

I live by the faith of the Son of God"? Is there nothing in the circumstances down here by which we live? We must go through them, but are we living by them? Are we living to Him in that sense? There are many Christians who have no distinct idea that they are to take up their cross and follow Him. May we learn that the times press. May our hearts so really look at Christ that we may be in conscious relationship with Him, our affections there with Him, and because they are there, looking for Him to come from heaven to change this vile body because it will not suit that place! Where are our hearts? Have we the deep blessed sense that He has associated us with Himself? "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory." The Lord give us so to have our eyes on Him that we may have all the blessedness of the consciousness that He has taken us to be with Himself in His unutterable love, and that we may thus know real deliverance from the power of sin and the world! The Lord fig our eye on Him with steadiness and earnestness of heart, so that we may say with David, "My soul followeth hard after thee."

Collected Writings of J. N. Darby 32:355-357.

Extract on Covetousness

The natural tendency of the heart often needs to be met with that word, "Take heed and beware of covetousness" (chap. 12). It is the love of possession. One came to the Lord, saying, "Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me." The heart wanted to keep it. If love of the world or covetousness gets in amongst the saints, it is an insidious thing and most difficult to meet, because it is often not open to discipline; and yet, if covetousness slips into the heart, it checks the power of Christ over the soul and conscience, and eats out the practical life of the Christian, and his soul is withered, withered, withered. It may be checked by the power of God coming in; but this covetous care about earthly things is so subtle that, while there is nothing on which to lay the hand, the practical power of Christian life in the soul is gone, though of course, I need hardly say, eternal life can never be lost in those who once had it.

"That on the good ground are they which, in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience." They may seem to the world to be fruits bright and blessed, but if people have not got Christ they tire. There will be no enduring, unless Christ has possession of the soul; but if He has, there will be an abiding motive, and people will go on, and "bring forth fruit with patience." They that hear and keep it go steadily on, having their motive for action in the Lord. Trouble may come in, in the church; disappointment may arise, even from brethren; but they {that hear the Word} go on just the same, because they have got Christ before them: for the word they have heard and keep connects them with Christ, and He is more than anything else.

Collected Writings of J. N. Darby 25:80, 81.

Elements of Dispensational Truth The Seven Churches

Chapter 5.7

What the Spirit Said to Laodicea

Commendation

There is none!

Judgment

I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot; I would thou wert cold or hot. Thus because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I am about to spue thee out of my mouth. Because thou sayest, I am rich, and am grown rich, and have need of nothing, and knowest not that *thou* art the wretched and the miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked; I counsel thee to buy of me gold purified by fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white garments, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness may not be made manifest; and eye-salve to anoint thine eyes, that thou mayest see (Rev. 3:15-18).

I KNOW THY WORKS, THAT THOU ART NEITHER COLD NOR HOT . . . THOU ART LUKEWARM (vv. 15, 16)

What Is the Lukewarmness? Based on this description it is often said that Laodicea is the *indifferent* church, whatever may be meant by that. However, Laodiceanism is not indifference, but perversion of God's truth by imitation. Let us consider this: dead Sardis is cold; Philadelphia is hot; and Laodicea is neither the one or the other. Laodicea has its origin mainly from Sardis and is a counterfeit of Philadelphia. Laodicea has works, notice; and those works reflect the state, the condition: "that thou art neither cold nor hot." In its application to today, Laodicea is a setting up of the first man (judged in Philadelphian recovery) and an awful mimicry of the operations of the Holy Spirit (given His rightful place in Philadelphian recovery), and this is dead towards God (the coldness of Sardis).

It is a dreadful thing to be associated with a form of things, when the spirit and

life are wanting. The fig-tree was, as regards Israel, an exhibition of this state. The thing to be overcome in such a state of things is lukewarmness; and to be able to overcome lukewarmness you must be hot yourself. "Moab had not been emptied from vessel to vessel." Affection to Christ in hidden ones, as individuals, may be found, but faith is not so much brought out in the assembly -- a strong manifestation of the declension in the corporate state of these Christians and of the fact that man spoils everything God sets up amongst men.¹

I Would that Thou Wert Cold or Hot. Why would the Lord prefer coldness to lukewarmness? Clearly, coldness must be preferable to lukewarmness. Why would the coldness of dead Sardis be preferable to lukewarmness? It is because of the awful spiritual pretension, the awful spiritual perversion, the awful spiritual mimicry, of what is divine. The character of it is similar to that of Jannes and Jambres who withstood Moses (2 Tim. 3:8). How did they withstand? It is by *imitation* -- by mimicry of what came from God. Consider the Laodicean boast of v. 17. That is a boast about spiritual riches, not money and material acquisitions. It is all a falsification of "the faithful and true witness." This is worse than coldness and is very deceptive. Consider that in connection with this verse:

Many shall say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied through thy name, and through thy name cast out demons, and through thy name done many works of power? and then I will avow unto them. I never knew you. Depart from me, workers of lawlessness (Matt. 7:22).

These are professed Christians, but never were Christ's, or else He could not say "I never knew you"; because He could not say that about any who had been His sheep (John 10:27; "I know them"). So it is not lost-again saints. There is no such thing. These professed to do works of power (miracles) through His name. While such claims are not restricted to what answers to Laodicea, it does characterize it.

Thus because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I am about to spue thee out of my mouth (Rev. 3:16).

Christ warned Sardis that he would come upon her as a thief at an unknown hour (Rev. 3:3) and that is the character in which He will come upon *the world* (2 Thess. 5:1-4). Not so Laodicea; He deals with Laodicea in accordance with their nauseating condition. Like lukewarm water He will vomit them out. This connotes a feeling of revulsion. His dealing with Thyatira, with Sardis, and with Laodicea each has its own character answering to the three respective features of these assemblies.

1. *Collected Writings* 34:165.

Himself though inherently sinless, as made sin) was delivered from death, so whoever believes on the only-begotten Son, shall not perish. It is as lifted up that He is the attractive One for the entire world. See notes on John 12:32.

(To be continued if the Lord will)

Ed.

Extract on The Life Which I now Live

Then see the place that he puts the Christian in, "for our conversation is in heaven"; our whole relationships in life--all that my life is involved in and develops itself in -- are in heaven; I am to run here having all my relationships up there, because Christ is up there who is my life. What a definite thing the Christian life is! it is not here at all.

"From whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ." Now what is He called "Savior" for here? We are all saved in a certain sense -- we have got eternal life; but in this epistle salvation is the result of redemption, not merely redemption. Practically Israel was saved out of Egypt as soon as the Red Sea was crossed, but they had not got the place till they had got through the Jordan too. We get in the Red Sea Christ's death and resurrection. The blood upon the lintel gave them safety while God was passing through destroying the first-born; the question between God and the people as to their sin was settled, still God was in the character of judge there, and He passes them by. But it was not deliverance. But when they come to the Red Sea He says, "Stand still, and see the salvation of God." God has now come in as a Savior and taken them out of the place they were in; and now they are delivered. When I get to Jordan, it is yet another thing: the waters open, not to bring them out, but to bring them in; not that Christ was dead and risen for them, but that they were dead and risen with Christ. So you get the Red Sea smitten, so to say, whilst in Jordan the ark stays in the water, and we go through with it. The reproach of Egypt was never rolled away till they got into Canaan; and so with us: I do not get deliverance and full power in heavenly places until I see that I have died and risen with Christ; I do not get into my place until then.

Now have you got there, beloved friends? If so, all your desire will be there, and you will be longing to be there too. Christ is there, and the Christian's heart is with Christ, his affection is in heaven, and he looks for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. He gives the Christian as one who has seen Christ in the glory, and who says, That is my hope; my citizenship is in heaven, and here in this world all I am to do is to run after Him as fast as ever I can to get there.

All my hope is not to die, blessed though that be, but to look for the Savior, "who shall change our vile body that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body." We are running the race towards the place where our standing is. We are in Christ, but that is not the thing here. Got it we have; but how far does the cross really tell us the tale of what we are? not only that our sins, but that we ourselves, are put away. Can you say with the apostle, "The life which I now live in the flesh,

enablement, to love and enjoy God. It gives a new desire -- to please God. Sin can never come from this nature, only what pleases God.

The new birth brings no one into Godhead nor does it communicate incommunicable deity to the soul. 2 Pet. 1:4 presents that of which we partake by "his divine power" in a *moral character*. The definite article "the" is not found before the words "divine nature." This fact indicates that *moral character*, or moral qualities, is in view. We are partakers of divine nature.²⁰

The important thing to understand is that being born anew is entirely a sovereign operation of God's will and is the implantation of a new nature into the soul. It is God's act. He implants a new life and faith.

GOD SO LOVED THE WORLD

When considering the true light in John 1, we saw from John 1:10 that "the world knew him not." That does not mean 'the world of the elect,' as some claim. Nor does John 3:16 mean the world of the elect, as v. 17 also does not. John 1:29 speaks not of sins (conduct and fruit) but of sin (the root). The Lamb of God did the work for, laid the foundation for, the removal of sin; but that actual removal awaits the coming of the new heavens and the new earth. In John 4:42 we have Christ presented as the Savior of the world. See also John 12:47. There is none else to look to. Those actually saved are the elect, of course. Though He gives His life for the world (John 6:51), the world does not appropriate His work. In John 8:23 we see that those opposed to Christ are of the world. This world has a ruler, even Satan (John 14:30). The action of the Spirit regarding the world, consequent upon Christ's rejection, is given in John 16:8. The world rejoices that Christ is not here (John 16:20). It is where the believer has tribulation (John 16:33). There are men given by the Father to the Son, out of the world. In John 17:21 and 23 it is also the people that is meant. And this is the use of the word world in John unless something physical is meant (cp. John 17:11, 13), or the world system (possibly John 17:14, 16). John's Gospel has the world (of people) in view while affirming that none come to Christ except they are drawn by the Father and given by Him to the Son. While there are Calvinists who take John 3:16 to mean 'the world of the elect,' John Calvin did not take it that way, as his commentary on John shows.

The "world" never means the elect.

As whosoever looked upon the uplifted serpent (John 3:14 -- a figure of

20. More is found on this and such things as how regeneration differs from new birth, what it means that God's seed in us cannot sin, what being washed all over (John 13:7-11) means, and that the new birth is not baptism or by baptism, in *From New Birth to New Creation*, available from the publisher.

I AM ABOUT TO SPUE THEE OUT OF MY MOUTH (v. 16)

This is an Irrevocable Sentence. This is a fixed thing; no recovery or repentance. The Lord does not speak of His coming. Some Laodiceans might speak of it, but it is empty talk. It was in Philadelphia that we saw the place and preciousness of His coming for His own. In the presentation of Himself to Laodicea it is what He is, and not what Laodicea answers to in its character. He substitutes Himself for Laodicea.

