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Editors' Notes

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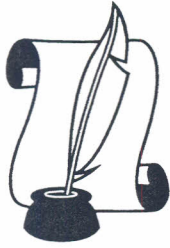


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Editors' Notes

Stuart and D'Esta Love

"Let the same mind be in you that you have in Christ Jesus, ... (Phil 2:5)

"For you know the generous act of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich" (2 Cor 8:9)

"Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ" (1 Cor 11:1)

Above are three passages that lead us to the very core of Paul's understanding of the appropriation of the Christian gospel. They are passages which also lead us to the heart of Christ.

The first passage introduces the "Christ Hymn" (Phil 2:6–11). Preceding it Paul calls the Philippians to live worthily of the Gospel (1:27–30), that is, their behavior begins with their status before God through their faith in the gospel. How does the church find power in the face of internal and external pressures? Certainly, it is not by forsaking her life in Christ or giving up being a fellowship of the cross. The opposite of standing firm in one spirit and striving side by side with one mind for the faith of the gospel is to allow selfish ambition to drive its ugly stake to the heart of Christian minds—and accordingly, to their lives. This can easily happen. Instead of following Christ's mind, each individual simply looks out for number one. That is why Paul exhorts his fellow Christians in the face of considerable antagonism from their fellow citizens (1:28–30) to stand firm in one spirit, to strive side by side with one mind for the faith of the gospel. Suffering had been the Philippians' lot from the beginning. They *saw* the struggle vividly narrated in Acts 16:19–24, and they knew of Paul's imprisonment, upcoming trial, and the questionable motives of some missionaries in advancing the cause of Christ. How easy it would be to be intimidated by the forces of evil—to lose sight of Christ's mind. So, to have Christ's mind goes beyond rational reflection to a "mindset" that issues in a determined pattern of behavior marked by unity, steadfastness, humility, and selflessness. As one person has put it, "For Paul, Christian love flows from the free disposition to unseat concern for self as the driving force of life and replace it with a practical concern for others."

The second quotation is a verse found in the midst of Paul's encouragement to the Corinthians to be generous in providing funds for the economic need of the Jerusalem church. The collection was designed to alleviate a severe human ordeal, but it was designed also to ratify the unity between Jewish and gentile Christians (Rom 15:25–32; 1 Cor 16:1–4; Gal 2:10; Acts 24:17). The statement, "Though he was rich, yet he became poor ..." echoes Philippians 2:6–8 and takes us back to the mind of Christ. It also enunciates the theological insight of 2 Cor 5:21: "For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness

of God.” The practical meaning had already been stated in 5:15: “And he died for all, so that those who live might live no longer for themselves but for him who died and was raised for them.” This, too, is the heart of the mindset of Christ.

The third quotation takes us to the crux of the only authentic hermeneutic. Paul’s comportment must mirror “the life of Jesus” for it is Christ’s life that we are to imitate. It is not an accident that the theme of imitating Paul as he imitated Christ appears so often with reference to churches that knew Paul personally (1 Cor 4:16; Gal 4:12; Phil 3:17; 4:9; 1 Thess 1:6; 2:14). And that is our experience as well, isn’t it? The imitation of Christ by our parents, teachers, ministers, and friends—those we have known personally and those who have cared for us according to the mind of Christ—has led us to the imitation of Christ.

As you read this issue of *Leaven* keep the “mind of Christ” close at hand. The opening article, “The Imitation of Christ” by **JOHN O. YORK**, features our editorial introduction and stresses that “as churches or as individuals, we are going to have to rethink our common understanding of what it means to be imitators” of Christ. **MARY ELLEN LANTZER PEREIRA** reminds us that “In order to experience the fullness of Christ and the power of his resurrection, it will be necessary to become like Christ in his death.” **IRA J. JOLIVET, JR.**, reflecting on Philippians 3:2–11, believes that for Paul, the revelation of the risen Lord opened the floodgates of an entirely new fount of divine knowledge—the mind of Christ. **RICK ATCHLEY** informs us that Paul was not defined by wealth or by poverty, but by a contentment that transcended both. **MARK HENDERSON**’s article “Standing Firm in the Lord” brings us back to our editorial thoughts—“Paul calls us to seek the mindset of Jesus Christ, to fill our minds with the things that really matter.” Therefore, “our present circumstances, no matter how difficult, do not define who we are and they don’t have the last word in our lives; Jesus does.” **GARY SELBY** with meaningful emotion leads us once more to understand that our purpose in life is to know Christ, to move more and more toward that for which God has called us heavenward in Christ Jesus. To realize this is true peace. All that transpires in life’s journey is okay because “The journey is home.”

Leaven readers will be stimulated by **C. ROBERT WETZEL**’s thoughtful article, “The Ordinances of the Church: Symbols? Sacraments? Mysteries?” In the end, Wetzel believes that baptism and the Lord’s Supper are “ordinances,” “symbols,” “sacraments,” and “mysteries.” Wetzel affirms, “They are all of these and more. And we would do well to spend a lifetime exploring and opening ourselves to the richness of what God is saying to us in these decisive events in the life of the church.” **MICHAEL DITMORE** and **MARCIA J. GALLES** explore the meaning of the Lord’s Supper and the healing power of forgiveness.

Book reviews of writings by **THOMAS H. OLBRICHT**, **JAMES THOMPSON**, and **ROLLIN A. RAMSARAN** are reviewed by **DOUGLAS A. FOSTER**, **IRA J. JOLIVET, JR.**, and **MARKUS MCDOWELL**.

Finally, an article closes the issue that we have been wanting to publish ever since the issue on Job. John O. York refers to it in the opening article, and we are grateful for the insights of **TIM WOODROOF**’s treatment of the ending of the book of Job, “His Hand Upon Us Both.” This fine effort should accompany the other articles published in our earlier issue.

Next year, Volume 6 will open with an issue on worship edited by **PAUL WATSON**. Our second issue, edited by **KEN GREEN** and **RICHARD HUGHES** is on the topic of Race. **DON WHITE** is preparing an issue on Ministry in Small Churches. And of course, one of our issues will be an outgrowth of the *Leaven* Symposium at the Pepperdine Lectures.

Continue to pray for God’s leadership of our efforts.