

# *In the Beginning and the Adamic Earth,*

*by W. Kelly,*

first published in *The Bible Treasury* in 1891 and as a book in 1994

The position taken in this book has been called the “Gap Theory,” referring to the space of time between Gen. 1 verses 1 and 2. However, the view presented does not require that a 4 billion year evolutionary process took place during that interval, as many websites opposing this view claim is involved in the “Gap Theory.”

A belief in a 4 billion year evolution of life commonly involves the “big bang” theory of the origin of the universe. Really, it is implicit in this theory to believe in the eternity of matter and that matter goes through cycles eternally (unless it spontaneously generates). Yes, some Christians say that God caused the big bang -- to get around the eternity of matter. Just the same, a “big bang” is a ‘big nonsense’ theory, or worse.

Heathen cosmogonies have order arising out of chaos. The “big bang” has order arising from an explosion. How many design engineers wish they could have accomplished their work of designing equipment by using little explosions. It would have saved much planning and effort. Oh, it is objected, time, sufficient time, is needed. Well, the Greek god Chronos (the god of time) had to do his magical work in connection with the “big bang.” It took him a mere 4 billion years to produce humans who believe that an explosion can bring about order and the appearance of design. So a great temple, labeled evolution, has been built to Chronos, the god of time; and in this temple men, fettered by biological, paleontological, social, and psychological theories fathered by the notion that man has developed from an animal ancestry (the product of the explosion), pay homage to the explosion and to Chronos. And in that temple the product of the explosion is now investigating the explosion! Perhaps the explosion created Chronos. Perhaps the explosion is god, the evolver of all things.

Man is a kind of evolver and would like to be a creator; but he would make the true Creator into an evolver (as in theistic evolution) -- or throw out the idea of God altogether (as in atheistic evolution). Faith finds its assurance in the written Word of God, a refreshing and important contrast from the speculations of men.

The earth’s crust has been basically formed catastrophically in contrast to the uniformitarian idea involving Chronos’ work. It is true that recent uniformitarianism has made some room for some catastrophes that it is thought can be accommodated into the uniformitarian scheme -- such as the alleged dinosaur extinction some alleged 65 billion years ago -- as long as the over-all scheme is maintained. On the other hand, the “young earth” advocates place the catastrophism all (essentially) within the flood of Noah’s day. But it may not be correct to place all catastrophism into that great event. There may have been a number of creative acts of God, and a number of catastrophes, between Gen. 1:1 and 2.

W. Kelly’s book rejects the idea of Chronos’ work, and evolution, drastically reducing the time-scale but without attempting to force all into the Flood era.

W. Kelly’s book has been reprinted as a large pamphlet to reduce the cost.

The price is \$4.00 plus postage of \$3.00 on orders under \$20.00 in North America; 10% postage on all orders over \$20.00. Foreign postage is higher.



*I am the companion of all  
that fear thee,  
and of them that keep*

## *Thy Precepts*

*(Psa. 119:63)*

*Keep by the Holy Spirit which  
dwells in us the good deposit  
entrusted (2 Timothy 1:14)*

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*The Christian's Heavenly Place and  
Calling Eviscerated by Messianic Judaism*

## Chapter 2

### *Judaizing Paul's Warnings Against Jewish Observances*

#### *Col. 2:16, 17: Its Bearing; and the Distortion of It by Messianic Judaism*

Let none therefore judge you in meat or in drink, or in matter of feast, or new moon, or sabbaths, which are a shadow of good things to come; but the body [is] of Christ (Col. 2:16, 17).

#### **GOD'S SETTING ASIDE THE VALIDITY OF THE JEWISH OBSERVANCES**

Concerning v. 16, as part of his judaizing, Dr. Stern wrote:

**Don't let anyone pass judgment on you in connection with optional matters.** Gentile believers are free to observe or not to observe rules about dining and Jewish holidays, as is clear from Romans 14&NN, 1 Corinthians 8&NN (p. 610).

He assumes this refers to "optional matters" and assumes that Gentile believers may do as they want to do concerning such things. Concerning 1 Cor. 8, it explicitly speaks of things sacrificed to idols, as does 1 Cor. 10. Observance of Jewish things found in Col. 2:16, 17 is not noted in 1 Corinthians. Concerning Rom. 14, that will be examined below, here noting that those who had Jewish scruples about some things are there called "weak in the faith."

In v. 16 we see the word "therefore." The "therefore" has in view the teaching that precedes v. 16. In view of that teaching, "therefore," a Christian ought not to be engaged in these observances. We have died with Christ. The law is not dead (as some Scofieldians say) but the Christian is dead -- even dead

to the law (Rom. 7:4) as he is dead to sin (Rom. 6:6ff). The Christian has been crucified with Christ (Gal. 2:20). Some objection to these observances are:

1. They were only shadows, not the substance. As shadows, they were *anticipative* -- not commemorative. The Lord's supper is the Christian *commemorative* observation of his death, held on the resurrection day, "the first day of the week," as the disciples did in Acts 20:7.
2. They were anticipative as sanctioned by God during the time that the first man was under trial, in the persons of the Jews, under the Mosaic system, to see if He was recoverable. The outcome of that trial is stated in John 15:24. As pointing forward, these observances were suitable to man in the flesh (man in his fallen, Adamic responsibility to see if man in the flesh was recoverable).
3. These observances came into conjunction with God's choice of Jerusalem as the divine center. It was at the appointed altar that sacrifices were to be offered. The passover was kept there. The passover lamb was slain there. The males in Israel were directed to appear before the Lord three times a year. These and other things are arbitrarily set aside by Messianic Jews. There is no divine authorization for their Judaistic observances and for their doing these things outside of Jerusalem, without a High priest and a priestly order. Messianic Jews, like so many non-messianic Jews, arbitrarily substitute their own order for God's order.
4. There was patience shown by God with some Jewish prejudices up until the book of Hebrews was written. After setting out the superiority of things brought in by Christ ("the body" rather than "the shadow" that the Jews had before the cross), the Hebrew Christians were told to go outside the camp (Heb. 13:18). The camp is a reference to Judaism. Thus, God gave opportunity for godly separation from such things before He sent His forces (the Romans) and destroyed the city (Matt. 22:7), thus bringing to an end the Jewish system of worship. This governmental, judgmental, physical crushing of the Jewish system, centered in the originally-appointed city, in AD 70 by the Romans, should be acknowledged (by all who confess Christ as Lord and Savior) as God's outward setting aside of Judaism. So we ought to have discernment that Judaism was *governmentally set aside* in AD 70 -- *besides* being *spiritually set aside* by the work on the cross, as the rending of the veil signifies. Before the book of Hebrews was written, the early Jewish converts were very slow to discern the spiritual setting aside of Judaism. Today, Messianic Jews do not apprehend God's spiritual setting aside of the Mosaic system at the cross, nor His governmental hand on Judaism in AD 70, publically setting it aside. Thus, they now conduct things according to their own thoughts (as do most Jews who do not profess faith