Notice that this address to the Laodiceans is a threat -- it is not said, Except ye repent -- not the fact of its accomplishment: {it is} their moral condition. They will be totally done with morally, but the Philadelphian state of the true Christian may run into it -- only we must remember, the "spueing out" will be after the remnant are gathered out of it, after the church is taken away. The outward state may go on to Antichrist, and then be given up.²

In Laodicea there is that which cannot apply to individuals; you may give warning to individuals in the church of God, "while the simple pass on and are punished." But this is not mere warning; excision is announced, and that can never apply to a saint of God. "Because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth."³

Now here, though the professing church still subsists in form, yet it is utterly rejected, and it is unconditionally declared that Christ will spue it out of His mouth. The judgment is not accomplished, but it is certain and assumed as such. And the reason why the coming of the Lord is dropped after Philadelphia is, that, the whole thing being morally gone and the subject of judgment, the Lord presents Himself as outside in Laodicea, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock." If there are still saints within, the testimony to them is as from without the scene of which they make a part. In Philadelphia, all dealing with the saints as maintaining them in a place of testimony is closed; for the professing church had then become either Jezebel in corruption, or Sardis in death, so that it should be judged as the world; and the remnant had the testimony as keeping the word of Christ's patience, and are comforted by the assurance that Christ will come quickly. Now they were to be content with the assurance that then the synagogue of Satan would know that Christ had loved them.⁴

The church of Philadelphia having its proper portion, the coming of the Lord, the subject of this blessed hope closes. In Laodicea, therefore, there is nothing about the coming of the Lord, although it remains true of course, but still it is not put before it. It is another thing which is in hand; and here the prophet character comes in, because the Lord is here speaking of that which was about to happen in judgment. He is going to judge the church itself. It is always the

2. *Collected Writings* 34:166.

3. *Collected Writings* 5:363.

4. *Collected Writings* 5:365.

professing church He speaks of (we must remember), that which takes the place of the church of God, as the testimony for God in the world. And mark now the peculiar character Christ takes here; if the church, this vessel of testimony for God, this witness, is set aside by the Lord in disgust, then the Lord comes in Himself as the “ Amen, the faithful and true witness,” not so much in the dignity of His Person, as shown in ch. 1, but as the faithful and true witness -- “the beginning of the creation of God,” as going to take the place of that which had so entirely failed as God’s witness on the earth. ⁵

No Word from Christ to Separate from Laodicea? Listen to what the Spirit says to the assemblies. Because of its then, subsisting state, Christ was about to spue them out of His mouth -- but that does not indicate that you should separate from it? You have church theories, and fellowship theories, and a ‘niceness,’ and a ‘loving, generous, and liberal’ view of Christians. Well, stay in Laodicea -- and beware of the being spued out.

BECAUSE THOU SAYEST I AM RICH, AND AM GROWN RICH, AND HAVE NEED OF NOTHING (v. 17)

The Lord’s mouth only spoke words acceptable to God. Laodicea however, boasts merely religious talk of an unholy character.

The expositors of Scripture that have been often quoted in our considerations of Rev. 2, 3 saw Laodicean characteristics in their day, which I do not doubt, but I am applying their observations on Rev. 3:14-22 to the Irvingite/Pentecostal/Charismatic movement, wherein is embodied Laodiceanism. Irvingism (a movement which took form in the early 1830s) is still in existence. I see it as an incipient form of Pentecostalism, a variety of it. Pentecostalism, as we call it, we might date from events in Azusa California in 1905; and “the Charismatic renewal,” as it is sometimes styled, is the more recent movement of Pentecostalism into churches that did not want to join the Pentecostal denominations that had developed. Charismatic churches have thus taken a new position also, as did the Pentecostal churches. This has been called “the third wave of Christianity.” Well, it really is its own thing. It seems to me it answers to Laodicea, though the Laodicean attitude is hardly confined to that movement. The spiritual pretension of v. 17 characterizes this movement. It claims to have what the church had at the beginning, even miracles, tongues (though mostly gibberish), and what not. It runs from four-square gospel to the laughing fraud (“Toronto blessing”) and Vineyard churches, to the Jesus-only Pentecostals (“Oneness Pentecostals,” fundamentally unsound on the Trinity), and so on. They are rich, and have grown rich, and even have claimed the powers of what is claimed in Matt. 7:21-23. Why, they have it all, and have

5. *Collected writings* 5:365.

born of the Spirit.” That new nature or life given to us, which is contrasted with the flesh, is attributed to the Spirit, divinely and essentially so. Every life has its nature from that of which it is born. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. You cannot thus speak of water: it is not the communication of a nature, but cleansing power. As far as it represents anything, it represents unequivocally death, not life, for we are baptized into Christ’s death. “That which is born of water is water” would be nonsense. It is not presented as the communicator of a nature; the Spirit is. It is a divine life-giving Spirit. So of Christ, who acts as well as the Father in it, He is a quickening Spirit. ¹⁷

A Christian, then, has these two natures. Of course, many do not believe this. Here is an interesting analogy:

Ques. Has a Christian a new heart ?

Yes. But that is not a cleansing of the old one, just as if this table, say, was very dirty, and then the mahogany was well cleaned. That is the Wesleyan or Arminian idea of a new heart.

Ques. Then instead of mahogany, you would have rosewood?

{Yes} Only the mahogany is there still. ¹⁸

What is offered against God initiating this apart from human will? Why, John 3:16. It is for whosoever believes; and that is, allegedly, an act of faith within the human will as its source. This is freewill-ism reasoning, namely that belief is *ipso facto* an act of moral free will towards God. The truth is that God gives the belief:

A man can receive nothing unless it be given him out of heaven (John 3:27). ¹⁹

Partakers of the Divine Nature

(3) As his divine power has given to us all things which relate to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that has called us by glory and virtue, (4) through which he has given to us the greatest and precious promises, that through these ye may become partakers of [the] divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust (2 Pet. 1:3, 4).

One of the things that “his divine power” has given us that relates to life and godliness is a new nature. The new nature gives the person the capacity, the

17. *Collected Writings of J. N. Darby* 15:324.

18. *Notes and Jottings of J. N. Darby*, p. 44.

19. N. Geisler gives this objection:

In fact it says we are to “receive” it. This implies a free act of the will that can either accept or reject God’s offer (*op. cit.*, p. 94 [96]).

This is right in the face of “unless it be given him out of heaven.” On no other basis is it received. To insert “and unless he has a free will” into John 3:27 is to add to God’s Word what is not there.

Bellett pointed out, the ear and the mind are but the gates. Truth enters the soul through the conscience, as is clearly seen in John 4 regarding the Lord's dealing with the woman's conscience -- not through man's will. It is in the soul, where the will is, that there must be a new nature implanted. J. N. Darby has a footnote to the words "born anew":

Not only "again," but "entirely afresh," as from a new source of life and point of departure; translated in Luke 1:3, "from the origin." It is a new source and beginning of life.

God, of course, is the source. God works in us both the willing and the doing of His good pleasure -- for He has placed a new nature in the soul and also seals us with the Spirit as power so that the person then wills and acts in accordance with the new nature from God, a nature that loves only to do God's holy will. Let us have Phil. 2:13 before us:

So that, my beloved, even as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much rather in my absence, work out¹³ your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works¹⁴ in you both the willing and the working according to [his] good pleasure.

Whatever comes out for His pleasure is because of what He has wrought in us in internal power. The old nature remains incorrigible, remains in its fixed, moral character of hostility to God (cf. Rom. 7:25), and it remains in the Christian on earth (1 John 1:8 refers to sin as the root within us) after being born anew.¹⁵ The idea that somehow the sinful nature is changed flies in the face of such a Scripture as it also does of Rom. 7:23, and cp. Rom. 8:7. The flesh will never be gone until we pass out of this world or when we are transformed (Phil. 3:21). But there are now new motives in the soul (see 1 Cor. 2:11-16), not merely those three great motivations of the natural man (see 1 John 2:16).

The being born anew is, then, another birth, and it concerns a spiritual nature: "that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." What is imparted "partakes of the nature of that of which it is born,"¹⁶ thus called *spirit* here.

The other element of the new birth and the power by which it is wrought is, according to scripture, the Holy Spirit. "That which is born of the Spirit is spirit," as that which is born of the flesh is flesh. And "so is everyone that is

13. {"To work out in result." as Rom. 7: 8, 13, 15," JND footnote.}

14. {"Internal operation of power, though seen in results, as Matt. 14:2; Col. 1:29. Not as 'work out' in ver. 12," JND footnote, also for the word "works" in v. 13.}

15. The doctrine of the Wesleyans on perfectionism is excellently dealt with in *Collected Writings of J. N. Darby* 3:164-205.

16. *Collected Writings of J. N. Darby* 20:205.

need of nothing!

And while the four great marks of departure traced in the four chapters of 2 Timothy are not confined to the Pentecostal/Charismatic movement, they are characteristic of this movement.⁶

J. N. Darby has brought various observations regarding features of Laodicea to bear on its character. Here are some of them:

The relationships of Christ to the professing church here are remarkable. The Christian is a new man, a new creation in Christ, risen into a wholly new place, on the utter rejection and proved insuperable evil of the first man -- proved insuperable in the death of Christ. Man's and Satan's business are to exalt and give a place to the old. It is not here in the world, not at any rate in his own eyes. The professing church goes decidedly back here into that out of which we are taken in Christ by faith. Hence though this has still the name of the church, and professes to be Christian, it is really wholly in its own claimed moral place, though thinking itself wiser than ever, off the ground of Christianity, and on that of the world or natural man, which consequently comes on the scene in its own place; and the church closes. What was wholly wanting was what was divine and new in man. It was the first man enriched, even if Christ enriched him. That would be admitted. There was no divine righteousness, no specific Christian clothing, the righteous life, according to Christ, of a new nature to be had only in Him. **The teaching of the Holy Ghost was wanting.** Man's intelligence was wonderfully and wholly in play. The things counseled to be got make this character of the evil clear; they are specifically divine things connected with man's rejection and acceptance in Christ alone, to be had only in Christ, and from Christ, and nowhere else; not an improvement of man, but what was divine found in and obtained from Him.⁷

"The teaching of the Holy Ghost was wanting." And we can see in those today who speak most about the Spirit the setting up of the first man.

Seductive power is getting ready for the final Antichrist of prophecy.

