

Rev. Paul A. Hottinger

By Water and Blood Days of Christmas Friday after Epiphany January 10, 2014
8:15 AM **1 Jn 5:5-13**; Lk 5:12-16 (He has chosen to become one of us and lead us into love and acceptance and forbearance and self-surrender to love.)

“This is the one who came through water and blood, Jesus Christ, not by water alone, but by water and blood.”

Here we have St. John talking to us about the testimony of Jesus and how it is a revelation. He says **the revelation comes in two ways: water and Spirit, and blood and Spirit**—the Spirit being in both.

Water and Spirit, of course, refers to **the baptism of Jesus** when the heavens opened and the Father affirmed him. “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased,” some evangelists say, or others say: “You are my beloved Son; in you I am well pleased.” Either way there is **affirmation from the Father. This is revelation in water.** That is the meaning of baptism. **Baptism is the Father owning his Son, and so also in our baptism: the Father owning us as his beloved.**

But then there is this other issue of **blood**. He said not water only, but also blood. This of course **refers to Jesus’ death on the Cross**. In the early Church there were people who said, yes, Jesus is the presence of God; however, God did not die on the Cross; the Son of God could not die on the Cross—that’s too nasty. God withdrew from Jesus before his passion, and so it only appeared that he suffered, and those people were called “Docetists,” from the Greek word to appear, *dokeo*. On the one hand you could say it was just an historic heresy, misunderstanding, fallacy, however you want to put it. But I think **there is a tendency of people to shy away from dealing with the death of Jesus on the Cross**, the blood he shed on the Cross, the blood poured out for us.

Recently I was reading a book by a very fine Christian man, not Catholic, but a very fine Christian man, but he **cannot quite grasp that Jesus really died for us**. He says Jesus died because he challenged the power structure—yes, but what power structure? Not the power structure of the Roman Empire or the Jewish high priesthood—after all, they are both gone and

we still have injustice and oppression. **What was Jesus challenging? That you have to get to understand his death and his power.**

In the early Church people said Jesus died to break the power of Satan. St. Paul says in Ephesians, chapter 6: **“Our contention is not against flesh and blood,”** not against people: Roman soldiers, Jewish high priests, or anybody, any people. No, **our contention is against the powers and the principalities**—that kind of power structure, the spiritual power structure of wickedness that takes many forms age after age, culture after culture, but is always **oppressing** this group, that group, pushed out of the limelight of God’s love, as it would be reflected in a prosperous earthly existence, since that was **originally the plan God had for us to live on earth in prosperity.** Prosperity includes all goods, spiritual and temporal—all goods that we need, not superfluous goods, but **all the necessities. That’s God’s will for everybody.**

Now it has never happened that everybody shares in what God desires, so that’s oppression right there, injustice. And according to St. Paul, this because of the power of the principalities, the powers, and the dominations, **spiritual forces in rebellion against God,** who were created to help us, who, in fact, are hostile to us and who hinder God’s work. And how is God going to overcome this? Through love. **How is God going to overcome this? He has chosen to become one of us and lead us into love and acceptance and forbearance and self-surrender to love.** That’s the real power of God. So all of the forms of force are the wrong forms. They are inadequate. It is **the love that is manifested in Jesus dying for us on the Cross that is the power to overcome** the power structure, the spiritual power structure, of **the principalities and the powers and the dominations** that St. Paul refers to in chapter 6.

Now those are just words of course, but it’s referring to something very real. It’s **a very real kind of bondage that the world is in** due, according to Scripture, to its own fault, its own wrong choices. It has put its trust in the wrong things, not in God, not in God’s grace or power or in God’s promises, but it’s something else, something we can get for ourselves, so we think. And that creates all kinds of divisions and all kinds of problems, and **there are all kinds of losers when we go our way. It is not God’s will.**

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