Thus we can conclude that the first epistle of John contains easily understandable criteria enabling us to assess how for example a person in Christ and an “*Antichrist*” can be discerned. Likewise, we could easily check ourselves anytime – provided that we do it in all honesty. And everything is directly linked with the “doctrine of Christ”.

The focal point of our faith

Things should be clear by now why such particular attention is given to this subject – the “doctrine of Christ” – the fundamental basis of our faith. In point of fact, it is not the centre of the true faith alone, but equally the subject matter of every correct and spiritually inspired teaching. Thus following John’s statement, every doctrine that does not include these key elements of the “doctrine of Christ”, is automatically to be considered as a false doctrine or an antichrist doctrine, though this may sound extremely severe. And if we do not live out this doctrine, we shall logically never experience the fruits and its privileges. Likewise, and lastly, the LORD Jesus Christ then is not indwelling in us – He is not our life. Consequently, we are not on the right track and have been deceived by the *spirit of the antichrist*, as expressed in John’s terms. It’s a most tragic present fact.

But what happens really if we do not bear Christ in our flesh, respectively if the “Christian” teachings presented to us do not include this all deciding element of “Christ indwelling in the flesh of man”, or of “Christ in us”? What else could then be the substance of the many “Christian” doctrines, or what are the usual central elements of the teachings of “Christian” ministers?

Basically, the “doctrine of Christ” is substituted by something else – and these are human doctrines having all the time the same appearance. They are centred on human religious assertions, everything based on the intellect, on the soul and emotion of man, on the audience or on the reader. In fact, these substitutes are “Christian” philosophies, mostly manipulated by *deceitful spirits*. And this subject matter is certainly not new. Already Paul mentioned in this direction two issues. Col. 2:8: *Beware lest anyone cheat you through **philosophy** and empty deceit, according to the **tradition** of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ* (NKJV). Or in 1 Tim. 4:1-2: *Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to **deceiving spirits** and doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron.*

Obviously, the apostle Paul encountered all these developments already during his lifetime. Main issue then were so-called gnostic doctrines. They tried to recognize and to explain God by means of the intellect. When translating these facts in our actual times, one finds a multitude of teachings which are in clear opposition to the “doctrine of Christ”. To realize this, one needs eyes and ears that have been touched by the Holy Spirit.

Doctrines of Christian movements.

What are in their essence the focal points of today's known "Christian" movements? Let us take as an example the doctrine of the Seventh Day Adventists. Key element of their doctrine is to conform to the command of the Old Testament regarding the Sabbath day. To honour this command is compulsory and linked with the experience of personal salvation.

Or let us look at the doctrine of the Jehovah's Witnesses. Their focal point is the divine person of Jehovah and the kingdom of God. Their doctrine however has no connection at all with the absolutely essential relationship with Jesus Christ for salvation. Consequently, this doctrine must be counted among the classical false doctrines.

But how about the nowadays widely accepted "Christian" big movements? Let us look at the worldwide movement of the Pentecostal church with all its affiliates. Basic substance of this movement is the personal experience of Pentecost as it transpires from its name and the practise of the spiritual gifts, with emphasis on the speaking in tongues. The same is in a way the situation with the charismatic movement with their orientation towards the popular churches.

But we could as well take various evangelical and free churches (Christian denominations separated and independent from government). Their focal point is the conversion and the experience of the so-called "new birth". But there exists a hidden connection with most evangelical groups towards the legal implications of the Old Testament so that they are involved in legalism. We could quote as an example the Baptist church who professes as essential point the personal experience of water baptism (complete immersion in the water). Their name is derived from the Greek term of: to baptise (*baptizo*). Here as well, we can readily recognize that the major concern of the Baptist church is the baptism of many believers, and certainly not the "doctrine of Christ", as defined by the apostles John and Paul.

Naturally, all are talking about Jesus: the Adventists, the Pentecost Church, the charismatic movement and the evangelicals. But when looking into it more closely, one can recognize that their theological backgrounds are always particular topics of the Christian faith which, of course, can be found in the bible – but certainly not the fundamental "doctrine of Christ."