in Christ); and, worse still, Judaize the New Testament to have it say what they are looking for in order to claim divine sanction for hanging on to *the shadows*. Now let us observe how Dr. Stern handles “the shadow of things to come” in v. 17.

#### THE NEW ORDER INTRODUCED BY GOD -- THE BODY [IS] OF CHRIST

. . . which are a shadow of things to come; but the body [is] of Christ (Col. 2:17).

**What Was the Standing of Those to Whom the Shadows Were Given?** The shadows were given to a people standing in (fallen) Adamic responsibility to see if man was recoverable from the fall. The law made no distinction between who was a child of God and who was not. Indeed, the children of God had no authority to form a visible, manifested community of children of God before the cross. The Lord Jesus died for the nation (John 11:52)<sup>1</sup> to provide the righteous basis for God to bless the new Israel under the new covenant and new priesthood in “the age to come.”

**The New Nation, New Covenant, and New Priesthood.** In the future, the nation will be the new Israel under the new covenant,<sup>2</sup> all saved (Rom. 11:26). They will be in the good of the earthly calling (in contrast to believers now who are partakers of the heavenly calling (Heb. 3:1). Certain feasts and sacrifices will be observed in a commemorative way under the priest upon His throne (Zech. 6:13; Ezek. 40 - 48), i.e., Christ, who will function as priest according to the order of Melchizedec, a priesthood founded on the once-for-all finished work (Heb. 9:12, 26, etc.). The specified Jewish observances carried out under the new order of priesthood founded on the once-for-all finished work (cp. Heb. 10:12) makes them look back to that work, and therefore commemorative of that work and its results insofar as they apply to the new Israel under the new covenant and the new order of priesthood in the new temple. That is an entirely distinct character from the shadows in the Mosaic system of good things to come. The commemorative observances are for the future Israel, an earthly people of God, having the earthly calling. To engage in these observations now is to practice what will be suitable for an earthly people in the future. It is for an Israel distinct from the millennial nations even if composed of children of God. It is part of their earthly calling, with a temple and priesthood re-

1. John 11:53 shows that the cross laid the foundation for the children of God to be gathered together into one. This is oneness in manifestation of their common eternal life in the Son. What results in, or tends to, a virtual setting up of a Gentile church and a Messianic Jewish church is not of God. It is contrary to the work of Christ on the cross.

2. Not surprisingly, Messianic Jews claim that Christians are under the new covenant (as Reformed Theology does), whereas Scripture clearly shows it is to be consummated with the two houses of Israel, united as one, under Messiah's reign before His ancients in glory.

established. *It is earthly to engage in such observances now!* Insofar as such things are done, it undermines the heavenly calling (Heb. 3:1) and heavenly position (Eph. 2:6) of the Christian now. It is at best a deplorable, unscriptural mixing of heavenly and earthly things, and at worst, as seen most fully in Judaism itself, the refusal of the heavenly entirely. It is, at the very least, a dispensational hodge-podge of some Judaism and some Christianity.

**The New Approach to God of the New Israel in the Millennium.** This is not the place to enlarge on the millennium, but let us note that approach to God will then have a very much higher character than under the Mosaic system of shadows. It is a great upward step from the situation with the old Israel under the old covenant and the old, Aaronic priesthood. Lift the church above the ages, into the heavenlies, as not part of God's ways in the earth with an earthly people of earthly calling, and then you can observe the great step upward concerning God's ways with man *in the earth*. **The veil was rent and never will be reinstated, but Israel will have an earthly temple with two-leaved doors and an intermediary priesthood.** It is important to observe that there is a two-fold bearing of the rent veil. There is a heavenly bearing of the rending of the veil for those who have the heavenly calling, and there is an earthly bearing for those who have the earthly calling. *Now*, we have access to the sanctuary above (Heb. 10:19) where the heavenly high priesthood of Christ is presently exercised (Heb. 8:2), and where Christ sings in the midst of the assembly (Heb. 2:12) in connection with the heavenly calling. In the millennium, in connection with Israel's earthly calling and place, the earthly temple will have two-leaved doors (Ezek. 41:24). In contrast with our entry into the heavenly sanctuary, without intermediary priests, we worship there. Not so with millennial Israel. The two-leaved doors signify much more access than the unrent veil in the case of the Mosaic system, but not the access of those who go directly into the presence of God in the heavenly sanctuary. Moreover, there will be an intermediary priesthood in the millennial temple (Ezek. 40 - 48). At that time, when there will be God-sanctioned observances, there is an intermediary priesthood, all this authorized by God. We Christians have no intermediary priesthood, all Christians being priests (Rev. 1).

Where did God authorize Messianic Jews to engage in their observances of shadows (cp. Heb.)? Where did He authorize them to set aside the divine order He has given in His Word? Not only do they transgress His written word, they engage in twisting, spinning, and distorting the NT to support their observances of the shadows, as is made clear in Dr. Stern's *Commentary*. The time for Jewish observances is future for the earthly people of God; observances not of the shadows, which pointed forward, but observances of memorials, founded on the once-for-all finished work, under the priesthood of the order of Melchizedec.