Thus we find there are two points of special importance as characterizing this church of Laodicea -- great pretension to spiritual riches in itself, and neither hot nor cold as regards Christ. First, there is great pretension to spiritual riches; but then as to life, they had the form of it, but not the power -- "thou art neither cold nor hot." It is not positive hatred to Christ, but it is not positive zeal for Christ. It is the church going on in outward comfort and worldliness, and at the same time making great pretensions to spiritual riches, which is a sure sign of poverty; for, whenever we see such great profession to possess within itself the riches of God, we shall be sure to find poverty. And why? Because those riches

6. See my *The Word of God Versus the "Charismatic Renewal,"* Ch. 6, available from Present Truth Publishers.

7. *Collected Writings* 30:349. Boldface added.

can only be found in Christ. When the church says, “I am rich and increased in goods [making itself the vessel of grace instead of Christ] and have need of nothing,” it boasts of riches within itself. Thus in so doing, it neither puts its “amen” to the promises of God in Christ Jesus, nor is it the true and faithful witness for God. The church ceases to be this, directly it looks away from Christ as the only source; and when it takes itself to be the vessel of riches, it then necessarily becomes a false witness instead of a true one. For the moment I say the church is all this or that, or the church is what I am looking at and not Christ, the eye is completely taken off Christ to the church; I am looking to IT instead of to Him, however much I may pretend to honor Him. The faithfulness of God is not the question here, but our failure. This is of the last importance as guarding against deception.⁸

Philadelphia had a little power -- enough to be separate from evil unto the Lord. But Laodicea *appears* to be the opposite, having much power (cp. Matt. 7:22). It is greatly helpful in understanding Laodicea that it is the opposite of Philadelphia. Regarding “sign-gifts” and Philadelphia, J. N. Darby remarked:

Thus, as regards gifts in the church, for instance, those which were for signs (“sign-gifts” as they are sometimes called, and a testimony to the world, signs being for those which believe not, as “tongues,” “gifts of healing,” etc.), these may be all gone; but never can those gifts be removed which flow down from the Head to sustain the members of the body; for “no man ever yet hated his own flesh, but nourisheth and cherisheth it even as the Lord the church.”

In the epistle to the Ephesians, where the church is so specially brought out as the body of Christ, we find the gifts for the church spoken of as being “for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.” Here we have not a word about the sign-gifts, while in Corinthians we have “gifts of healing,” “divers kind of tongues,” “interpretation of tongues,” etc. Thus we see in Scripture two characters of gifts distinctly marked out: first, the sign-gifts, as in Corinthians, which were public signs attached to the church for outward testimony, whereby to attract an unbelieving world; secondly, those gifts which flow from the Head for the nourishment of the body. This nourishment must ever remain. It may come in the way of outward testimony, or direct from Christ Himself in the way of grace; but there must always be this supply from the Head. This is just what we get brought out in the Philadelphian church; for that which characterized it was weakness -- only a little power, but a much greater nearness to Him who is power, a greater degree of affection to the Lord, more intimacy of communion with Him, and in the promises made to it a much more definite identification with Himself.

8. *Collected Writings* 5:375.

The Spirit is the Spirit of God. The Spirit takes the Word and puts it into the soul, through the conscience. The soul is the dwelling place of truth -- as J. G.

12. (...continued)

are told “but of God.” Here is how Dr. Geisler does this on the basis of two considerations:

First, verse 12 makes it plain that the means by which this new birth is obtained is by “all who *receive* him [Christ].” This involves an act of free will (p. 58 [59]).

No, it involves an uncontingent, sovereign act of God’s will for the sinner to receive Christ -- as the very next verse (v. 13) shows. Christ is received (v. 12) because God has caused the new birth (v. 13). **Of course we believe and receive. But why?**

For it is God who works in you both the willing and the working according to [his] good pleasure (Phil. 2:13).

He who has begun a good work in you will perform it unto Jesus Christ’s day (Phil. 1:6).

N. Geisler’s second argument is:

Second, this passage is simply denying that there is any other source of the new birth other than God Himself. It is not “of” (Greek: *ek*, out of) human sources, whether parents, husband, or ourselves. No one can save us but God. God is the *source* by which the new birth is given (v. 13), but free will is the *means* by which it is “received” (v. 12). It is “by” grace but “through” (Greek: *dia*) faith that we are saved (Eph. 2:8) (pp. 58, 59 [60]).

John 1:13 uses *ek* three times: nor *ek* flesh’s will, nor *ek* man’s will, but *ek* God. So the new birth is not “out of” the flesh’s will, not “out of” man’s will, but “out of” God’s will. Dr. Geisler reduces this to mean that God is the *source*, and moral free will the *means*. Rather, the new birth is determinatively out of God’s will. His will is both the source and the means. In John 3:5 we have “born *ek* the Spirit.” And what is born *ek* the flesh is flesh. We have also “born *ek* water.” Water refers figuratively to the Word of God which is the *instrumentality* used by God. Just so, man’s will is not the instrument, but God’s will, through the Word, is how the new birth is brought about. This is taught also in James 1:18, to which JND has this footnote:

‘Having so purposed’ or ‘willed it.’ It was the fruit of His own mind, and so a free gift.

W. Kelly translates:

Having purposed He begot us by [the] word of truth . . .

Marshall, in his *Interlinear*, translates:

Having purposed he brought forth us by a word of truth . . .

It is the sovereign, determinative will of God by which one is born of God -- not contingent on the flesh’s will, nor on man’s will, nor of blood. But for free-willers, notice, obedience to God and saving faith is in the will of man -- and so the new birth is not necessary in order to obey and have saving faith. What *is* the necessity for the new birth?

We will examine Eph. 2:8, regarding faith not being of ourselves, in the chapter on Ephesians. Here we may observe why, for believers in moral free will towards God, Eph. 2:8 must not mean that faith is the gift of God. It is of the essence of Arminianism, and semi-Arminianism, to deny that faith is implanted into the soul by God. That would mean that the new birth is an unconditional, sovereign act of God. Acts 13:48 states: “and believed, as many as were ordained to eternal life.” Consult the notes on that text. It is spiritually painful to see the ways in which that passage is eviscerated in keeping with the notion of moral free will towards God.

some received ¹¹ Him because they have been born of God.

James 1:18 shows that God uses His Word instrumentally in effecting the new birth. That Word is not received by human faith of free moral will towards God.

A man can receive nothing unless it be given him out of heaven (John 3:27).

It is given to the soul to receive His word and to receive Christ. It is given by God in the new birth.

So then [it is] not of him that wills, nor of him that runs, but of God that shows mercy (Rom. 9:16).

THE NEW BIRTH

(5) Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except any one be born of water and of Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not wonder that I said to thee, It is needful that ye should be born anew. The wind blows where it will, and thou hearest its voice, but knowest not whence it comes and where it goes: thus is every one that is born of the Spirit. Nicodemus answered and said to him, How can these things be? Jesus answered and said to him, Thou art the teacher of Israel and knowest not these things! (John 3:5-8).

Nicodemus Did Not Know That a New Heart Was Needed. With Ezek. 36:25-27 before us, showing Israel to have a heart of stone, we can see why the Lord expected a teacher in Israel to know that a momentous change, morally and spiritually, was needed for Israel to be under the new covenant when Messiah reigns before His ancients in glory, in the millennium. They need a new heart. They need the new birth.

A New Nature in the Soul. The water is a figure for the Word of God. It is through the truth, instrumentally, that we are born of God (see James 1:18). ¹²

11. The reader should consult the remarks on 2 Pet. 1:1, given later in this book, and other passages that use the word receive, as well as the next footnote

12. N. Geisler eviscerates James 1:18, as he does all such texts, by constantly repeating the same refrain, namely, that God does not save apart from faith (Eph. 2:8), which faith is, in his view, the *free choice of the sinner*, not from God implanting faith in the soul. Thus:

Our salvation is “through the Word” (Rom. 10:17; James 1:18), but the Bible declares that the Word must be received by faith (Acts 2:41; Heb. 4:1-2) to be effectual (*op. cit.*, p. 94 [96]).

So, when the Word says we are born of God’s will we may expect the eviscerating free-willism response to be, yes, but it is God’s will that the means be by the exercise of man’s moral free will towards Him. *There is no Scripture that cannot be undermined by such a process of thinking.* Thus is it in the case of John 1:12, 13, where the three human agencies are first excluded, and then we

(continued...)

Weakness is that which characterized the church of Philadelphia . . . ⁹

AND KNOWEST NOT THAT THOU ART (v. 17):

Knowest Not. Glorifying in their supposed spiritual powers and attainments, they had no inward consciousness of their actual spiritual condition.

The Wretched And The Miserable. The first two of the five words describing the actual spiritual state of the angel, and thus of the assembly in Laodicea, are two closely related words. W. Kelly translates “the wretched and the pitiable.” The word “the,” gives an emphasis to the deplorable condition. They had set up the first man as an imitation second man, along with falsifying the operations of the Spirit, and thus were actually in spiritual suffering and distress that is the object of pity, made so much worse by their false boast and accompanying spiritual blindness. It is nauseous.

And Poor, and Blind, and Naked. What a horribly true description of these professed Christians. As the impoverished widow of Luke 21:3, so these were, in reality, in an impoverished spiritual state. Not that they had any sense of it, for they were blind. And to this is added nakedness, not physical, but that their state is exposed. It is exposed to others, for they themselves are sure they are not naked. In proportion as the professed Christian is fleshly, thus is he naked; for the flesh provides no clothing.

I COUNSEL THEE TO BUY OF ME (v. 18).

Buy. The way to buy is by the repentance called for in v. 19. It is Christ’s counsel to buy from Him, the only true source of what meets every divine test. He is not counseling to do the buying in little bits. In a footnote to “buy” in J. N. Darby’s translation, we read:

All aorists, having the force of an accomplished fact, ‘mayest have become,’ ‘have got into that state.’

The counsel, then, is that the three items named be had at the same time, the soul having acquired them all, for they are intimately related to being here for His glory.

Gold Purified ¹⁰ by Fire. The gold speaks of divine righteousness. Of course, this characterized the One who was God and man, one Person. In His pathway here He was tried in the fire. We noted previously that the assembly in Laodicea had set up the first man in place of this blessed One who is God’s proved one. It is divine righteousness as faithfully displayed in Him.

9. *Collected Writings* 5:343, 345.

10. “Purified” does not mean we must suppose there was dross in divine righteousness or in Christ. He was tested, but the acid test showed the pure gold.

White Garments. One cannot have practical, active righteousness in the walk as meant by the white garments (cp. Rev. 19:8), unless we have the gold purified by fire.

“The white raiment” is the works of the saints, which are the fruits of believing in divine righteousness. They are consequent upon the possession of divine righteousness. Human righteousness is quite a distinct thing from the righteousness of saints; for the righteousness of saints flows from hearts set at liberty by divine righteousness . . . The works of the Spirit flow out from the Spirit which has been the seal of divine righteousness to the soul; these saintly works are the fruits of the Holy Ghost in us. Here, then, is the “white raiment,” which those at Laodicea were lacking.¹¹

Eyesalve. Concerning eyesalve, J. N. Darby remarked:

. . . that true intelligence of the Holy Ghost which makes us see, the unction of the Holy One.¹²

Concerning the practical use of eyesalve, it is connected with the practical, active righteousness in the walk. And this, the Holy Spirit seeks to work in us. For example, Christian liberty is freedom from self to do the will of God. When pretended “liberty” is used to indulge self, we know that that is not what Scripture means by liberty. The Holy Spirit leads us in a holy walk and gives us discernment. Also, see Eph. 1:17, 18; 1 John 2:20.

Admonition

I rebuke and discipline as many as I love; be zealous therefore and repent. Behold, I stand at the door and am knocking; if any one hear my voice and open the door, I will come in unto him and sup with him, and he with me (Rev. 3:19, 20).