Having been engaged during three centuries in counselling with persons of most different groups, I had the opportunity to check out all major Christian movements in respect of the key elements of the "doctrine of Christ". One can find among them a multitude of teachings and rituals – but practically nowhere the true "doctrine of Christ". No doubt the name of Jesus Christ is widely professed – but to live out the "doctrine of Christ" is quite something else. There are many reasons behind that, but what I can see is one essential reason (though I am well aware that many won't accept it and may even accuse me of heresy). From my point of view and experience, the majority of the Christian teachings are in disguise polluted by the spirit of the antichrist – exactly as it is described in the 1st and 2nd epistles of John – and this is clearly not my personal opinion, but the opinion of the Holy Spirit!

What then does the "*spirit of the Antichrist"* (and finally Satan himself) want to avoid? This is very obvious: The complete union of man with Christ, because man can finally be made complete and thus reach his final goal of divine calling and election only in unification

with Jesus Christ (i.e. in diligently observing and applying the “doctrine of Christ”). From a spiritual point of view, this can be made possible only for people who really bear Jesus Christ in their flesh, respectively who are in Christ.

In order that man can be made perfect in Christ, it is an absolute prerequisite to be totally one or totally united with Christ. And precisely this most important spiritual fact is neglected by almost all modern “Christian” teachings. Rather more important for them are theological conclusions, arbitrary interpretations of the Word of God, human insight, religious trends and movements. The whole last century was particularly marked as the century of “Christian” movements. However, there is a very few Christian movements where this essential prerequisite to personally have Christ indwelling in our flesh is taught.

Assuming that the three epistles of John have been inspired by the Holy Spirit, the resulting consequence would be that man would miss his eternal destiny if he does not follow in practice the “doctrine of Christ”. In this respect, let me make it very clear that whatever I am saying in this treatise has nothing to do with salvation or perdition because as a human being, I am not entitled to judge. I am rather talking about the eternal goal of man, namely to become perfect or complete in Christ. It is virtually impossible to achieve this goal outside the “doctrine of Christ” – otherwise the apostles Paul and John would have been mistaken!

This is exactly why John in the verses already quoted makes such harsh and equally restrictive statements. If therefore the doctrine of Christ is not presented in a practical way, we shall not be able to live according to it – we would then not be on the right track. We then as “Christians” are subjected to a tremendous religious illusion. Consequently, it is but logical that we ought to separate ourselves from teachers and their teachings who do not impart the doctrine of Christ and live up to it as the totally basic element of our faith. Thus it becomes rather tight for anybody who exposes himself as a professing “Christian”. He will assume a personal responsibility before God and as such would have to act accordingly in a responsible and consistent manner.

People spreading unbiblical teachings are mostly and totally unwittingly connected with deceitful, unseen powers and forces which according to the bible as quoted earlier are tempting spirits. These spirits certainly speak of Jesus and of the bible, for the devil assuredly knows the bible much better than we do –we should never forget that!

The only true foundation

As a result of my involvement in counselling, I have studied during the past 30 years many “Christian” movements in respect of their teaching and their origin and I have found out that the well known movements and churches always originate or have originated from particular details of the Word of God, but that they do not have their true basis on Jesus Christ **alone**. How come? The answer meanwhile becomes quite obvious: Because the “doctrine of Christ” was not understood by their founders. If this absolutely basic doctrine has not been understood, the logical consequence will be that on the grounds of most different objectives new churches and congregations are founded. If churches and groups are founded with a **specific name**, I can readily recognize that their founders were not aware of the true meaning of the “doctrine of Christ”.

What is the logic behind this statement? Whenever “Christian” individuals set up churches and communities, they have obviously not understood the “doctrine of Christ” and the divine principle of the true “body of Christ.” The divine revelation of the Word of God regarding the true church can have but one single foundation. And this foundation cannot be part of a doctrine, nor man, nor denomination, nor founder etc. – but solely and exclusively on Jesus Christ Himself. Congregations, churches, movements are actually and almost completely based on anything else than Christ alone. They set up their churches and ministries on human doctrines, human commands, theological insight, modern movements, impulses etc. However, if churches are founded on these elements, they are in the light of the Word of God definitely based on false grounds! Consequently, they cannot be considered having been created by the LORD.

The consequences will be dramatic. Following personal declarations made by our LORD, all these falsely founded congregations, churches, movements etc. will sooner or later crumble or be demolished, and this by the *gates of hell*! Actually, this happened always like that during church history, and will continue likewise until that the end of times will come when “Babylon” will be judged. They come and go - the movements, and churches, congregations and “Christian” ministries alike. But finally, they will be overtaken and demolished from the gates of hell because they have not been grounded on the only true foundation which is Jesus Christ alone.