Presently, for the heavenly people of God, there is another order. And if I may so express it, the Spirit of God has labored to make the setting aside of the Mosaic system very clear in the letter to the Hebrews -- unless one is refracting it through the lens of messianic Judaism. The Hebrews were hankering after the shadows (if not worse) and the objective in Hebrews is to lead them away from that into what is proper for those who are partakers of the heavenly calling (Heb. 3:1). It is a dispensational hodge-podge for any professed Christians to engage in what was ordained under the Mosaic system, or is reserved for an earthly people in the millennium. It is an undermining of the heavenly calling and its thrust is divisive in the church, tending to make a Gentile church and a Jewish church, though, of course, it is affirmed that Jews and Gentiles "have been joined together into a single people of God" (Dr. Stern, p. 580).

Illustrative of how to explain Scripture from the viewpoint of Messianic Judaism, concerning v. 17, Dr. Stern wrote:

The festivals do *indeed* have value; since God commanded the Jewish people to observe them, they remind Jews of God and of what he has done. They are one of God's ways of bringing the Jewish people closer to himself . . .

For Gentiles, however, Jewish practices are in most cases nothing more than a shadow, insofar as they do not arise out of their own national experience. <sup>3</sup>

God did not "command" <sup>4</sup> present day Jewish believers to observe these days, whether they be from the Mosaic system or the coming millennium. If he refers to the OT, you may observe how he regards himself in continuity with Jews of that era.

And since Dr. Stern asserts that these practices are one of God's ways of bringing Jewish Christians closer to God, the Gentile Christian is disadvantaged by not having them -- unless he immerses himself in Messianic Judaism and "has involved himself with Jewish life on a daily basis." None of this is really Christianity.

Moreover, Jewish practices are (at least "in most cases") nothing more than a shadow for gentiles, implying that they are something more than a shadow for a Messianic Jew. But as Col. 2:17 shows, there is the shadow and there is the body -- but not something in between -- more than the shadow but less than the body.

3. *Jewish New Testament Commentary*, p. 611.

4. It is claimed that Paul "observed them all his life (ac 13:9&N," *ibid.* So he claims (p. 267) that Paul "remained a Jew all his life, indeed, an observant Jew (16:3, 17:2, 18:18, 20:16, 21:23-27, 25:8, 28:17; and see 21:21N), even a Pharisee (23:6, Pp. 3:5) . . ."

## *Died to Elements of the World, or Died to Elemental Spirits of the Universe?*

"Elements of the world" refers to OT Judaism and God's people are warned against this. However, this phrase is said to refer to "elemental spirits" from which Jewish and Gentile believers have been delivered; and that leaves Jewish believers free to practice Messianic Judaism. Three passages we will consider, are:

See that there be no one who shall lead *you* away as a prey through philosophy and vain deceit, according to the teaching of men, according to the elements of the world, and not according to Christ (Col. 2:8).

If ye have died with Christ from the elements of the world, why as [if] alive in [the] world do ye subject yourselves to ordinances? Do not handle, do not taste . . . (Col. 2:20).

(1) Now I say, As long as the heir is a child, he differs nothing from a bondman, though he be lord of all; (2) but he is under guardians and stewards until the period fixed by the father. (3) So we also, when we were children, were held in bondage under the principles of the world; (4) but when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, come of woman, come under law, (5) that he might redeem those under law, that we might receive sonship. (6) But because ye are sons, God has sent out the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father. (7) So thou art no longer bondman, but son; but if son, heir also through God (Gal. 4:1-7).

This is translated by J. N. Darby. W. Kelly translates similarly, but using "infants" in Gal. 4:1, 3. Alfred Marshall in his interlinear translation translates substantially the same, also using "infants." It refers to the state of a minor compared to one having reached his majority -- sonship status.

But we need to add Gal. 4:9, 10 to this:

but now, knowing God, but rather being known by God, how do ye turn to the weak and beggarly principles to which ye desire again anew to be in bondage? Ye observe days and months and times and years.

### KEEPING THE LAW NOW IS AS HEATHENISM

Before commenting on the false notion that "elements of the world" means "elemental spirits of the universe," we will hear from J. N. Darby concerning the meaning of the passages quoted from Gal. 4.

It is very regrettable that Christians are not taught what the trial of the first man (1 Cor. 15:47) to see if he was recoverable from the fall (of course he was not!) was, and its bearing, and how the cross ended that trial. The institution of the law under the Mosaic system was part of that trial of the first man, man in the flesh. The following from J. N. Darby relates "the elements of the

world” to the law in the Mosaic system, and observes, as Galatians teaches, that to engage in the things of the law now is actually heathenism -- a most solemn consideration.

The institutions of the law were adapted to man in the flesh. A magnificent temple, beautiful vestments, a God present to the senses upon earth, though man was not permitted to draw near to Him; trumpets, visible sacrifices -- all these things were ordained that man in the flesh might be in relationship with God, according to the elements of the world, which are suited to man in the flesh. Christians are a heavenly people; they see not the objects they adore, except by faith. God is worshiped in spirit and in truth, not with bulls and goats. The Spirit reveals to them that which they see not; they know that Christ is ascended into heaven, having finished the work which the Father gave Him to do; and the heart rises up into the heavenly temple, by the grace of the Holy Ghost come down from heaven, there to adore God. Thus the heirs themselves {OT saints under the law} were as children, bound to accomplish an external worship, to offer beasts. The cleansing was an external purifying of the body by water; the sacrifices -- types for the time then present -- could not purify the conscience from sin; they were not offerings of praise, and thanksgiving, and adoration, founded upon the accomplished sacrifice of Christ. It was all “the elements of the world,” which were adapted to man in this world.

Every religion accomplished in external ceremonies, and composed of such things, is but “the elements of the world,” and resembles heathen worship. The favor of God is sought by means which an unconverted man can use, quite as well as, or even better than, one that is converted; for his conscience does not make him feel that these things cannot cleanse the soul. Those who seek to obtain righteousness by works are greatly irritated against those who have peace with God through faith, for this declares all their labor to be in vain. There was but one city where the Gentiles persecuted Paul in which the Jews did not stir them up to do it. They {the Jews} boasted in what man could do, and maintained their own glory; they were not willing to see it trampled under foot. But faith gives the glory of salvation to God, and seeks in a new life, the spring of which is love, to glorify Him by obedience and the fulfilment of His will.