/ REBUKE AND DISCIPLINE AS MANY AS I LOVE (v. 19)

Cp. Heb. 12:5, 6 and Prov. 3:11, 12. This statement is of general application and is not restricted to Laodicea. It has to do with His governmental, or disciplinary, ways with His own.

“As many as I love I rebuke and chasten” -- convicting the conscience. Nothing is healed until that is done; it is not only an expression of His displeasure, but bringing it home to the soul -- it is to “as many as I love.” Whatever amount of exercise of conscience there may be, it is a proof of God’s love; this is comfort to many a troubled soul. Men often speak of judgments as if they were from man, not God, but man’s heart rebels more against God than against man. Job

a new life to the sinner.

In the parable of the great supper we observed that the invitation first went out to those who are here called “his own.” We also saw that all, without exception, made excuse not to come. Then we saw that there was a servant who *brought* and *compelled* persons, from Jews and Gentiles, to come in. In John 1:13 we see that those who are “born . . . of God” (this refers to the new birth) were not born of God by anything human being involved. Three things are denied as a source in man for being born of God:

1. **Not of blood.** This refers to the fact that the new birth cannot be received from parents or some blood-line; for example, from being in the Jewish line.
2. **Nor of flesh’s will.** Flesh here refers to man as fallen. The will is under bondage to the flesh (“sin in the flesh”) -- by three great motivations discussed when we considered the parable of the great supper (found in 1 John 2:16). The flesh’s will refers to the will in the person, not to what is external to himself.
3. **Nor of man’s will.** This refers to the will of man that is external to the person.

“**But of God.**” God can act sovereignly and cause the new birth and that is what we have here. And so says James 1:18:

According to his own will begat he us through the word of truth.

The natural will of man contributes nothing except opposition to God’s gracious invitation, without exception. It is the divine will that produces the new birth, which is the implantation of a new life in the person. It is a divine act. Instrumentalities used of God in accomplishing this are given in John 3:5-8, as James 1:18 also shows the use of the Word of God.

We saw in vv. 10, 11 that the world knew Him not and His own received Him not. Then v. 12 says “But as many as received him . . .” The question is, why did any receive Him? Arminians answer, because they exercised their moral free will towards God to believe. The truth is that v. 13 gives the answer to why any believed, why any received Him. To believe on His name is to be born of God. To receive Him is to be born of God. Faith does not precede new birth but rather faith and life are implanted by God into the soul *simultaneously*. The order of vv. 12 and 13 does not mean that new birth comes after receiving Him. Verse 13 explains *why* anyone received Him. Anything human is excluded but

11. *Collected Writings* 5:377.

12. *Collected Writings* 30:349.

conversion comes from the will of man. You say that as soon as a man believes we find that God renews his mind. But, if he believes, it is already renewed, since Christ is precious to him, while before he saw no beauty in Him that he should desire Him; already he knows that he is a sinner, and needs a Savior, and he has found Him if he believes. Observe that Jesus says, "You will not come." I believe fully that they are responsible for it; but where do you find, You will? The word of God expressly says, No. "There is none that seeketh after God." He came to seek them, thank God, but when He came He was rejected; He was not received save by those who are born of God. This is said by the Spirit in Isa. 1, by John the Baptist, by the Lord, and by the apostle John. Now certainly God does not hinder any one from coming, but such is the disposition of the heart of man that he will not. This is why the work of God is necessary, and why it is said, "No man can come unto me except the Father which hath sent me draw him." Perhaps you will say, Every one is drawn. No, because the one who is drawn comes, and Jesus will raise him up at the last day: he is saved, see John 6:39. Therefore it is said (v. 37), "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." The Lord then expressly says what you say He does not say, "No man can come to me except the Father which hath sent me draw him," and He repeats (v. 65), "Therefore said I unto you that no man can come unto me except it were given unto him of my Father." Also it is written, "But ye do not believe, because ye are not of my sheep. My sheep hear my voice . . . and I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish." ¹⁰

3. *God Must Sovereignly Cause the New Birth*

. . . but to as many as received him, to them gave he [the] right to be children of God, to those that believe on his name; who have been born, not of blood, nor of flesh's will, not of man's will, but of God (John 1:12,13).

BEING BORN OF GOD IS A SOVEREIGN ACTION NOT DEPENDENT ON MAN

The fact that the true light came into the world is a revelation of the light, but more than that was needed because of the state of man as blind, deaf, and lying in a state of spiritual death towards God, three of the ways in which man's spiritual condition is given in John. Therefore we have the quickening power of God in John's gospel so that the lost one, quickened (and thus born of God) may see, hear, and be in a state of spiritual life towards God. *Quickening* is a correlative expression with *death*, whether applied to the body or to the soul (John 5). This will be considered more fully under point four of this chapter. Here we draw attention to the connection of quickening and new birth. Quickening means making alive, and the new birth speaks of the impartation of

10. *Letters* 2:478, 479.

complained of God more than of the Sabeans. It is because God touches the conscience. It is a sorrowful thing when God's voice is not heard in the chastening. There are more pains taken with this Christian than with any. It is a different thing from Paul in 2 Cor. 12, where he says, "Though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved"; as if he said, I shall not cease to love you, though the way I take to show it to you makes you love me less. Here the meaning is, although they did not love Him, but were sunk amongst the rest, He would not give them up. ¹³

BE ZEALOUS THEREFORE AND REPENT (v. 19)

They were zealous for the first man, but it is a false zeal, an imitation zeal; and they were zealous for manifestations of the Spirit in Pentecostal power, leading to delusion. The Lord puts before them what *true zeal* does: repent.

BEHOLD, I STAND AT THE DOOR AND AM KNOCKING (v. 20)

It is indeed an amazing thing to **behold**, that Christ is pictured in this way, that the state calls for this. Christ is outside of what Laodicea represents. ¹⁴ Here we see that the Lord had put Himself before the door and was standing there knocking. This, of course, does not mean a door to the assembly. He had already said that He was about to spue the angel, and thus them, out of His mouth. Neither does this refer to John 10:9, nor to Luke 11:9, for that matter. Why, it does not answer to Luke 14 either. Do not go through Scripture looking for doors and suppers and then link them all together. This is not a verse about salvation for the sinner. Though He graciously calls to repentance, knowing they would not, He now addresses anyone in the assembly of Laodicea who hears His voice and opens the door -- to sup.

God knew the body would not repent. "Behold I stand at the door and knock." These words of invitation to those who hear are of a different character from those in Canticles: "The voice of my beloved that knocketh; open to me," etc.; where it is awakening the heart afresh of the Jewish people, who had been asleep a long time, stirring up the stupid, sleepy thing, by appealing to the affections. Here it is at the close of the testimony Christ is seeking to gather up any lingering desire after Him; but the promise to those who overcome, though most blessed, is of a lower and more general character than that given to the other churches. To sit with Him on the throne -- this is what all will have who reign with Him a thousand years. All who are raised reign with Him. To the other churches there is something more special promised -- this is only trenching on the kingdom. But Christ Himself will come in to him, "and sup with him, and he with me." He says Christ will come, and give you to enjoy

13. *Collected Writings* 34:166.

14. It is inaccurate to say that He takes a place outside the professing body, if by that is meant the professing church generally. This has to do with Laodicea, not, say, Sardis.

with Him at His table, not come down with you to your things.¹⁵

But this cannot rise up to what Philadelphia has.

IF ANY ONE HEAR MY VOICE AND OPEN THE DOOR (v. 20)

There was a great amount of fleshly noise in the assembly in Laodicea that tended to drown out the voice that should be heard and to which response was due. When we do not judge self, then fleshly noise affects our hearing. It affects communion with Himself. Some measure of self-judgment must come about for one to open the door to communion. It is self-judgment that causes the hearing of the Lord's desire for communion and opens the door to it. And while this is a general truth, we have here something specific in the case of the Laodicean assembly. This has its own distinctive character just as there are distinctive things in Thyatira, Sardis, and Laodicea. These four continue until the Lord comes. Laodicea, remember, does not depict the entire profession.

I WILL COME IN UNTO HIM AND SUP WITH HIM, AND HE WITH ME (v. 20)

Disowns the Assembly in Laodicea. The golden candlesticks, or lamps, speaks of the divine origin, not the present state, or condition. Moreover, the professed Christians living in Laodicea form the assembly in the place, whether or not they assemble together. The fact of an address to the assembly does not mean that they were assembling scripturally. Something is seriously wrong with your notions about the assembly of God if you think Christ was in the midst in Laodicea (cp. Matt. 18:20) because the assembly there is addressed (through the angel of the assembly). Christ, in His presentation of Himself, substituted Himself for them. He was about to spew them out of His mouth. And what is left is only individual communion, as noticed in this v. 20.

Come in unto Him. How personal this is; and how it shows forth the desire of His heart and His readiness to meet the soul's need and commune with him. How much better He is than religious flesh and show. He is real and the other is a sham, a fraud.

Supping. Luke 24:24 is not what we have here. Why compare the two *discouraged* disciples to those in the assembly of Laodicea. It seems to me that is doing the two disciples an injustice.

The supping together speaks of communion. The Lord speaks of Himself as supping with the one who hears His voice and opens the door. It is an unspeakable privilege to have the Lord do that. But He also speaks of such a one as supping with Himself. "He with me" denotes an unspeakable privilege the soul has. It indicates that He desires to lift up and enlarge the soul's

15. *Collected Writings* 34:165.

state of every man. He is the final test for the first man. The first man is in a state of spiritual darkness and does not apprehend the light. "The world knew him not." Besides that matter of the world, the first man, under testing in the persons of the specially favored people, did not receive Him. Man's will was exposed in its implacable hatred of God in not receiving Christ.

In order to receive Christ God must sovereignly cause a man to be born again so that there might be a new nature that receives Christ. J. N. Darby wrote:

But there is a fundamental error in your reasoning, as if faith in a human testimony, with respect to temporal things, was the same thing as faith that receives the word of God in the heart. There is no enmity in the heart against temporal things, but "the mind of the flesh is enmity against God." You say that man if he wished could believe, but he never wishes, because the object of faith is hateful to him; and, further, if he believed with this natural faith only, it would be worth nothing. Many believed in Jesus (John 2:23, 24), but Jesus had no confidence in this faith.⁹ You forget that the one who believes with a true faith has everlasting life. (John 3:36.) See 1 John 5:15. Likewise, they are not born of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but they are born of God. And therefore it is said (Gal. 3:26), "Ye are children of God by faith in Christ Jesus." Now this true faith, the fruit of the operation of the Holy Ghost, has not been found in any man. It is said (Isa. 1:2), "Wherefore when I came was there no man?" John the Baptist says (John 3:32), "And what he hath seen and heard, that he testifieth: and no man receiveth his testimony"; also the Lord Himself says (John 3:11), "We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen, and ye receive not our witness." That it is the work of God is clear according to the word (James 1:18), "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth." In Galatians we read (1:15), "When it pleased God . . . to reveal his Son in me." God gives us eternal life. "He that hath the Son hath life," says the apostle John. "That which is born of the Spirit is spirit" -- an entirely new thing in man. Christ Himself is our life, and we have not this life before receiving Christ. The testimony, then, is clear and certain that we are children of God through faith, and born, not of the will of man but of God.