Our LORD Jesus Christ Himself clearly mentioned in Matt. 16:18 indirectly and unmistakeably: *And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it* (NKJV). Mind you that Jesus did not say that Peter would be the true rock or foundation (the big mistake of the Roman Catholic Church!). In Greek language, there is a word play in that passage. Peter (*petros*) signifies stone, pebble. The rock (*petra*) instead is through the whole bible exclusively identified with Jesus Christ and certainly not with a human being!

Whatever is grounded on Jesus Christ, in personal life or in building a church, can never be overcome by the *gates of hell*. Jesus has conquered Satan and his kingdom and He has even declared that nobody can pluck His true members from His hands. We can derive therefrom a simple truth: Everything else that has not been grounded on Jesus Christ will be overtaken by the gates of hell, destroyed and demolished. From my point of view, this is exactly what is meant in Revelations chapters 17 and 18 with the destruction of Babylon.

According to Eph. 4:11-16, we should no longer be *carried about with every wind of doctrine*. By that are truly meant all of the countless false, deceitful or superficial teachings of our days. The New Testament contains in all sincerity one single true, correct basic doctrine, and this is the “doctrine of Christ”. We must by all means know this doctrine, live up to it and follow it. Should this not be ascertained, deception will sometime follow, mostly unconsciously. We shall then at least certainly not reach our personal aim which has been set by God for man, i.e. to be made perfect in Christ.

The exact definition of the "doctrine of Christ".

After all of these general considerations, let us ask how one could define more precisely the "doctrine of Christ". To summarise, it is the comprehensive divine concept to bring man to perfection in Jesus Christ in all eternity.

The Word of God contains hundreds to thousands of basically interesting subjects – but there exist one single subject only which is of paramount importance, and this is **the revelation of Jesus Christ**. This basic thought of God is to be found all across the Word of God. In the Old Testament, many things are portrayed in images, examples or role models which finally are disclosed and fulfilled in the New Testament in Christ.

Consequently, the Word of God as a whole reveals the LORD Jesus Christ and shows us at the same time how man in Christ will be totally restored and this by being fully united with the LORD Jesus Christ. This is the only way for man to reach the eternal divine destiny. And this destiny means: the eternal consummation of man in Christ. This is also the core of the "doctrine of Christ", i.e. man's way to follow to be united with Jesus Christ and by this union to be restored and transformed in His image. In this way, his eternal call and his being part of the chosen people is fulfilled by the union with the LORD Jesus Christ. All other topics contained in the Word of God are clearly inferior in their importance to this goal.

It is rather important that you can realize and understand these facts in their context. The "doctrine of Christ" is the doctrine of total union of man with Christ and shows the way to go by man to reach his personal consummation. Subjected to this eternal divine goal for mankind are all other teachings of the Bible – they are rather meant to assist us to reach the goal. If this order of priority is not recognized and thus not taught – which mostly happens unintentionally and unconsciously – we would then have to consider what is said in the 2nd epistle of John, i.e. that delusion and false teachers are involved!

Every reader of the Bible knows that the LORD Jesus Christ is declared to be the *A and the O*, the *Alpha and the Omega, or the beginning and the end*. This means that Jesus Christ is *all and in all* and that outside of Him, nothing can be compared which exists. This leads to a very simple interpretation. In the unification of man with Jesus Christ resides the answer, e.g. regarding our total redemption, our transformation in His image and our eternal consummation. Or in other words: The personal consummation can be obtained only if man applies the "doctrine of Christ" and lives accordingly. I repeat: It must imperatively be **lived out**, because this is the only way that man will reach to his goal of divine calling.

As an example, I quote from Col. 1:27-28: *To whom God would make known what [is] the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory: whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus (KJV).*

These two verses show perfectly well what must be absolutely the focal point of any preaching of the Word of God. It is clearly mentioned also that Jesus Christ must be preached – and this in itself is the "doctrine of Christ". It is not the preaching of e.g. the baptism, the charisma, the conversion etc. All of these subjects are certainly to be found in the bible, but they do not represent the central point. The centre can always and exclusively be but the LORD Jesus Christ, because He alone is *the hope of glory*. Should there be other

subjects to become the centre point of preaching, then we would certainly miss finally our goal, because outside of “Jesus Christ in us”, i.e. outside the “doctrine of Christ”, we simply cannot live out the Word of God as per divine standard, or fulfil the requirements of the LORD. The ensuing consequence of such wrong assessment will always be a bad conscience, pious hypocrisy, religious illusion.