The law was then a schoolmaster until Christ, the promised seed. In its forms and in its ceremonies, it resembled the religion of the Gentiles. God, while ever maintaining the perfect rule of conduct of man and the unity of the Godhead, yet condescended to adapt Himself, in the worship He ordained, to the ways of the spirit of man, coming near to hHim, in order to make manifest whether it were possible for man in the flesh to walk with God . . .

But the apostle takes up a still stronger ground. The Galatians were Gentiles, and had been as heathen under these same elements of the world. Not knowing God, they did service to them who by nature were no gods. Their worship was necessarily according to the elements of the world -- what man in the flesh could offer: they could not conceive of anything else but a worship of ceremonies, the observance of days and the offering of beasts. The true God

condescended to place Himself upon this ground in His relations with man, as has been said. He drew near to man where man was. Nevertheless, upon this footing He did not reveal Himself. He hid Himself behind the veil, though He made a covenant with man: He gave a law which was to be observed, while He remained behind the veil, and He ordained sacrifices, most beautiful and instructive types of the true sacrifice of Christ, which is of eternal value . . .

Yet these poor Christians now desired to return to the weak and beggarly elements from which, when heathens, they had been delivered, through the knowledge of the redemption that is in Christ Jesus! Mark well that all their ceremonies {of the law} are but the same thing as paganism, the elements of the world. Even if those who subject themselves to them be Christians, yet the principles according to which they walk are the elements of the world, and their practices are heathen practices. We learn this here as doctrine, but the history of the church shows it to us as a fact. Holy days and holy places were taken from the heathen, who had holy places and days on which they held festivals in honor of deified men, such as Theseus, Hercules, and others. The names of saints were afterwards attached to these places and days, and the saints celebrated instead of the demi-gods.

St. Augustine has told us what was done, and how it began. He sought to put an end to these evil habits, not to the days, but to what was practiced upon them, for they got drunk in the churches. This occurred in Africa, and the same thing was done elsewhere. The feast of the Nativity was the worst of all the pagan festivals, and it is still celebrated among the heathen in the East. Not being able to prevent those who, emerging from paganism, called themselves Christians, from continuing the disorders practiced at this festival, the leaders of the church decided to put in its place the Nativity of Christ. Augustine also says, respecting the memory of the saints who took the place of Theseus, etc., that the church thought it better for people to get drunk in honor of a saint, than in honor of a demon. It is certain that Christ was not born in December. The time at which Mary went to visit Elizabeth proves this, if compared with the order of the twenty-four courses of the priests. Zacharias was the eighth course.

In taking up again from the Jews these elements of the world, the Galatians were returning to their former heathen practices. Until the coming of Christ these things had an important meaning; they were figures of that of which Christ has been, or is now, the reality: moreover they tested man, and showed that he cannot walk with God as man in the flesh. But when once Christ was come, the substance was there, and the figures had no more ground of existence, the test had been already applied. What is done in fulfilment of the law is but the denial of the fulfilment of all in Christ -- heathen elements of the world, in which the Galatians walked when they lived as heathen in the world. <sup>5</sup>

5. “Notes on the Epistle to the Galatians,” *Collected Writings of J. N. Darby*, 34:81-85.

## NOT "ELEMENTAL SPIRITS OF THE UNIVERSE"

The word elements (*stoicheion*) is translated by some as "elemental spirits." And so "elements of the world" becomes "elemental spirits of the universe." This comes from heathen Greek thought, of course; and Greek philosophy and vain deceit, according to the teaching of men, has made inroads among some Christian scholars and teachers. This notion serves Messianic Judaism quite well in its effort to maintain the law, or whatever part of it they want -- since they would not really want the Christian to be really dead to the law. Since the law, as part of the Mosaic system, falls under the expression "elements of the world," and since Col. 2:8 says, "If ye have died to the elements of the world," that would set aside the law for a Christian. But, Messianic Judaism has the NT use of "elements" (*stoicheion*) mean "elemental spirits," and the problem is thought to be solved. But Rom. 7:4 says:

So that, my brethren, ye also have been made dead to the law by the body of Christ . . .

Gal. 4:9-10 does not refer "to those weak and miserable elemental spirits," as Dr. Stern translates. Now, he does not deny that the warning is against observance of Jewish practice, but limits this warning only to Gentile Christians observing Jewish practices (in most circumstances):

But when Gentiles observe these Jewish holidays neither out of joy in sharing what God has given the Jewish people nor out of spiritual identification with them, but out of fear induced by Judaizers who have convinced them that unless they do these things, God will not accept them, then they are not obeying the *Torah* (the law) but subjecting themselves to legalism; and legalism is just another species of **those weak and miserable elemental demonic spirits**, no better than the idols left behind. <sup>6</sup>

This is nothing other than a way to get rid of the passage as having application to *all* Christians, Jew and Gentile. The book of Galatians was not written to Gentiles, but, as Gal. 1:2 says, "to the assemblies of Galatia." It would be absurd to claim that there were no Jewish Christians in any of them. And such Jewish believers are among "the Israel of God" noted in Gal. 6:16, who are to walk by the same rule as the Gentile Christians. Besides whatever might be common to Jewish and Gentile believers, Messianic Judaism has two sets of rules, one set for Jewish Christians and one set for Gentile Christians. It thus institutionalizes divisiveness; and we see this divisiveness also in his statement "nor out of spiritual identification with them." Note also that it is implied that Jewish Christians obey the *Torah*. Gentile Christians need not do so, but if they do it in fear, that is a "legalism," "is just another species of **those weak and**

6. *Jewish New Testament Commentary*, p. 557.