You say that he has faith -- 'may it not be that he opens his hand to receive?' But hearts are not so disposed; they will not open the hand. Everything is done, as far as the heart is concerned, when it is disposed to receive Christ. He complains that when He came there was no man. You acknowledge that he has salvation, but, if a man is disposed to open his hand,

9. {It was a mere human belief, founded on the signs, not founded on the reception of the Word.

But Jesus did not trust himself to them, because he knew all [men], and that he had not need that any should testify of man, for he knew what was in man (John 2:24, 25).

And what was in man that he knew was there? "Preparatory light"? "Prevenient grace"? Or was it the spiritual darkness without any light whatsoever?}

John 9.

LIGHT THAT IS DARKNESS

(22) The lamp of the body is the eye; if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body will be light: (23) but if thine eye be wicked, thy whole body will be dark. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great the darkness! (Matt. 6:22, 23).

(34) The lamp of the body is thine eye: when thine eye is simple, thy whole body also is light; but when it is wicked, thy body also is dark. (35) See therefore that the light which is in thee be not darkness. (36) If therefore thy whole body [is] light, not having any part dark, it shall be all light as when the lamp lights thee with its brightness (Luke 11:34-36).

In John, the Son is presented as light in connection with His personal glory. It speaks of the perfection of His Person. "God is light" (1 John 1:5). We partake of the divine nature (2 Pet. 1:4), i.e., of God's moral qualities. If we are born of God we have the faculty to apprehend the "true light." In Matt. and Luke the seeing faculty is brought especially before us. Note that it is not said that the body will be full of light. It is that the body will glow. "Thy whole body will be light" if the eye is single. On the other hand, if the eye is wicked, "thy whole body will be dark." There will be no glow of the light. The question is, is a person glowing with the light or is he dark?

There is another matter. The light that is darkness is not the light from God. It might be the 'light' of religion, or the 'light' of reason, or new-age 'enlightenment.' Such things in a person are darkness. How great such darkness is. The single eye is when God opens our eyes to see Christ, the "true light" and the focus becomes single upon Him; and simple, unmixed. A test for us is how much we glow. Is any part dark? Is the eye single? Is it simple? There is no "true light" but One who reveals the Father.

In Matt. 5:13, 14 the Lord says to His disciples that they are the salt of the earth and the light of the world. They are the preservative through separation from evil unto Himself and they are light. Let us not disjoin these two, the salt and the light. They both express Himself.

2. Christ Rejected

While the first three gospels trace the rejection of the Lord Jesus, the Gospel of John assumes that rejection at the very beginning of the book. Thus we read:

The world knew him not (John 1:10).

He came to his own, and his own received him not (John 1:11).

He has come as light into the world, and as the true light, He has exposed the

apprehension of Himself. This involves cleansing from defilement (John 13:8).

Communion is not the same for all. Do you think this rises to the communion of a Philadelphian? Hardly! Why not withdraw from the assembly in Laodicea? Were any in the assembly of the Laodiceans to *answer in practice* to Christ as "the beginning of the creation of God" he would not remain there. But an individual may stay in such a connection and have a measure of communion. However, godly separation from evil, unto the Lord, results in greater honor to the Lord and communion with Himself. The flesh will declaim against this fact, however true.

Promise to the Overcomer

He that overcomes, to him will I give to sit with me in my throne; as I also have overcome, and have sat down with my Father in his throne (Rev. 3:21).

THE CONNECTION WITH WHAT THE FIRST MAN FORFEITED

In tracing the promises and their connection with what the first man (1 Cor. 15:47-49) has forfeited, another wrote:

There is yet another promise to the Church of the Laodiceans: "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame and am set down with my Father in his throne." Promise and prophecy had alike announced Jesus, the Messiah, as the rightful heir to the royalties of David's throne. "He shall be great and be called the Son of the Highest and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David, and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end." In this title, and with these claims, He presented Himself to Israel when He rode into Jerusalem upon a colt, the foal of an ass, "and all the people cried, Blessed be the king of Israel, that cometh in the name of the Lord." But this choicest gift of Jehovah's love they rejected, and set up over His head, when they crucified Him, "This is Jesus, the king of the Jews." Therefore He is set down with His Father on *His* throne, cast out by the world! Yet this place of blessing, though forfeited on their part, He holds in His own personal title as "he that liveth and was dead, and behold I am alive for evermore." The rejected king of Israel -- rejected by those to whom He came in grace -- is nevertheless the One who says, "Even as I also overcame"; for though death and the grave were the limits of Satan's power, there was a path which the vulture's eye had not seen, and resurrection to the Father's throne declared Him, beyond all controversy, to be the overcomer. "Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." It is a present fellowship with Himself, in a way that the world knows not, in which He gives the promise, "I will grant to sit with me on my throne"; for the Church by faith through the Spirit can look into the future and distinguish between the Father's throne where the rejected One is set down, and the Son's throne on which He is to sit and reign, and trace the effect which will follow this change of position.

How precious for our souls to discover that throughout all the confusion in the pathway of forfeited or rejected blessing from the starting-point in Eden to the Father's throne, the Lord Jesus Christ has been the glorifier of God and the Savior of the lost! Promises and blessings which were originally put into creature hands are now made "yea and amen in Christ." Gifts and callings which were necessarily on creature responsibility are waiting to be opened, out to the glory of God *by us*. The creature itself is no longer dependent upon its own expectations, but stands on the new footing of redemption. Another life has been brought into the world by the incarnate Son of God, and, by His death and resurrection, is communicated to all them that believe. "He that hath the Son hath life." The hour upon which heaven and earth waits is that of which He said, "Of that hour knoweth no man, neither the angels of God, but my Father only." He will then quit the Father's throne to sit upon His own throne. From that point and by that act *above* all things below will change into their own respective places and correspondence, either caught up to be for ever with the Lord; or by judicial power commanded to depart -- consigned to the lake of fire, where the devil and his angels shall be later.

We are come to the end of the history of God's goodness to man in the flesh, and therefore of forfeited blessing. It is unspeakably gracious in our Lord (who has recovered all that was lost both for Himself and for God; and keeps all in His own hands for the coming day of universal glory) to anticipate that time and give, as we have seen, all these spoils to the overcomers, during the period of His rejection, in known enjoyment with Himself. In the light of *this* love, we can accept these promises to the seven churches, and eat the fat and drink the sweet, and know the joy of the Lord to be our strength; while the world is running its own course, heedless of the gathering storm. Or we may take the assurance of the Lord Jesus, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." How very precious to find our souls drawn aside from the glory of man by companionship with Christ; and as overcomers, through a closer walk with Him, to hold these various promises in the secret of the white stone, "and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it!" We become independent of everything under the heavens, by being thus consciously united to Christ, and in all which comes down from God out of heaven. All our blessings, while we are waiting for the Lord, are descending blessings; for "every good and perfect gift cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness nor shadow of turning." We owe nothing to the flesh, nor to the world, nor to Satan, except it be to maintain the fact that we do not. On the other hand we are not our own, but bought with a price, and are set by grace in that new place of glorifying God in our body and spirit, which are His.

The overcomers have but a little while in which to do a great deal. "Behold I come quickly" is His parting word to Philadelphia. "Hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown," is the encouraging word to us till He does

"Lightens every man," then, does not mean everyone has some "preparatory light," but rather that light shines on man's state so as to expose it:

But all things having their true character exposed by the light are made manifest; for that which makes everything manifest is light (Eph. 5:13).

WHAT IS THE ANSWER FOR THIS DARKNESS?

Because [it is] the God who spoke that out of darkness light should shine who has shone in our hearts . . . (2 Cor. 4:6).

Every saint was "once darkness, but now light in [the] Lord" (Eph. 5:8). How did that come about? You who believe in moral free will toward God think (in effect) that you apprehended the light (contra John 1:5) by your free will (your pretension not to be totally lost), not that God sovereignly implanted it into you. The fact is, it was accomplished by the God who spoke in Gen. 1, "let there be light." "And there was light." And just so did He speak light into our souls by His own sovereign will. Yes, He "has called you out of darkness to his wonderful light" (1 Pet. 2:9). Man is blind to the light and his eyes need to be opened (Acts 26:18). The Savior does it through His Word, as He himself opened the eyes of the physically blind when here on earth, as in the case of

8. (...continued)

a predetermined, puppetlike basis or to have *all* flock to Him on a morally unconditioned basis (2:64, 65).

Thus, man is viewed as extensively depraved but not "totally intensively depraved" (2:268). That is, man is not totally lost -- which is implicit in the notion of moral free will towards God. "Preparatory light" and "prevenient grace" are inventions of the flesh in order to deny that man is totally lost. In effect, this affirms that light is working within the spiritual darkness. It should also be realized that when man's true condition is not acknowledged, the doctrine of the atonement is necessarily affected also.

Those maintaining moral free will towards God sometimes argue that the fact that God gives commands shows that man has the ability to respond. I would have thought that the inability of man to carry out the law would have kept persons from making such a claim. Man does not have "preparatory light" of "prevenient grace" that enabled anyone to keep the law.

John 12:32, which will be discussed later, does not really support the idea either. Nor does Titus 2:11, which says:

For the grace of God which carries with it salvation for all men has appeared . . .

There is nothing here about imparting to all men a grace sufficient to enable them to believe. The atonement has not effected all lost men, whose moral state constitutes the darkness, so as to restore "a sufficient degree of moral ability to permit moral action in real freedom." It is an invention designed to support moral free will, which free will is used to solve the alleged problem of how God could hold men responsible if they cannot obey. That would mean God is immoral, so free will must be true. The truth is that man in the garden *was* free, fell, and acquired the sinful nature. Man follows the old nature and will not come to Christ but is responsible to do so. The history of the testing of the first man shows that he is not recoverable.

This is a pretension of the first man not to be totally lost. The error is that every person since Adam has “preparatory light” and that must be true also of those that “need not to be in *that* darkness which comprehends not the light.” And, is there another spiritual darkness that is not “*that* darkness”? The fact is that there is only one spiritual darkness and it is devoid of “preparatory light” supposedly “endowed by the Logos.” The Lord never spoke of, or appealed to, a “preparatory light.” It is a myth of freewill-ism. You will see from 1 John 1:5, 6 that one either walks in the light or he walks in darkness. The unbeliever abides in darkness and blindly walks there:

I am come into the world [as] light, that everyone that believes on me may not abide in darkness (John 12:46).

Yet a little while is the light amongst you. Walk while ye have the light, that darkness may not overtake ⁶ you. And he that walks in the darkness does not know where he goes (John 12:35).