How to enter into “heaven”?

The “doctrine of Christ” signifies in other words that Jesus Christ will be preached. We can now ask quite simple questions in order to understand the “doctrine of Christ” and to apply it in a practical way. We can ask e.g. the question how one can get into heaven. And the ingenious answer is very simple: Only by being in Christ or that the LORD Jesus Christ is truly our life.

What does our LORD demand in particular from us so that we shall finally end up in “heaven?” I am quoting as examples two things which in themselves are already of high significance: We must be as righteous and as holy as Jesus! Now what normally almost all “Christians” object to it, is the following: “How could man reach to these standards?” But the LORD simply tells us: “You must be like that; otherwise you will not enter into “heaven!” It is now the Holy Spirit who teaches us that there is no human method at all to attain the righteousness and holiness of Christ that could be accepted by the LORD, the eternal God. He would have to throw us high out from “heaven”. No man gets access to “heaven” by his own righteousness or holiness. Even worse than that: In God’s view, it is a blatant scandal to consider that we could reach to “heaven” by human-religious efforts. This is since the beginning of time the error committed by all religions.

How about the usual “Christian” reality? We attentively read the bible, we always attend diligently church service, perform many pious things trusting that these “Christian” activities will satisfy our LORD. Naturally, there is nothing to be criticised against these activities – they are biblically correct. However, nobody will in doing so get into “heaven”. For that purpose, we need in all truth the righteousness and the holiness of Christ. Or, to express it in biblical terms, we must be dressed with the so-called *cloth of righteousness* of Jesus Christ. But the question arises, where to obtain this cloth of righteousness and holiness of Christ. In which shop can it be purchased – and from which shelf can it be taken?

There exists but one single legal way in this universe to reach to that righteousness and holiness which counts in the eyes of the LORD. And this way is: We must imperatively and in all reality **be in Christ** – the focal point of the “doctrine of Christ”! To illustrate this clearly, I am quoting from 1 Cor. 1:30-31: *But of Him (meaning God) you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God—and righteousness and sanctification and redemption—that, as it is written, “He who glories, let him glory in the LORD”(NKJV).*

The true gospel message teaches us that we can get totally into Christ when undertaking with child-like faith specific steps. As soon as we are really and practically in Christ, then **He** will be made to us by God that righteousness and holiness which is asked for by God from us human beings in order that we can get access to “heaven”. Thus the only possible entry into “heaven” can be found only if the LORD Jesus Christ has really become our

life, because by this fact alone shall we bear His righteousness and His holiness within us. This is the amazingly simple but radical biblical road map leading us into “heaven”.

Paul – God’s instrument to reveal the “doctrine of Christ.”

In order that we can understand the divine “doctrine of Christ”, we need trustworthy messengers who can convey to us this doctrine correctly. Otherwise, everything will sooner or later go wrong. The divinely inspired Word of God was revealed and dictated by the Holy Spirit to specific responsible persons to write down the epistles in the New Testament. Regarding the “doctrine of Christ”, He particularly used two apostles who, inspired by the Holy Spirit wrote down essential parts of this doctrine, namely the apostles Paul and John. As mentioned earlier, Paul wrote more about the “theoretical” aspects. The two prepositions that are typically used by Paul in his epistles read as follows: “in”, and “with”. Thus we frequently find in his epistles the term *“**in** Christ”*. As can be seen in the verse in 1 Cor.1:30 just quoted: … *But of Him you are **in** Christ Jesus.*

Other typical terms used by Paul are combinations of words such as: crucified **with** Him, died **with** Him, raised up **with** Him. What Paul tries to say is always the same: you must be in Christ, or you have to be with Christ in a specific state, namely e.g. crucified with Him. This means that we must have experienced personally the crucifixion with Him of our old self. This will then lead to the death with Him of the old self in Christ and finally to be raised up in Christ.