## miserable elemental demonic spirits."

When Scripture says,

when we were children, were held in bondage under the principles of the world (Gal. 4:3),

the **we** means the Jews under the law. Dr. Stern translates:

when we were "children" we were slaves to the elemental spirits of the universe. <sup>7</sup>

Christ came and redeemed those who were under the law (Gal. 4:5). It is clear that those "children" were Jews under the law; and, it follows from Dr. Stern's statements, that they were slaves to the elemental spirits of the universe (not merely some of them). That is quite a stunning implication inherent in his notions. And his view is that Jewish Christians should engage in those Jewish practices that were practiced while the Jews were slaves to the elemental spirits of the universe, which he let us know were demonic. No doubt he believes that Christ has set the Jewish Christian free from these elemental spirits and can practice the Torah!

We should note that Dr. Stern will not face the meaning of what he says. Gal. 4:3 said:

So we also, when we were children, were held in bondage under the principles of the world.

The text does not say it was true only sometimes. The text does not say that it was true for only some of them. It was true concerning *all of them*, true *for the entire time*. All, at all times, were held in bondage under the principles, or elements, of the world. It is just those whom Christ came to redeem from under the law (Gal. 4:5). It was noted above that **we** in Gal. 4:3 refers to Jews under the law, looked at as minors (Gentiles never were under the law). Not so, says Dr. Stern, who works to mitigate the real, implicit result of his notion about elemental spirits:

**We**, both Jews and Gentiles, were slaves to them. Gentiles served these demonic spirits as gods, Jews, knowing the one true God, were sometimes led astray by demonic spirits, including the demonic spirit of legalism. <sup>8</sup> Jews served this spirit whenever they perverted the Torah into a legalistic system . . . <sup>9</sup>

So, sometimes the Jews were not led astray! He is perverting the all-inclusive thrust of the passage, it meaning all under the Mosaic system, all Jews

7. *Jewish New Testament, in loco*.

8. "The demonic spirit of legalism" reminds me of the Pentecostal notion of a "demon of eternal security." Both are imaginary demons, but the phrases serve a false purpose to support the respective false systems.

9. *Jewish New Testament Commentary*, p. 556.

Without in the least denying that Gentiles served demonic spirits as shown elsewhere in Scripture (1 Cor. 8, 11), this is not the issue here in Galatians. Moreover, *Gentiles are not included in the we of Gal. 4:3*. Concerning the Jews, Dr. Stern flatly contradicts Gal. 4:3 with his “sometimes.” His system forces him to say “sometimes.” The law as under the Mosaic system, really given to man in the flesh (in the persons of the Jews) to see if he was recoverable from the fall, is bondage. It applied to **all** under the Mosaic covenant. All were in bondage under the elements of the world, Messianic Judaism notwithstanding.

Happily, all Christians, Jew and Gentile have died to the elements of the world, whether in its pagan form or in its Jewish form. Moreover, all Christians are dead to the law (Rom. 7:4). All Christians are under “the law of the Christ” (Gal. 6:2) and the rule of the new creation (Gal. 6:14-16), walking by the Spirit (Gal. 5:25). Note that this is stated in the book of Galatians. All this excludes the system of keeping Jewish observances as well as excluding the observing so-called Christian holidays (which are “baptized” heathenism -- idolatry). The Christian has no holidays among the holidays of this world. Nor is the Lord’s day a holiday among the holidays of the world.

While Galatians repudiates the system that was proposed to the assemblies of Galatia, there is such a thing as bearing with some Jewish scruples that some Jewish believers who are “*weak in the faith*” observe (Rom. 14). But in the case of Messianic Judaism we are considering a divisive movement in the church on earth, which is quite another thing. However, since Messianic Judaism uses Rom. 14 falsely, let us briefly consider its bearing.

### *The Bearing of Romans 14*

Heathen holidays were never sanctioned for observance by God. As in Gal. 4:10 the “days and months and times and years” means things Jewish, the meats and drink and days in Rom. 14 refer to Jewish practices, part of the Mosaic system at one time sanctioned by God. The reason for the directions in Rom. 14 is that the Mosaic system had not been heathenism, but rather at one time had been sanctioned by God. In the assembly there may be both Jewish and Gentile believers, as was the case at Rome when Paul wrote this. Some of the Jewish believers might be strong in the faith while other Jewish believers might be “weak in the faith” (Rom. 14:1). The “weak in the faith” have scruples about some things concerning Jewish practice. Recall how Peter was delivered from this, though once he dissembled (Gal. 2).

In practice, many Christians are set on doing their own will. However, in this passage God graciously regards *all consciences as in exercise before Him*

and as each’s intention to please Him. Supposing that to be the case, and there being some “weak in the faith” in the assembly at Rome, who have Jewish scruples about some things because of being Jewish, and because God had sanctioned the Mosaic system, what was to be done?

Clearly, what the Apostle wrote does not support Messianic Judaism, which system, no doubt, supposes its adherents to be, not only *strong* in the faith, but under *obligation* to practice these Jewish observances. In no way can that be gotten out of the passage. Actually, this passage shows us that true believers on Christ who are adherents of Messianic Judaism are “weak in the faith.” Worse still, they support an institutionalized divisiveness in the church on earth. And this gives occasion to point out the difference in the Apostle’s approach to these matters in Romans compared to Galatians. Galatians addresses the matter from the aspect that a system was being set up -- and Messianic Judaism is a system (whatever differences it may have from the Galatian form of the system) -- while Rom. 14 deals with Jewish believers, still “weak in the faith,” in the assembly. Nor does Rom. 14 contemplate such a thing as those “weak in the faith” having meetings for the observance of those very practices that show that they are “weak in the faith.” Moreover, the observances of those “weak in the faith” are not to be imposed on the assembly, or give character to the assembly. No, there is no option for them to have Messianic, Judaistic meetings, or assemblies.

Here are some thoughts from W. Kelly on Rom. 14.