Concerning v. 5, Dr. Whedon wrote:

Light shineth in darkness -- Not only was there from the Logos a moral consciousness created in man’s original nature; but when, nevertheless, the moral and spiritual consciousness of men through sin again became dark and inert, the Logos, Christ, shed the beams of truth and love into it, unappreciated and unaccepted. This shining and rejecting existed in all ages; but especially during the incarnation, of which John is about to write. ⁷

Thus is the Scripture boldly eviscerated by free-willism. “The best commentators” must be those who join in undermining Scripture teaching on the true spiritual state of man as darkness not apprehending the light. Man apprehended preparatory light and beams of truth and love in his heart! It is well to have before us the true character of this opposition to God’s Word. ⁸

6. The sense is ‘overtake so as to seize upon you,’ as Mark 9:18; 1 Thess. 5:4 {JND footnote}.

7. *Whedon’s Commentary Revised*, Harrisburg: Christian Light Publications, pp. 231, 230, respectively, 1981 [1860, 1888].

8. “Prevenient grace” is an expression used to signify the Arminian notion that God has provided to all men a grace that is sufficient for man to be able to exercise his moral free will towards God so as accept God’s salvation. From *A Contemporary Wesleyan Theology*, Grand rapids: Francis Asbury Press, 1983, we learn that prevenient grace is part of the same grace God is always showing (1:485). Prevenient grace is:

. . . a universal benefit of the Atonement, removing the racial guilt related to Adam’s sin, making all men salvable . . . restoring a sufficient degree of moral ability to permit moral action in real freedom, either to respond to the convicting of the Spirit or to resist. The grace is indispensable but not irresistible. God’s will is that all should respond, but His will has elected to permit people not to respond. He would rather have some choose Him freely and serve Him because they love Him than to have the elect serve Him on

(continued...)

come. ¹⁶

And here are some remarks by G. V. Wigram:

I do not see why I am not to admire Christ here. I admire a friend who watches over me and comes in to help me all unasked in a difficulty. And Christ, knocking at my divided heart till the last hour, saying, Open, open, I must come in, I *must* admire. There is something beautiful in His conduct; His patience, His pertinacity are to be admired; His determination to come in to the heart which has shut Him out, and sup there; I cannot see Him so without loving Him.

Now turn to the promise. “To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.” In these addresses to the seven churches we may notice that, when the moral state is good, the promise is high up; but when the moral state is bad, the promise is a low one. As to the paradise of God, a man out of communion does not know anything about it; but talk to a man of the world about a throne, and he will understand that. Here is a promise palpably addressed to sense. It is a promise which the natural heart can embrace; but it is presented in a way in which none else could present it, bringing out secrets none else know, of a walk with God of those who in the midst of ruin have kept near Him.

And it is as He has sat down on His Father’s throne that they shall sit on His. Everything which brings practical conformity to Christ is sweet. We love everything that makes us a little like Him, because we love Him. A cloud received *Him* out of their sight, and *we* shall be caught up in the clouds too. So in this promise He says: I do not give you a promise that I have not proved myself. I have been in conflict, and now I am seated on a throne. You shall have the same. I conquered; a throne was prepared for me. You are in conflict; overcome; a throne shall be prepared for you. He turns to us from resting on His Father’s throne, as to those who are set in the energy of his victory, and he says, You, as I was, are in conflict. He does not say, What is your conflict compared to mine? but identifies them as far as possible with Himself; He loves to associate us with Himself. If you are fighting, so was I. He has not the heart to say to any of us, What a difference between your conflict and mine! No, He ennobles our little bit of conflict and patience, as He says, *I* have overcome; you overcome. What a heart of love He has. How He loves to say: you poor Laodicean listening to my word, see the place I have prepared for you! True, you are yet in the conflict, but what of that? There is a throne prepared for me, and you shall sit upon it. You shall hear the words, “Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.” You, who have an ear to hear, think of my joy in welcoming you home, in seeing you on my throne. He will not tell how all labour was His, the sitting down ours!

How sweet is any association with Himself! Do you know what it is to be in the conflict, and to find the Lord raking up this little thing and that, making

16. *The Bible Treasury* 7:367, 368.

the best of what is so unsatisfactory, while you are often forgetting what He has done for you? He looks into your heart, and well He knows the sorrows of the wilderness, His love, which has brought you there, knows all your perils. The victory of Christ is ours. He said:

He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.

He puts life into me, and He is responsible to bring it forth in that day: He begins and He ends.

Christ's life upon earth was one of constant communion with God as the perfect dependent man; and He will be in glory as the Son of man. All glory is given to Him as the recompense for having humbled himself and been obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Therefore God hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

All the glory of God is connected with the recognition of what Jesus did as Son of man. It was thus that God's throne became stamped with mercy. There is no power in any but Christ. Was there a little left in Paul or in Peter? No, none. It is all found in the blessed One. All power is given to Him as He sits upon the throne of God as the Lamb that was slain.

And is this One for me? This Christ for me? What shall we say? Has He said, Chief of sinners though thou be, I have washed thee? Then talk not to me of feebleness and weakness; for I have given thee my own beauty.

This conflict is an uncommonly happy thing. I can say, Foolish one that I have been! I have tried to be happy in the world, but I cannot, for the world, will not know me. But happier ground is it to say: I love Him; He was murdered here, so I cannot sit down here; He could not find a rest here, and I cannot. I believe we may write upon every sorrow, every trial, Christ is in this.¹⁷

OVERCOMING WHAT YOU SHOULD

Let us take a lesson from Saul as to overcoming. He overcame the Ammonites; but the Philistines, whom he was specially raised up to conquer, he never overcame. If people do not do the thing they are sent to do, it does not matter how much they do.¹⁸

CHRIST'S THRONE

Christ Is Not on His Own Throne Now. Christ will take His own throne after He appears in glory. The rapture saints and all who have part in the resurrection

The cross was a great turning point. Consequent upon the crucifixion of Christ, the whole world is stated to lie in the wicked one (1 John 5:19). Eph. 6:12 speaks of "the universal lords of this darkness." And so the believer is spoken of as "delivered from the authority of darkness" (Col. 1:13), and thus we are not "in darkness" (1 Thess. 5:4) and not "of darkness" (1 Thess. 5:14). We have been "called . . . out of darkness to his wonderful light" (1 Pet. 2:9). We walk in the light where God Himself is (1 John 1:5, 6), Him in Whom is no darkness.

Concerning practice, what fellowship is there of light with darkness (2 Cor. 6:14)? The Spirit said, "Ye were once darkness, but now light in the Lord; walk as children of light . . . (Eph. 5:8). Hence we ought to "cast away therefore the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light" (Rom. 13:12). God will "bring to light the hidden things of darkness" (1 Cor. 4:5).

(7) Be not ye therefore fellow-partakers with them; (8) for ye were once darkness, but now light in [the] Lord; walk as children of light, (9) (for the fruit of the light [is] in all goodness and righteousness and truth,) (10) proving what is agreeable to the Lord; (11) and do not have fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather also reprove [them], (12) for the things that are done by them in secret it is shameful even to say. (13) But all things having their true character exposed by the light are made manifest; for that which makes everything manifest is light (Eph. 5:8-13).

God has brought all this out regarding man's totally lost condition consequent upon the closing of the testing of the first man with the crucifixion of Christ. Indeed, before the cross Satan was not called the god of this world as he now is (2 Cor. 4:4)), nor the prince of the power of the air (Eph. 2:1).

WHAT DOES "LIGHTENS EVERY MAN" MEAN?

Now, the Son, come as the true light, "coming into the world, lightens every man." What is intended by this is that the true light has shined on man and has exposed the moral state of every man towards God. Light has shined upon man in his lost condition, upon man's state. Thus, every man's individual, moral state Godward is exposed. That state is spiritual darkness and that spiritual darkness does not apprehend the light. There are no exceptions.

One who believes in moral free will towards God must find ways to get around what is taught in this passage. Thus, in opposition to the real meaning of the spiritual darkness, concerning v. 9, the Mennonite Arminian, D. D. Whedon wrote:

The best commentators render this verse, *That was the true Light which, coming into the world, enlighteneth every man . . .*

Every human being is endowed by the Logos with a preparatory light, so that he need not be in *that* darkness which comprehends not the light.

17. G. V. Wigram, *The Addresses to the Seven Churches*.

18. *Collected Writings* 34:166.

John 1:5).

The moral darkness of man towards God that is brought before us here answers to Luke 14:18:

And all began, without exception, to excuse themselves.

The system which believes that the faith spoken of in Eph. 2:8 is human faith, exercised by the human will, requires that the will of man cannot be in such moral darkness that cannot apprehend the light. Since they view moral free will towards God as being in every man, it follows, in this system, that no man's will can be in moral darkness that cannot apprehend the light. The meaning of the notion of moral free will towards God is that each human will *is* capable of apprehending the light -- a notion which entirely contradicts this Scripture.

THE TRUE LIGHT CAME INTO THE WORLD

The true light⁴ was that which, coming into the world, lightens every man. He was in the world . . . (John 1:9, 10).

First of all, we should note that the Son is presented as the true light in connection with His personal glory.

This is not speaking of every man coming into the world⁵ but rather of the Word coming into the world as light:

And this is the judgment, that light is come into the world (John 3:19).

I am come into the world as light (John 12:46).

The coming of the true light, the Son here in holy manhood, is connected with the testing of the first man. He himself is the final test. This involves the revelation of the Father in the Son since the rejection of the Son involved the rejection of the Father Who was perfectly displayed in the Son. Those that saw the Son saw the Father (John 14:9). Those who rejected the Son rejected the Father:

(23) He that hates me hates also my Father. (24) If I had not done among them the works which no other one has done, they had not had sin; but now they have both seen and hated both me and my Father (John 15:23, 24).

John begins with the rejection of the Word, the revealer of the Father (John 1:10, 11), and the character of the gospel agrees with this important fact -- thus taking in so largely the *world*, and not merely Jewish particularism.

4. The darkness claims to have light -- from man's reason or religion. For example, Masons speak of being illuminated. New Agers seek the inner light. The light of the Gnostics and their modern counterparts is darkness. All this is *false* light, which is not light, but is part of the darkness and opposition to the *true* light.

5. See *The Bible Treasury*, New Series 7:3, 4; *Collected Writings of J. N. Darby* 3:58.

of the just will reign for the thousand years with Christ in that day (Rev. 20:4). Christ is presently waiting for that time, and we are waiting also. The throne where He is seated is expressly stated to be the Father's throne, not His own (Rev. 3:21).¹⁹ The overcomers will sit with Christ in *His* throne.

Differences of Reward in the Kingdom. There are some indicators of this in Rev. 2 and 3. While the reward for an overcomer in Laodicea is, perhaps, the lowest of all, the promise of reigning with Christ (Rev. 3:21) is the portion of all who are part of the first resurrection (Rev. 20:4). This is the resurrection of the just. There are parables in Matthew which show that there will be differences among those who reign with Christ. Moreover, you will recall the Lord Jesus speaking of the placement on His right hand and His left. The Father will determine this. Such things do not depend on the value of the precious blood, else it would make variation in the value of the blood. The differences depend on other factors.²⁰

We might note here that the twelve apostles will have a special place in the kingdom (Matt. 19:28).