If we have really experienced the crucifixion of our old self, we shall then have, according to Paul, Jesus Christ indwelling in our flesh. He mentions this also quite nicely in 2 Cor. 4:11: *For we who live are always delivered to death for Jesus’ sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh NKJV).* There is hardly a better way to express this marvellous fact - … ***that the life of Jesus** also may be manifested **in our mortal flesh***. This is precisely what makes us effectively live in the “doctrine of Christ”, or that we have well understood and applied it. Consequently, the key issue of this doctrine is according to Paul that the LORD Jesus Christ dwells in us.

John - God’s instrument to reveal the “doctrine of Christ.”

Let us now look at what the Apostle John tells us. According to his epistles, the LORD Jesus Christ has come into our mortal flesh, if we are really in Christ and when this fact is personally confirmed to us by the Holy Spirit down in our heart (1 John 4:2).

John mentions in 1 John 4:2+6 in a post script an essential element: As soon as we really have the LORD Jesus Christ dwelling in us, we shall then be of God. I take hold of this fact in child-like faith and in practice. When I am knocking on my chest, I can then declare that I am made of flesh, blood and bones. We can assign this perception on the declaration of John. Because he simply says: “If Jesus Christ dwells in your flesh, you will then be of God – i.e. you consist in the essence of Jesus Christ and as such of God. Isn’t it an exceedingly marvellous revelation?

Apart from his three epistles, John was also the writer of the Revelation of Jesus Christ. In this last book of the bible, all what is written therein together with its prophetic information is meant to reveal the LORD Jesus Christ (and His true church). The term “Christ” is not restricted to the personality of our LORD Jesus Christ; it is rather describing something complete consisting of two parts: the **Head** which is our LORD Jesus Christ Himself, and the **body** consisting of many members. Therefore, the “doctrine of Christ” is not only the doctrine of “Christ in us”, or of “Christ in our mortal flesh”, but it is also the doctrine of Jesus Christ, the Head, and His true members – or the doctrine of the true body of Christ, the true church or the true people of God. The book of Revelations contains the unveiling of the eternal Son of God und all those people who in Christ have become as well sons of God. This as well is a fascinating subject!

The four gospels in the New Testament inform in general who Jesus Christ was, what He was teaching, and what He performed. But now, by means of the epistles, in particular those of Paul and John, we are furthermore instructed how we can get totally in the LORD Jesus Christ, how He enters into our flesh, how He becomes our life, and how we can be of Jesus Christ or *of God*, whom we are in Christ and what will then in practice happen in our life. However, all this has its same origin: our LORD Jesus Christ. Everything, what is written in the Word of God and which solely counts in God’s eternal thoughts, has exclusively to do with the name of Jesus Christ!

Many believers use at the close of their prayers, always the name of Jesus. It is mostly added just as a form, but this is totally wrong and becomes in some way a magic formula. Of course, it is correct to pray in the name of Jesus, but not to be used as a pure (magic) formula. After all, it means something totally different.

When we speak out the name of Jesus Christ, it means that we consciously are being now connected by child-like faith with the **personality** and the **nature** of Jesus Christ and that from this connection we then pray or act accordingly. Thus, we find for example in regard to baptism in the book of Acts and in the epistles always the same formulation that people were baptized in the **name of Jesus Christ**. It is explicitly not mentioned that they were baptized in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, as it was expressed in Mathews 28.

What was the reason why in executing this instruction, baptism was exclusively made in the *name of Jesus Christ*? The explanation is but logical. The name of Jesus Christ is not to be “son” – this is rather His position or function. To baptize *in the name of Jesus Christ* means that we are identified with the whole life, the character and personality of the Son of God, whose name is exactly Jesus Christ. It is with a name that a personality is identified. If baptism is made into a name, this signifies in other words that we are made one or identified with His nature, deeds, life and eternal existence.

This makes it very clear that true salvation, true reconciliation, to be cleansed, made holy etc. is possible only by one singular way: by being made one with the LORD Jesus Christ, thus with His name. This is the key issue of the “doctrine of Christ” – the focal point of our faith!

Three basic terms: grace, gift, faith.

To sum up this subject, some closing considerations follow. Time and again, Paul quotes the above three terms: **grace**, **gift** and **faith**. They represent in another way the three basic elements of the "doctrine of Christ" as finally the prerequisites that really matter for our total spiritual development. Thus, what happened at Golgotha was the providential work of God to accomplish redemption until the perfection of man in Christ. This is the basic divine intervention in human existence and therefore is the essential part of the "doctrine of Christ." It is exclusively in this way that man receives totally undeservedly the eternal son of God, the LORD Jesus Christ as a free gift with all of His nature and His personality. He is conferred to man or put at the disposal of man. In this manner, God gives the Son of God to a bruised and humiliated person and thus makes him a son of God (Gal. 3:26).