The apostle now proceeds to treat of a question exceedingly delicate and critical, especially in days and places where the saints consisted of any considerable mixture of converts, brought out of systems so opposed as those of Jews and Gentiles. What to the strong in faith is an indifferent matter may trouble the conscience of those who are weak, as the apostle here distinguishes them. The weak were such Christians as were still shackled in conscience by their old Jewish observances, as to days, meats, etc., by distinctions not moral but ceremonial; the strong were those who saw in their death with Christ the end to all such bondage and enjoyed liberty in the Spirit. Carefully must we guard against the offensive misinterpretation that the weak mean those who tampered with evil. Contrariwise so fearful were they of sin that they were needlessly burdened and thus cherished a conscience not tender only, which is of the utmost moment for all, but scrupulous. But they were in no way lax, which is an evil of the greatest magnitude and only exaggerated, not diminished, by increase of knowledge. The weak were really ignorant of the liberty wherewith Christ has set us free, and hence apt to burden themselves continually where they might have found rest for their souls. They knew not that His yoke is easy and His burden light.

The practice to which brethren are called in such matters is mutual forbearance (Rom. 14, Rom. 15:7), all agreeing in doing what they do to the



Lord, spite of difference in judgment of what should be done. Room is thus left for growth in knowledge as the word of God opens to our faith, while conscience meanwhile is respected . . .

It is obvious that the Gentiles, as having been outside the law, would be least affected by such scruples. But the apostle puts the difference on a ground far deeper and holier than any such accidental and circumstantial distinction after the flesh. A believer whether a Jew or a Greek might freely realize his deliverance from questions of meats or days. Not a few Gentiles in those days knew the law and could not but feel the immeasurable superiority of its institutions as compared with the abominations of the heathen. So we might have difficulty in understanding that those regulations given by the true God through Moses to His people could vanish away, null and void for the Christian. Hence therefore we hear of him that is weak in the faith, as the next chapter opens with the conduct which becomes us who are strong in bearing the infirmities of the weak, the apostle identifying himself of course with such as see earthly restrictions at an end. But while grace alone produces strength in the faith, there is far more behind in the grace which produces it, and what savours more characteristically of Christ. The knowledge of faith is good; the love that is of God, of which Christ was the perfect expression, is still better; and he who has that knowledge is above all called to walk in this love, as indeed every one who is born of God must be. The question of eating and days may concern the least things, but it can only be rightly solved by the deepest truth and the richest grace. Both come through Jesus Christ, and are the portion really of the Christian. But how little Christians appreciated Christianity then, how much less now!

Undoubtedly then he who believed that he may eat all things is far more right in thought than he who makes a point of eating herbs. Still there was no ground in such prejudices or in their absence for making little of the weak and for judging the strong; for there was a double danger of fault -- to him who knew his liberty, of despising the scrupulous; to him who was scrupulous, of judging censoriously the free. But such weakness is no more folly than such strength is laxity; even as divine love is always holy while always free. God has received the believer; and this is said emphatically of him who was judged licentious by the weak; as the brethren on the other hand are called to accept, but not to the determination of controversial questions, him that is weak in the faith. How much ignorance the Lord bears with in the most intelligent! "Who art thou that judgest another's servant? To his own master he standeth or falleth." He beautifully adds (in answer doubtless to many a bitter anticipation of what would be the end of their liberty) "and he shall be made to stand; for the Lord is able to make him stand." For the strong have no strength of their own, but grace will hold them up. Would we wish it otherwise, if it could be? Do we not delight that all is of Him?

In speaking next of a day regarded above a day the apostle enlarges. Giving up idols the Gentiles saw nothing in one day more than another. The Jew was naturally disposed to cling to old religious associations. But in this the

Lord's day is in no way included; for it rests on the highest sanction of the risen Lord (John 20:19, 20), confirmed by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven (Acts 20:7; Cor. 16:2; Rev. 1:10), and is no open matter as to which each is to be fully assured in his own mind. For a Christian not to regard the Lord's day would be a direct dishonor put on His own special meeting with His disciples on that day, an open slight to that witness of grace and of the new creation (as the sabbath was of the old creation and of law). Only we must bear in mind that, while some lower the ground on which the Lord's day is observed by reducing it to the mere practice or authority of the church, others unwittingly foist into Christianity what properly belongs to man and Israel. But the Christian is not a mere son of Adam or Israel. He is called out from both into an incomparably higher relationship. He is dead and risen with Christ; and to this change the Lord's day is not the least striking testimony. On it the Lord proclaimed His brethren set in the same place with His God and Father as Himself risen from the dead. To confound the Lord's day with the sabbath is to confound the gospel with the law, the Christian with the Jew, Christ with Adam. The very absence of a formal enactment in its case is admirably consistent with its nature as contrasted with that day which sanctified from the beginning, entered so prominently into God's dealings with Israel as to be a sign between Him and them.<sup>10</sup>

### {Degrees of Punishment}

"F. J. H.," Bristol. It is quite clear there will be different degrees of punishment in the judgment (Luke 12:45-48). Who can imagine the fearful horror of those who have taken the place and profession of being the servants of the Lord Jesus Christ, and yet have said in their hearts, My Lord delayeth His coming; and have beaten their fellow-servants, and eaten and drunk with the drunken! Read carefully every word in this solemn scripture: "For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required," &c. It is a searching question for every one who professes to know the will of the Lord. (Answer to a question (no. 13), by C. Stanley, in *Things New and Old*, Vol. 27.)

10. *Notes on the Epistle of Paul to the Romans, in loc.*

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

### Chapter 4

## *God's Sovereignty in the Book of Acts*

### *Some Words Relating to Sovereignty Used in Acts*

#### INTRODUCTION

The rejection of the Son has taken place by the first man (see 1 Cor. 15:45-47), representatively in the persons of the favored nation (Israel):

. . . but now they have both seen and hated both me and my Father (John 15:24).

This was the climax of the testing of the first man. It is good for our hearts to know that God controls everything:

. . . for I [am] God and there is none else; [I am] God, and there is none like me; declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure (Isa. 46:9, 10).

In Acts 15:17, 18 we read:

. . . [the] Lord, who does these things known from eternity.

God does not have after-thoughts. He controls all as Acts 4:28 clearly shows.

