

## The Christian.

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## EDITORIAL.

## THE MYSTERY OF GODLINESS.

The annual discourse delivered by the editor at Southport, P. E. I., July 26th, 1900.

"And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness; God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory." (I Tim. iii, 16.)

A competent person defines mystery "a revealed secret." When that which was hid in God is made known to man, it is called a mystery. Paul says, "Behold, I show you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump," etc., etc. (I Cor. xv, 51.) This mystery was once a secret hid in God, but is now revealed by the Spirit through the apostles.

The text speaks of a secret too great to be controverted, but was grandly demonstrated and is to be received by men for their salvation. Without it is no godliness. He describes it in six grand facts. 1st. God was manifest in the flesh; 2nd, was justified in the Spirit, 3rd, seen of angels, 4th, preached unto the Gentiles, 5th, believed on in the world; 6th, received up into glory.

Let us consider these facts in the order here stated. The first and greatest fact is God was manifest in the flesh. This fact was too great to be first announced by a man as were other facts, but God himself in the presence of men said to Jesus at his baptism from the opened heaven, "Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

On the coasts of Cæsarea Philippi, Jesus asked his disciples, "Whom do men say that I the Son of Man am?" How would such a question sound coming from any one else? But it was highly proper for Jesus to ask and press the question, for a world's salvation depended upon it. "Whom do ye say that I am?" and Simon Peter answered, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Jesus blessed Peter and said of the *truth*, which he had confessed: 1st, Flesh and blood hath not revealed it to thee, but my Father which is in heaven. 2nd, I will build my church on this rock. 3rd, The gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

Of himself he said, Thou art Petros, but on this Petra I will build my church. He calls both the man and the *truth* he confessed *Rock*, but with this essential difference: the man he calls *Petros*, or a moving stone or rock; but the *truth* *PETRA*, an immovable rock, a bed rock, a sure foundation. In the same chapter we are told that Jesus rebuked Peter, calling him Satan, showing him to be a moving stone, utterly unfit for a foundation, but after much dressing and polishing an excellent building stone. But *Petra*, the bed rock, the sure foundation, after every trial is un-

changed, the same yesterday, to-day and forever.

Just after God had announced Jesus as his beloved Son, he was tempted of the devil. If thou be the Son of God, do thus and so, but after every trial the rock was unmoved and Satan vanquished. The *truth* he most hated was as firm as ever.

The enmity of wicked men aimed at that *truth*. They called it blasphemy, stoned him for saying it. On his trial for life no witness could condemn him. "He did no sin." "Never opened his hand but to bless; never wept but in sympathy for human woe." His judge, the high priest, was baffled. Pilate could find no fault in him, neither could the high priest. He then appealed to Jesus as on oath to tell them if he were the Son of God. Jesus said "I am." The priest said to the people, We need no other witness, ye have heard his blasphemy. What think ye? And they all said, *He is guilty of death*. He dies then for confessing that he is the Son of the living God. He dies that we might live, and the good confession he made in his death is the confession we make when we are saved. It is the rock on which the church is built. The man who believes with all his heart that Jesus is the Son of God is begotten of God. He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved. When the Ethiopian officer heard Philip preach Christ and came to a certain water he said, "Here is water, what doeth hinder me to be baptized." Philip said, "If thou believest with all thine heart thou mayest." He said, "I believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God." And they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him. To confess this truth is called the good confession. Jesus had made it before Pilate. Timothy had also made it before many witnesses (I Tim. xii, 13.) "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." God manifest in the flesh is the grand creed of the church. We hear of churches revising their creeds to suit the times. What seemed suitable to be believed in past times needs modifying and improving to keep up with the increasing light of the present age. How could this creed be improved? It needs no revising, but remains the same from age to age. In receiving it we accept of Christ as our own loving Saviour, and in faithfully loving and serving him we hold fast the good confession till he shall confess us before his Father and the holy angels.

Some think it was the church against which the gates of hades or death would not prevail, but it was not the church which death now assails, but the rock on which the church is built. The great question to be decided is this, *Is Jesus the Christ the Son of the living God?* God said he is, Jesus said I am, Jews and Gentiles deny it and put him to an accursed death for saying it. The gates of hades open for him and his pure spirit passes into the unseen. All men, good and bad, have been held by death, will it hold

him? If he is only a man it will. If he is the Son of the living God he will rise the third day and make eternal havoc of this last enemy. How much depends upon the events of these two or three days. He is condemned by all men, and now lies like a criminal in a dishonored grave. But the priests are uneasy and apply for a guard. If his body cannot be found, the last error is worse than the first. Neither they nor Pilate's soldiers can follow him past the grave. But he is condemned and conquered, and who can deliver him? This leads us to the second fact in the great mystery.

Second, He was justified in the Spirit. Death has not prevailed. His eternal power and Godhead is a settled truth demonstrated by the Spirit of God in the resurrection of Christ. An angel rolls away the stone, the seal is broken and Jesus walks out of the sepulchre its eternal conqueror. What can his enemies now do? They said, let us frame a lie, a mean and foolish one to be sure, but it is the best we can do. Guards, circulate this lie. It may cost you your life but we will persuade the governor and secure you. Say his disciples stole him away while we slept.

It is very difficult to forge a lie in the face of blazing truth. Even if these few timid disciples had taken the body from the armed guards, why would they not compel them to bring it back as soon as the theft was discovered? Surely the whole Jewish nation, backed by Rome's mighty legions, would not be fooled and conquered by a handful of weak disciples without men or money. Where was the body of the crucified One, was a question, and remains a question which infidelity cannot answer. The priests believed he rose, and dare not deny it. They never charged the disciples with theft, nor demanded from them the body of Jesus. How silly, then, was the story that they had stolen the body and still enemies kept it afloat.

Not only did God raise Jesus from the dead, but in due time sent down his Spirit to fill his apostles and qualify them for the great work of convincing the world of sin, of righteousness and of judgment. On the very day the Spirit came and filled his apostles they began to preach to his murderers the resurrection and glorification of Him whom they put to death as a blasphemer, which, when they had heard, they were pricked in their heart and said unto Peter and the rest, Men and brethren, what shall we do? His answer was, Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus for the remission of sins and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. They believed and obeyed the dictates of the Holy Spirit and 3,000 were saved; and this was but the beginning of the Spirit's work. Jesus was further justified by the Spirit in the salvation of Jews and Gentiles. All that believe and obey what the Spirit said through the apostles are saved. The Holy Spirit still justifies the Messiah and abides with his faithful followers.

To be concluded in our next.