In order that this gift by the grace of God becomes operative, we are to execute specific steps which can happen only by child-like faith. By accepting in faith the grace and the gift of God, the LORD Jesus Christ will be implanted by the Holy Spirit into the flesh of man. It is the *seed of God* which is put in man (1 John 3:9). This totally unmerited privilege obtained by man has immeasurable dimensions which will once be disclosed to us in eternity only. It is a pure act of God's grace that a person is *in Christ* or *of God*. And since it is pure unmerited grace, it becomes obvious that in all what concerns the "doctrine of Christ", it is certainly not a person to get the honour, but solely the eternal and holy God, personified e.g. in Jesus Christ (Eph. 2:8-10).

If we have well understood the "doctrine of Christ", we shall never give honour to men. Truly, we just can do one single thing, namely *to glory* in the crucifixion and thus *in the LORD* (Gal. 6:14). It means that we boast about what Jesus Christ has done for us at the cross. The result will be that we experience personally that our old man is crucified with Him – and here again, we can give glory only to Jesus Christ. It has become a common practice in "Christian" circles to applaud when interesting speeches are held. Quite obviously, the question arises who will be honoured. From my point of view, the honour belongs solely to the eternal and holy GOD and thus to the LORD Jesus Christ.

If we stand in the "doctrine of Christ" and apply it in practice, then man will be made one with the LORD Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit. This is the marvellous result. However, we are then loosing something – what we possibly like most – namely our self or our old man. This is the high price that we must pay. The Word of God teaches us that a *grain of wheat* must first *drop into the ground and die*, before it can be brought to life and bear *fruit* (John 12:24). Therefore, the "doctrine of Christ" includes clearly the message of the **death of old man**, because the experience of this death alone leads to a regeneration in Christ so that we can truly become a new creation in Christ. The focal point of the "doctrine of Christ" is, therefore as well the experience of the old man to have been crucified and put to death. This can be seen as well as the *narrow gate* or the *hard way* (Mat. 7:13-14) – the way in Christ towards eternity or into heaven. And this way has just one single name, the name Jesus Christ, and again this is an essential part of the "doctrine of Christ". This is the only manner that Christ will truly be our life and that He dwells in all truth and reality in our mortal flesh.

How to fulfil God's holy demands?

All these facts bring along most practical and marvellous consequences. If only we could grasp this in our everyday "Christian" life. The Word of God demands a lot from us. We ought *to be holy*, as the LORD Himself *is holy* (1 Pt. 1:15-16). There is virtually no way to fulfil these requirements of God beyond the "doctrine of Christ". However, if Christ dwells in us as a result of this doctrine, He then becomes our life, or we have Him indwelling in our flesh – and thus the LORD Jesus Christ Himself performs all what the eternal and holy God expects of man. Strictly speaking, He has already accomplished everything! If we are *in Christ* or *of God*, then God recognizes us as established in Christ, and thus united with His Son. In this way, everything will be fulfilled whatever the eternal and holy God expects of man. It is exclusively in Christ that we shall reach the goal of our eternal, divine calling and election. Outside of Him, this would be totally impossible. We can certainly follow Jesus in a religious manner all our life long – but what we shall never attain is the godly goal of our eternal divine perfection in Christ. In Christ only – He in me and I in Him - is the way to eternal salvation.

Beyond the "doctrine of Christ", it is virtually impossible to fulfil the demands of the Word of God. Whatever we perform outside of Christ, i.e. outside of an intimate oneness with Him, is nothing else than religious illusion and in effect an antichrist activity. In John 15:5, Jesus tells us unmistakeably: *For without me you can do nothing*. This utterly radical declaration can now be understood correctly without any problem. Beyond "Christ in me", i.e. outside Christ in my flesh, I can do nothing, at least nothing according to eternal divine considerations that could bring me, so to speak into "heaven". It is simply impossible.

Therefore, many "Christians", though with the very best, sincere, pure and "Christian" motives and intentions will at the end miss the target. Though many have experienced a conversion and a redemption, which the LORD would certainly accept – they will never experience the eternal goal of God for man, i.e. the total reconciliation and completion of man. Although they meant it well, they will however get stuck. I want to emphasize once more: I do certainly not judge in this instance about salvation or perdition. I cannot and I certainly will not do so! I am not entitled to judge people whether they are saved or lost. The issue is a totally different one, namely in what condition the "Christians" will enter into eternity – and here I have well justified doubts – if the Word of God is really the truth ….