There are numbers of statements in the book of Acts that have the same truth in them. Elsewhere we noted that the Gospels of Luke and of John have an emphasis on the sovereignty of God. The same is true in the Acts. The word *horizo*, meaning to *determine*, is used eight times in the NT, five of which are in Acts:

Acts 2:23; 10:42; 11:29; 17:26; 17:31.<sup>1</sup>

*The Englishman's Greek Concordance* (p. 720) indicates that *tassō* (meaning to

1. See *The Englishman's Greek Concordance*, p. 538. The other Scriptures are: Luke 22:22; Rom. 1:4; Heb. 4:7.

*appoint*) is used eight times in the NT, four of which are in Acts:

Acts 13:48; 15:2; 22:10; 28:23.

The word *proorizō*, meaning to mark out, or determine, beforehand, is used once in Acts (4:28) and elsewhere by Paul, with whom Luke traveled, in Rom. 8:29, 30; 1 Cor. 2:7; Eph. 1:5, 11.

#### THOSE THAT WERE TO BE SAVED

Concerning Acts 2:47, W. Kelly remarked:

What is the meaning of "such as should be saved"? It means those in Israel destined to be saved -- those Jews whom grace was looking upon and dealing with in their souls. In the approaching dissolution of the Jewish system God reserved to Himself a remnant according to the election of grace. There was always this remnant, which a time of declension and ruin served but to define. Thus, during the Lord's lifetime the disciples were the remnant, or "such as should be saved." All those that were soon to confess Jesus as Messiah by the Holy Ghost were "such as should be saved"; but there was no such thing yet as the church to add them to. Now, at the time referred to in Acts 2, the assembly or church was there to which they might be added. Coincident with the Holy Ghost's presence, we have the church; and this agrees with 1 Cor. 12:13, where it is said that "by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body"; that is to say, the formation of the body depends upon the baptism of the Spirit. Acts 1 shows that the baptism of the Spirit had *not* yet taken place; Acts 2 shows that it *had*; and immediately the fact is apparent that the church was there as a thing actually found upon the earth, to which "such as should be saved" were being added by the Lord. That is, the Lord now had a house upon the earth.<sup>2</sup>

There is a helpful footnote to this phrase in J. N. Darby's translation. And it may be added that these are among "the election of grace" (Rom. 11:5), among "the Israel of God" (Gal. 6:16). This is the portion of saved Jews now, but the godly remnant after the rapture will be part of the nation, the new Israel under the new covenant, when Israel realizes "the adoption" (Rom. 9:4).

#### GIVEN UP BY THE DETERMINATE COUNSEL AND FOREKNOWLEDGE OF GOD (ACTS 2:23; 4:28)

. . . him, given up by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye, by [the] hand of lawless [men], have crucified and slain (Acts 2:23).

This does not say 'the determinate counsel and *the* foreknowledge.' God's determinate counsel and foreknowledge are connected together by the use of only one "the."

Scripture speaks of God's "purpose" and of His "counsel." These two words differ in this respect, that God has an *intention of His will*, i.e., His *purpose*

2. *Lectures on the Church of God*, Lecture 3, *in loco*.

(πρόθεσιν) that He intends to bring to pass, and in doing so He acts according to the *wisdom of His mind*, i.e., His *counsel* (βουλῆν). Here we read of his “determinate counsel.” “Determinate” (ὠρισμένη) notes the fixity of the wisdom of His mind in so ordering. This determination is seen also in Luke 22:22 and in Acts 17:31 (“appointed”). God’s foreknowledge is intimately linked with this. First, then, we see sovereign determination here, i.e., predetermination by the will of God. <sup>3</sup> Christ was “given up,” “given up by the determinate counsel . . .,” by God, to provide for Himself a Lamb. Here we see coupled together two things: (1) the fixity of the wisdom of God’s mind concerning this matter and (2) God’s selective, discriminatory foreknowledge of His Christ as being given up, by God’s own action, to the evil will of Jew and Gentile. <sup>4</sup> This use of the word “foreknowledge” will be

3. Here is the way “free-will” advocate, Dr. N. Geisler, handles predetermination:

Whatever God foreknows must come to pass (i.e., is predetermined).

Such things involve semantic word-play. It is meant to avoid God actually, sovereignly choosing. No, it might be replied, God chose to do it that way. *That* is God’s choice. What such reasoning is about is to get rid of unconditional election of the saints and maintain moral free will towards God. To the above quoted statement he had this footnote:

By “determined” here we do not mean that the act is directly caused by God. It was caused by human choice (which is a self-determined act). By “determined” it is meant that the inevitability of the event was fixed in advance since God knew infallibly that it would come to pass. Of course, God predetermined that it would be a self-determined action. God was only the remote and primary remote cause. Human freedom was the immediate and secondary cause (*Chosen But Free*, p. 44).

In the first line substitute for the words “the act” these words: “belief of the gospel”; or, “faith.” Thus you will see what fathers this system of limiting God in this way. I do not deny that God is omniscient, of course, nor do I say that He is the author of sin; but what we have here is an absolute system stated, a system which undermines God actually predetermining anything. Thus Luke 22:22 cannot mean that God decreed the death of Christ. Acts 10:42 cannot mean that God decreed that Christ would be judge of living and dead; and etc. We will touch on such points in the body of the text.

4. There are two words that have to do with God’s foreknowledge (see *The Englishman’s Greek Concordance*, p. 654). One is used here and in 1 Pet. 1:2. Concerning this, W. E. Vine wrote:

PROGNŌSIS (πρόγνωσις), a foreknowledge . . . is used only of divine foreknowledge, Acts 2:23; 1 Pet. 1:2. Foreknowledge is one aspect of omniscience; it is implied in God’s warnings, promises and predictions. See Acts 15:18. God’s foreknowledge involves His electing grace, but this does not preclude human will. He foreknows the exercise of faith which brings salvation . . . (*Vine’s Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* under Foreknow).

To the distinction he made concerning God’s foreknowledge he has gratuitously added man’s moral free will towards God, namely, that faith is an act of moral free will. The effect is that what one hand gave the other took away.

Dave Hunt will not even allow what the one hand gave. Contradicting W. E. Vine, he wrote:

We simply can’t find a verse anywhere that uses “foreknowledge” in any other way than to express the fact of knowing in advance (*What Love Is This?*, p. 227).