THE FINAL PROMISE REMINDS US OF MALACHI 4

In view of the failure of what God committed to Israel and what God committed to the church, a comparison of Mal. 4 with this last promise to the overcomer is instructive. In Mal. 4, the coming kingdom is brought before them. This is in view of failure, for Christ will make good for God's glory all that in which man has failed to carry out the will of God. Connected with this final call to hear what the Spirit says to the assemblies is the promise of the kingdom, reigning with Christ, sitting in His throne.

Israel failed in respect of the *earthly calling*, although Jehovah had His jewels amidst that failure. And the church, seen in responsible testimony on earth, has failed regarding the *heavenly calling*, though God has His overcomers amidst that failure.

Yes, Christ will glorify God with respect to that in which man has failed. Thus, the coming kingdom will have two departments, so to speak; the heavenly and the earthly. Of course OT saints will be in glory and share in the heavenly department, without setting aside the distinctive place of the bride of Rev. 19. They are those "who are called to the supper of the marriage of the Lamb" (Rev. 19:9). All who have part in the first resurrection shall reign with Christ, as Rev. 20:4 shows, a text which is not occupied with the distinction we find in

19. That Christ is not now on David's throne is dealt with in *Elements of Dispensational Truth*, vol. 1, Ch. 4.3.

20. See *Collected Writings of J. N. Darby* 8:27.

Rev. 19. Israel will be at the head of the nations in the earthly department of the kingdom. That saved nation (Rom. 11:26; 9:4, 5) will be composed of righteous ones only (Isa. 60:21), the rebels having been purged out (Ezek. 20, etc.); i.e., the nation will be formed under the new covenant of the remnant formed between the rapture and the appearing. That will be the *new Israel*, under the *new covenant*.

Call to Hear

He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the assemblies (Rev. 3:22).

This is the seventh, and final, call to “hear what the Spirit says to the assemblies.” This is not the last call to hear, as we see from Rev. 13:9, but that text has to do with the epoch after the rapture of the saints; hence the words “what the Spirit says to the assemblies” is appropriately omitted. None of the apostates of Christendom will have an ear to hear. They will be under the working of error, to believe the lie (2 Thess. 2). However, the gospel of the kingdom will be going forth in that epoch and there will be those, apart from the apostates, who will have an ear to hear God’s testimony in that time.

* * * * *

We have come to the end of “the things that are” (Rev. 1:19), the end of the things concerning the church on earth seen in responsible testimony until the rapture. What follows “the things that are” -- the time of the churches? No.

After these things I saw, and behold, a door opened in heaven, and the first voice which I heard as of a trumpet speaking with me, saying, Come up here, and I will show thee the things which must take place after these things (Rev. 4:1).

Rev. 4 brings us to the things that must take place after these things concerning the church viewed in responsible testimony on earth. It is a new period.

(Concluded)

Ed.

The Knowledge of God

The knowledge of God is found through the conscience, not through the understanding.

(Collected Writings of J. N. Darby 25:194).

men’s souls characterizes the darkness. The darkness is not an environmental influence. The inability of the darkness to apprehend the light is stated preparatory to the statements in vv. 10, 11 that (1) “the world knew him not” as well as that (2) “his own received him not.” In the first case it is dark failure to recognize Him and in the other it is dark rejection of Him. All men are thus accounted for and have the character of spiritual darkness as the constitution of their spiritual state. In John we find man blind, deaf, and dead. (Dead Lazarus was all three at the same time, and serves as an illustration of the power of the Son as the resurrection and the life).

We Christians are stated to have once been darkness:

for ye were once darkness, but now light in [the] Lord (Eph. 5:8).

In 2 Cor. 4:3, 4 we read:

(3) But if also our gospel is veiled, it is veiled in those that are lost; (4) in whom the god of this world has blinded the thoughts of the unbelieving, so that the radiancy of the glad tidings of the glory of the Christ, who is [the] image of God, should not shine forth [for them].

Those who are darkness are here seen as blinded in their thoughts so that light might not enter them.

We certainly must acknowledge the force of the word *apprehend*.² Darkness is the moral state of man consequent upon the fall. That true Light that came into the world is infinite. Man cannot *comprehend* what is infinite, cannot comprehend God -- meaning that man cannot fully take God in, because God is infinite and man is finite. Man lacks that capacity. However, we may perhaps think that man can *apprehend something* about God, i.e., be able to take in something about him into our souls, *morally speaking*.³ But it is not naturally so, because man’s state that is here described is darkness. It is universal in mankind. And, there is no *apprehension* by that darkness of the light. It is a state completely at variance with the nature of God, in whom is no darkness at all (1

2. F. F. Bruce wrote:

The exact force of the aorist *katelaben* must be determined by the context; this suggests that ‘overcame’ (cf. RSV) or ‘mastered’ (NEB) is preferable to ‘comprehended’ (AV) or ‘apprehended’ (RV) (*The Gospel of John*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, p. 34, 1983).

I believe that understanding the context suggests that the word means *apprehend*, contrary to the notions that some expositors have. Specifically, the thought is not that the power of darkness will fail to overcome the light -- though that in itself is true, but that is not the teaching here. Here we have something like 1 Cor. 2:14, where we learn that the natural man “does not receive the things of the Spirit” and “he cannot know them.” *Cannot* means *inability*. The darkness really cannot apprehend the light.

3. This is not what is meant by Rom. 1:19, “his eternal power and divinity.” Those things only make the case worse for man.

witness concerning the light. The true light was that which, coming into the world, lightens every man. ¹ He was in the world, and the world had [its] being through him, and the world knew him not (John 1:4-10).

LIFE AND LIGHT

This is what the Word is in relation to God. Moreover, it is an immense contrast with men. He is the light; men are the darkness. He is the life; men are the darkness as spiritually dead toward God. Men have neither light or life. Herein is the key to vv. 4-13. We are going to consider the new birth. Those who are not born of God do not have light and life. They have only darkness. When a person is born of God (born again), God implants a new life into the soul, and with that life there is light, as well as faith. The born again one has what the darkness does not have. Moreover, the darkness does not apprehend the light.

NO APPREHENSION OF THE LIGHT

Men love darkness (John 3:19), walk in darkness (John 8:12), and will be permanently overtaken so as to be seized by darkness (John 12:35) eternally, and meanwhile they abide in darkness (John 12:46). Ultimately they will be cast into the outer darkness (Matt. 25:30) outside the new heavens and earth, into the gloom of darkness eternally (Jude 13). The darkness is not passive as we see from John 3:19. Men love darkness because their deeds are evil. Indeed, the darkness is aggressive in evil. When we think of darkness as contrasted with physical light, we understand that darkness is the absence of light. The spiritual darkness that we are considering is, certainly, the absence of spiritual light; but it has the added characteristic of opposition and hostility to the light.

(19) And this is the judgment, that light is come into the world, and men have loved darkness rather than light; for their works were evil. (20) For every one that does evil hates the light, and does not come to the light that his works may not be shown as they are (John 3:19, 20).

Men love darkness and hate the light, for man would indulge the old nature acquired in the fall. His will follows the three motivations of the old nature given in 1 John 2:16, by which he is controlled. He freely follows his old nature. What are the works he produces?

(11) . . . the unfruitful works of darkness . . . (12) for the things that are done by them in secret it is shameful even to say. (13) But all things having their true character exposed by the light are made manifest; for that which makes everything manifest is light (Eph. 5:11-13).

As life and light characterize the Person of the Son (John 1:4), so the state of

1. {Cp. John 3:19; 12:46; 1 John 2:8. The translation of this verse is considered by W. Kelly in some detail in *The Bible Treasury* 13:318-319. See also his exposition of John, *in loco*.}

The Offering Up of the Gentiles

I desire to call attention to another part of Paul's ministry than that which usually commands the consideration of the Lord's people -- in the Ephesians and Colossians. These two epistles contain the doctrine (as is well known) of the pre-eminence and fullness of Christ, as Head of the Church; and of what the body and its members are, which He nourishes and cherishes as His flesh and His bones.

The Epistle to the Romans, which is the subject of this paper, has to do with mankind as such; and therefore looks at Jews and Gentiles in the governmental and dispensational actings of God, whether in His "goodness or severity." The geographical change of place, so to speak, gives a further interest to this epistle; for God is no longer occupied with Jerusalem, as the center of light or as the city of the great king; but with Rome, as the metropolis of the Gentiles, and with their times. "To them which sat in darkness, and in the region and shadow of death, light is sprung up. "The sovereignty of God's will and His electing love are now manifested in *their* midst -- for whatever the changes may be, as to country or people, still God is active both in wisdom and in grace toward them, and He worketh all things after the counsel of His own will.

The special point to which I wish to direct the attention of the Lord's people is the offering up of the Gentiles, in Romans 15, 16, "acceptable to God, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost." Another point is likewise stated by Paul regarding himself, "That *I* should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God." Tracing this subject of especial interest to us, we shall find the stability of our souls needs to rest upon the statement of James, "Known unto God are all his works, from the foundation of the world."

In the earliest days of our great mystery, when Simeon saw the Lord's Christ, and took Him up in his arms and blessed God, he said, "Mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before all people; a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel." Moreover, Simeon said to Mary His mother, "Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel, and for a sign that shall be spoken against." I quote this passage because we shall find these statements form the constituent parts of God's actings in the Roman Epistle. In Simeon's prophecy, we see the Jews and Gentiles are both recognized *as such*, and so in the Romans, but with this additional fact, which Paul states, "we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are *all* under sin," so that "every mouth may be stopped, and all the world brought in guilty before God; for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." Both had reduced themselves to a common level morally as men; and governmentally they were shut up under the righteous judgment of God. At this point it is, and on account of this break down, that the hidden purpose of God found its

opportunity to come in; and through a crucified but risen and ascended Lord and Head, God is calling out the Church, as the body and bride of Christ.

The prophetic order of the ways of God on the earth was and is, "Israel shall blossom and bud, and fill the face of the earth with fruit." And though this order may now be suspended through Israel's unbelief, and the calling out of the Church for the heavens, yet it cannot be changed. Indeed this *is* the order which Paul maintains by the quotations from the prophets and the Psalms in Rom. 15, "Rejoice, ye Gentiles, *with* his people" and again, "Praise the Lord, all ye Gentiles, and laud him, all ye peoples"; only that this order (of the Gentile nations being blessed with and through Israel) is in abeyance, while the Jews are broken out of their olive tree, and the Gentiles are grafted in. This, however, is only a dispensational cutting off, as Romans 11 plainly shows, "For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness *in part* is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in; and so all Israel shall be saved," etc. In truth, their own history, as detailed in Rom. 9, ought to have made the Jews acquainted with the sovereignty of God, as a principle on which He had acted in their midst; for example, "They are not *all* Israel which are of Israel: neither because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but in Isaac shall thy seed be called." As it is written, "Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated."