I quote from 1, Cor.3:11-15: *For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire* (NKJV). Basing on what was already mentioned, this text can now be well understood. When exactly can our works endure? Only when we are totally united with Jesus Christ – thus when we are *of God*. Logically, the deeds of God will then result which remain in eternity, because they were effectively performed by the LORD Jesus Christ Himself.

He who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do… says the LORD Jesus Christ in John 14:12. He has promised that we shall do His works. But in reality, they will be done by Jesus Christ Himself, so that they will en-

dure into eternity. These works represent *gold, silver and precious stones*. Everything else is *wood, hay, straw* – i.e. impossible to survive in eternity.

Simply to remain in Christ

The apostle John (certainly not I!) defines in his epistles the following: Every doctrine which is oriented outside of the "doctrine of Christ", must be regarded as an antichrist doctrine! You can very well find this out for yourself (see 2 John 7-11). All doctrines outside of the "doctrine of Christ" have always identical foundations (reasons). Their true basis finally is not Jesus Christ, as could be assumed (1 Cor. 3:11), but: voluntarily chosen verses out from the Word of God, religious traditions, movements and experiences. It has mostly to do with the functions inherent to our soul, religious "Christian" efforts which man has to execute – and thus one is involved at the end in man's initiated teachings and commands – or even in works done on the basis of the law. This is basically the common ground of all doctrines outside of the "doctrine of Christ". Man has always to undertake specific actions to be saved, to be well pleasing to God, to be accepted – before others and before the LORD.

What is the origin of all these antichrist teachings? Their founders or teachers were certainly or are not ill-intended in professing their belief, except deliberately false teachers or false prophets. Whoever of these founders and teachers has not recognized Christ – in the sense as portrayed by the apostle Paul or the apostle John – is not entitled to impart the true gospel or the "doctrine of Christ". Even if they wanted to, they would never be able to do so. After all, they can simply transmit Christian-religious doctrines, found and build up movements and churches – but they will never be in a position to build the true body of Christ since the body of Christ is always built up out of Jesus Christ alone.

For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ – and this in fact since nearly 2'000 years. True church or true congregation cannot be founded, built etc. by any man. We just can diligently serve the LORD as members and to be built into His holy temple. And in this way, the true congregation of the LORD is built up out of Jesus Christ by itself, of course by the services which the LORD has foreseen for His church. They are rendered by men in Christ who are serving diligently according to the gifts they received. No man can found or build the church of the LORD. But why does this happen actually, at a rate of likely far above 90%? It is because one has not understood the "doctrine of Christ"! It is for this reason that we find in our days such a great chaos in church planting. Thereby, everything sounds so biblical and "Christian-like". But after examining what is being presented as against the basics of the "doctrine of Christ", one gets alarmed.

Everywhere in Christian circles, programs and seminars are offered. They satisfy practically all "Christian" needs, may it be for one's personal life or for church growth. Many activities which are based on any isolated biblical or personal declaration are demanded. However, you will to no avail find therein the "doctrine of Christ"; it is practically nowhere to be found anymore. From the point of view of the apostle John instead, all such teachings are to be considered as antichrist-like, as soon as they disregard the "doctrine of Christ". Thereby, antichrist-like means: oriented, built-up against Christ. Of course, no teacher wants intentionally to do so. However, whatever has not been generated out of Christ, will be auto-

matically identified by the Holy Spirit as antichrist-like doctrine – regardless how "religious" and "Christian-like" it may sound.

From God's view, there exists but this unique true "doctrine of Christ". According to this doctrine, we must first and foremost **be in Christ**. Whatever is done in the "Christian" sector beyond this standpoint is in fact opposed to Christ, thus Antichrist-like. This is, mind you, what John says, inspired by the Holy Spirit – and not from me.

Based on the preceding statements, I have submitted to you the correct "doctrine of Christ" in its basic elements. If you are now applying them practically in everyday life, you will make the wonderful experience that Jesus Christ will effectively be conceived into yourself. The Holy Spirit will confirm it to you that the LORD Jesus Christ is really indwelling in your flesh. You will then have the assurance from the Holy Spirit that Jesus Christ lives in you, in your mortal flesh. You are of God; you are in Christ and He is in you. Thereafter, your old nature is deprived of its power, and Jesus Christ Himself, by the power of the Holy Spirit displays His life and His works through you. You will know it for sure because the Holy Spirit will confirm it. And subsequently, you will be aware of it that you are effectively in possession of the correct doctrine, the "doctrine of Christ", i.e. in Christ.

To remain in Christ only.

To bring it to a close, there remains just one thing: We should keep to this doctrine, i.e. to **remain** in the person of Jesus Christ. Under no circumstances and by nobody should we allow ourselves to be cast out of this marvellous position. In the epistle to the Galatians, this danger is clearly portrayed. Paul imparted to the members of the congregations in Galatia the "doctrine of Christ", i.e. the only correct gospel. But thereafter, Jewish teachers of the law brought them a different gospel – which was apparently accepted in short time – and they let them be cast out of Christ (Gal. 5:1…)! When studying this different gospel (which in fact does not exist at all), it was nothing else than the "gospel" of the law. The trap is well known. These teachers of the law instructed the Galatians, that circumcision was compulsory in order to be saved. And since circumcision was effectively foreseen in the old covenant, the disaster came up quickly. The Galatians agreed – and were immediately *cast out of the grace*, i.e. were immediately *separated from Christ*.

The brothers and sisters in the Galatian congregations fell off the "doctrine of Christ", because false teachers brought them the doctrine of the circumcision. One falls just as simple and as quickly as that! And apparently, all of the congregations in the Roman province of Galatia were affected. Nowadays, hundreds or may be even thousands of "Christian" teachings and information are circulating, but mostly they never represent the "doctrine of Christ". However, we can reach to the divine goals for our life only if we are centred in the "doctrine of Christ".

And how does the LORD call this goal? Does it mean: When I die, I shall then be with the LORD and everything will be wonderful. Hallelujah, bless the LORD! This standpoint is sadly speaking rather superficial and totally egocentric. No. The goal is not the salvation – because with it, the whole journey in God's marvellous plans just begins for us. The LORD does not only want us to be saved, but He wants to drive us totally into Christ, to transform

us into the image of His Son, so that we shall be finally like Jesus Christ. The Son and the many sons of God – the LORD Jesus Christ and His true brothers – are destined to execute the eternal plans of God. The LORD wants us to be made perfect or complete in Christ. And the consummation means: **perfection in Christ**! For this reason, Paul taught e.g. the Colossians tirelessly that they are made *perfect in Christ* (Col. 1:28). And in Christ alone, i.e. in applying practically the "doctrine of Christ", man will get into his eternal calling as planned by God.

The LORD requires for the eternal administration of the creation and the universe suitably qualified "personnel". And as it would be practised by an employment agency in this world, He seeks His future instruments. Once He has found them, those will be trained, tested, prepared and made perfect. Consequently, men in Christ are involved in an intense training in order that they once will fit in God's holy temple as living building blocks and perfectly prepared for their future jobs. Our true functions will then start when we shall be with the LORD. The LORD will then make history with these people made perfect in Christ in all eternity. And eternity means a different spiritual condition of life without beginning and without end.

But there is a direct and irrevocable connection with the "doctrine of Christ". You must by all means proceed and remain constantly in this doctrine. You will therefore readily understand why this text is entitled: "The doctrine of Christ, the fundamental basis of our faith". Finally, it is not the "doctrine" of Christ, but the LORD Jesus Christ Himself. He is the absolute centre, in order that every person can in every respect reach the goal. May the LORD make it happen that you can grasp it in your practical life and to remain in it!

(Note: Terms such as Christian, Christianity, were intentionally put between quotation marks because they are human inventions. They comprise the aspect of human efforts by which the targets are missed and were never given by the LORD, which is why they are unclear.)

Bruno Schaer

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Direct Link (for all texts available in the English language):
http://www.schaermin.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=category&sectionid=3&id=42&Itemid=33

This is a translation of the original speech held in German language no. 05217 entitled "Die Lehre des Christus – das absolute Zentrum des Glaubens " (text slightly adapted and available as HTML-file under direct link:
http://www.schaermin.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=103&Itemid=13)

Knowing that the quality of this English translation could still be improved, proposals to upgrade this text are always most welcome.