Historically, therefore, the sovereignty of God in Rom. 9 should have been familiar to them, and have led them to see that it was capable of being applied to the Gentiles, equally with themselves. Dispensationally, they were to learn from Romans 11, that

their casting away would be the reconciling of the world." Again, "If the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles, how much more *their* fulness? . . . And what shall the receiving of them be, but life *from the dead*?"

Ministerially too, in Rom. 15, the people of Israel were appealed to personally by Jesus Christ, when on earth as their Messiah, proposing to establish blessing in their midst, according to the prophetic order, which has been noticed. In v. 8 we read, "Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers: and that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy." Under this ministry, John the Baptist, as the forerunner of the Lord and the preparer of His ways (as well as Christ Himself), preached "the kingdom of heaven is at hand"; but Israel's rejection of Him, and therefore the kingdom in His person, caused the Lord eventually to weep over Jerusalem, and to say, "Ye shall not see me henceforth till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." They stumbled at that stumbling stone, nevertheless the prophetic order of the God of the whole earth abides: "For thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will extend peace to her (Jerusalem) like a river,

God's Sovereignty and Glory in the Salvation of Lost Man

Chapter 3

The Sovereignty of God in John's Gospel

The subjects of John's gospel include man's moral state of darkness towards God and man's need of the sovereign action of God to implant a new nature. The Father and the Son draw, give, quicken, give eternal life, and hold the believer secure. These things run through the gospel of John in this order:

1. Man's state of moral darkness (John 1:4-10).
2. Christ rejected (John 1:10-11).
3. The Spirit of God must sovereignly cause the new birth (John 1:11-13; John 3).
4. The Father and Son quicken the spiritually dead (John 5:24).
5. The Father draws and speaks to sinners, and gives them to the Son; and the Son gives them eternal life (John 6:39, 44, 45, 65).
6. The Son sovereignly chooses (John 6:70).
7. The believer sees the Son and hears His voice (John 9:39-41).
 8. The believer is secure in the hand of the Father and of the Son (John 10:28-30).

It is not surprising to observe that these are all interlocking truths.

1. Man's State of Moral Darkness

(4) In him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light appears in darkness, and the darkness apprehended it not. There was a man sent from God, his name John. He came for witness, that he might witness concerning the light, that all might believe through him. *He* was not the light, but that he might

devil, and “bruise Satan under our feet shortly.”

Thus, it is beyond and above all the prophetic and dispensational promises, and actings of the Almighty God, or the Jehovah of Israel, that *we* are called to acknowledge Him. Where a risen Christ now is, and we in Him, God is outside all the narrower circles of covenant and promise, which refer chiefly to what is human and earthly; and as the God of patience, the God of hope, and the God of peace dwells in the infinitude of His own sphere (where the glorified Lord is), and calls us to know Him there as “reconciling all things to himself, by Jesus Christ.”

Finally, this epistle, which recognizes “a remnant according to the election of grace,” out of the Jews (Rom. 11) while Christ is hidden in heaven; as well as the sovereignty of God in “calling out from the Gentiles a people for himself” in Rom. 15, does *not* make these two companies “one new man” by the baptism of the Spirit, as the body of Christ; though it does shew us this mystery in the distance, as seen in the last verse of Rom. 16. Paul does not teach what the Church is, doctrinally, nor how the body is *formed*, though he does allude to the fact in Rom. 12; “for as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.”

“The mystery” itself is stated last of all; and left for other writings of the apostle to unfold, but it is not his starting point or theme. On the contrary, the various lines and dispensational actings of God *on earth* are traced out as leading on to it, in this Epistle to the Romans. This mystery of the Church is an adjunct, and is introduced by a doxology:

Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, but now is made manifest, and by the writings of the prophets [New Testament prophets] according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith, to God only wise, be glory through Jesus Christ for ever.
Amen.

May we remember our new elevation, and live in the power of it, as “the epistle of Christ (upon this earth) known and read of all men”; the only fit and proper expression of a people thus offered up to God, sanctified by the Holy Ghost, and waiting for the coming of the Lord, and our gathering together unto Him!

A Voice to the Faithful 3:353-370.

and the glory of the Gentiles like a flowing stream: then shall ye suck, ye shall be borne upon her sides, and be dandled upon her knees; as one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you, and ye shall be comforted in Jerusalem.”

It is not consequently in *this* dispensation that the order of God, either as regards the earth or the heavens, the Jews or the Gentiles, the Church or the world, Christ or Belial, God or Satan, can be manifested to sight; this is reserved for the millennial age, and constitutes the public reign of the glorified Christ, as Son of man upon His own throne, when He takes to Himself His great power, and “every tongue shall confess that Jesus is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

In the meanwhile God is now “calling out from the Gentiles a people for himself.” There is also a remnant called out of Israel “according to the election of grace,” and these two companies may be plainly seen in the end of Acts 2, and at Cesarea at the close of Acts 10. Paul, in Eph. 3, declares not only that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, the Church; but also “partakers of his *promise in Christ* by the gospel.” This latter point is one of great interest, in considering the ways of God in relation to the blessings in Christ; and is yet more distinctly expressed by Paul in writing to the Galatians: “Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us; that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.”

It is *this* which enables Paul to take the place as the apostle to the Gentiles, and to offer them up (as in priestly character) a new meat-offering to the Lord, acceptable, being “sanctified by the Holy Ghost.” It is only the elect Gentiles surely who are thus offered up out of the nations; while the professing Christendom of our day, or the Gentiles, are dispensationally grafted in among the Jewish branches, under responsibility of continuing in the goodness of God, otherwise they also shall be cut off.

Nationally, the Gentiles are partakers of the root and fatness of the olive-tree; that is to say, of promise and grace, as we have seen. And further still, Paul, writing to the Ephesians, says, “Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.” Dispensationally, the Gentiles are thus grafted into the olive-tree of Rom. 11, and partake of the grace of God through the promises to Abraham; while, ministerially, this grace and these promises, are presented to them in Christ; and this gospel constitutes the responsibility of Christendom, whilst Israel is nationally broken off. But the offering up of the Gentiles, sanctified by the Holy Ghost, is the elect whom God has called out from the Gentiles, a people for Himself, and is similar in this dispensation to the offering up of the Levites by Moses. “Aaron shall offer the Levites before the Lord, for an offering of the children of Israel, that they may execute the service of the

Lord, and they shall be mine.”

In this epistle to the Gentiles of the Roman earth, Paul does not look at them corporately as the Church, with the ascended Lord as the Head; but treats them as on the earth, and in the ninth and eleventh chapters clears this subject, in reference to the Jews and Gentiles, from all difficulty as to the governmental actings of God. With regard to the prophetic order of blessing for the earth, Jerusalem will be still the center, and Israel the people. But this order is in abeyance till the millennial age commences, in consequence of their rejection of the Messiah, “Jesus Christ, the minister of the circumcision, for the truth of God,” etc.

The close of the Roman epistle brings forward in the meanwhile the fulness of the Gentiles, which Paul offers up to God as the fruit of his testimony to Christ among the nations. This company takes a place on earth, as suited to a rejected Christ in heaven. They are not of this world, even as He was not of this world. It is a new holocaust to God -- fruit of Christ’s work and of God’s sovereignty towards us, while “the veil is upon the heart” of the nation of Israel. Further, the apostle declares, “I have therefore whereof to glory through Jesus Christ, in those things which pertain to God; for I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ hath not wrought by me, to make the Gentiles obedient by word and deed, through mighty signs and wonders by the power of the Spirit of God.”

The fifteenth chapter is properly a postscript to the whole epistle, and recognizes, not merely this new offering up of the Gentiles, “sanctified by the Holy Ghost”; but consistently therewith “knows no man after the flesh.” We therefore find an entirely new genealogy for the people who compose this offering to God, and another mode of salutation corresponding to them as new creatures in Christ. “Salute Andronicus and Junia, my kinsmen, and my fellow-prisoners, who are of note among the apostles, who were *in Christ* before me.” “Salute Rufus, chosen *in the Lord*.” “Greet them which are of the household of Narcissus, which are in the Lord.”

So also there is a new form of commendation, which recognizes these, not only as in Christ, but in church connection. “I commend unto you Phebe our sister, which is a servant of the church . . . that ye receive her in the Lord.” “Greet Priscilla and Aquila my helpers in Christ Jesus, who have for my life laid down their own necks . . . likewise greet the church [assembly] which is in their house.” Lastly, as regards labour, “Salute Tryphena and Tryphosa, who labour in the Lord. Salute the beloved Persis, which laboured much in the Lord.”

The Jews were the people who might *rightly* boast of descent and succession. They had whereof to glory, as their ancestry proves; for of them, as concerning the flesh, Christ came. But we Gentiles can only date our new and remarkable genealogy from the end of man in the flesh, and even refuse to know a Christ after that order. We begin where descent and succession have no place nor

register. “The offering up of the Gentiles” is one with a risen Christ and Lord. We date from a new starting-point, the man in glory at the right hand of God, where there is neither Jew nor Greek, circumcision nor uncircumcision, bond nor free, but Christ is all and in all.”

This epistle, which is the charter of our privileges as Gentiles, and still more, the epistle of our liberty and title as the beloved of God, is addressed to the saints, called out of the great metropolis of the Roman earth, and closes by instructing them that though, as Gentiles and Jews, they could *not* receive one another, looked at as in the flesh; yet that in Christ risen and glorified these distinctions are done away. Paul therefore teaches them how to use Christian liberty and Christian charity towards one another “as regards meats and drinks” and days and years; for the kingdom of God is not any longer meat and drink, but “righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost”; wherefore receive ye one another -- quite outside these fleshly differences (a lesson which Peter was taught by the sheet) -- “*as Christ* also received us to the glory of God.”

It is in keeping with our epistle, to notice the way in which Paul commends them to the God of patience, for this needed grace of unearthly and openhearted reception; as well as the motive for its exercise, which is supplied from the Lord Himself -- “now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be likeminded one toward another” in all that is relative and spiritual, according to Christ Jesus, “that ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” We may notice another form of commendation to the God of hope for everything personal and moral -- “now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.” As regards all that is external to themselves, this same God, but as “the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly.” The disturbing power of the devil shall be set aside, in faithfulness to Christ, and for the glory of God.

In these presentations of God, it is not in covenant names and relations that He is announced, for these are Abrahamic, and Davidic, to which, as born of the flesh, the Gentiles were strangers. To a people “without God, and without hope, in the world,” He is become the God of hope: and *now* in Christ Jesus, “ye who sometimes were far off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ; for he is our peace.” Disgraceful, and defiling things -- the sins of Jews and Gentiles -- were met and dealt with in righteous judgment on our substitute and sacrifice at the cross, in the earlier chapters of this epistle.

The application of grace, according to the principles of God’s will, in government towards Jews and Gentiles, occupies the middle or dispensational part. The whole disturbing and separating power of Satan is challenged in Rom. 8 “who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect?” So that finally, God on the throne of majesty, in the heavens (where the glorified man is) can displace the