(continued...)

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more fully discussed when considering God’s sovereignty in Romans.

What about the case of the Lord Jesus? Did God look down the avenue of time, see what the Lord Jesus would do, and after that by “determinate counsel” decree that such and such would be the case? In Isa. 42:1 (and cp. 1 Pet. 2:6) He is called Jehovah’s elect in whom His soul delighted. Was the Lord Jesus the elect because God saw beforehand what He would do and so decided to elect Him? Or is the case this?:

For in truth against thy holy servant Jesus, whom thou hadst anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with [the] nations, and peoples of Israel, have been gathered together in this city to do whatever thy hand and thy counsel {βουλή} had determined before should come to pass (Acts 4:27, 28).

Did God look down the avenue of time, see what would be done to the Lord Jesus, and *then* by His counsel determine <sup>5</sup> what should come to pass? Surely we know that is not so (Matt. 16:21; Luke 22:22; Isa. 46:9, 10).

Besides Peter’s pointing to God’s determinate counsel, he refers also to God’s foreknowledge:

. . . but by precious blood, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot, [the blood] of Christ, foreknown indeed before [the] foundation of [the] world, but who has been manifested at the end of times for your sakes . . . (1 Pet. 1:19).

And in keeping with His determinate counsel and foreknowledge, God

announced beforehand by the mouth of all his prophets, that his Christ should suffer (Acts 3:18).

God determined that the awful deed would be done, yet man <sup>6</sup> is held responsible for the deed (Acts 2:23), <sup>7</sup> though grace could count it as manslaughter (Acts 3:17), allowing them to run into the city of refuge (Christ). They were guilty (Acts 2:36;

4. (...continued)

Why “can’t” he? The fact is that the inverse of what he claims is true. “Foreknowledge” as used in Scripture *never* means merely God’s omniscience. Foreknowledge is included in omniscience but has a discriminatory bearing in connection with determinate counsel. We will consider this more when we look at Romans, where we shall also see that God’s *knowing* is sometimes used with a discriminatory bearing also and not as if it meant merely omniscience or prescience. God’s uncontingent choice is involved in such cases

5. The word *determined* is from a Greek word also found in Rom. 8:29, 30 (predestinated), 1 Cor. 2:7 (predetermined), and Eph. 1:5, 11 (marked out beforehand).

6. Peter had no problem, as many modern persons do, concerning who was responsible for Christ’s death. He charged: “ye, by [the] hand of lawless [men], have crucified and slain” -- clearly meaning the Jews, using the Romans, and both guilty, i.e., Jew and Gentile, each having their particular responsibility.

7. There are expositors who speak of God’s sovereignty and man’s “moral free will” meeting in the crucifixion of Christ, and speak of it as a paradox. There is nothing about moral free will towards God in the matter. It is just words, used to maintain the erroneous notion of moral free will towards God. But it is, at the least, an admission that the determinate counsel of God is a fact.

4:10; 5:30; 10:39). If not availing themselves of the city of refuge, then there was only the avenger for them. And as to God's governmental ways with such as did not repent, see Matt. 22:1-13 -- this passage actually carries us beyond governmental wrath (Matt. 21:7) to what is eternal (Matt. 21:13).

The Jews are charged with the crime, having rejected Christ (cp. John 1:11), through the instrumentality of lawless men, the Romans -- who, through Pilate's evil use of governmental power of empire committed first to the Babylonian, Nebuchadnezzar, included the world in the guilt (cp. John 1:10). Cp. Luke 18:32. This is not to deny that the world is guilty before God on other grounds also, but here the action of lawless Gentiles against God's Christ is noted.

#### DETERMINATELY APPOINTED TO BE JUDGE

The One who died in accordance with the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God is also

. . . determinately appointed of God [to be] judge of living and dead (Acts 10:42).

See also Acts 17:31; John 3:35; 5:22. Not a single person due for judgment will escape. God's determinate appointment is involved.

#### JESUS CHRIST FOREORDAINED FOR YOU

Acts 3:20 speaks of the fact that Jesus Christ "was foreordained for you." The force of this foreordination should be clear to us after considering the above Scriptures. It is a determination from the divine side, not contingent on man, though God uses sinners to carry out His determination.

#### THE BELIEVER ORDAINED TO ETERNAL LIFE

Acts 13:48 is, as we might expect, a battle ground of the subject of election. The passage is quoted here at some length because of the efforts made to use the context to evacuate the force of the words "*were ordained*," which point to God's sovereign election of the saved:

(46) And Paul and Barnabas spoke boldly and said, It was necessary that the word of God should be first spoken to you; but, since ye thrust it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, lo, we turn to the nations; (47) for thus has the Lord enjoined us: I have set thee for a light of the nations, that thou shouldest be for salvation to the end of the earth. (48) And [those of] the nations, hearing it, rejoiced, and glorified the word of the Lord, and believed, as many as were ordained to eternal life (Acts 13:46-48).

Simon has related how God first visited to take out of the nations a people for his name (Acts 15:14).<sup>8</sup>

That is the translation of one quite capable in the Greek language. And another who

8. This verse shows that God acts sovereignly to secure for Himself a people.

was very capable in the Greek language, W. Kelly translates v. 48:

And the Gentiles on hearing rejoiced, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed.

J. N. Darby wrote:

But still the grace of God, mingled with faith, was necessary to make the truth enter the heart, so that it might be born of God. This is what happens here. The power of God accompanied the word and "as many as were ordained to eternal life believed." The result is this: -- opposition on the part of the Jews, testimony throughout all the earth (except at Jerusalem, chap. 15), and the operation of grace in the heart, whereby it is led to the acceptance of the gospel.<sup>9</sup>

**What Does the Word Ordained (τεταγμένοι) Mean?** This word is derived from τάσσω which means to appoint:

to bring about an order of things by arranging, arrange, put in place.<sup>10</sup>

In addition to being used of such things as Claudius' edict banishing Jews from Rome (Acts 18:2), *tassō* denotes God's appointment of "the powers that be" (Rom. 13:1), of a career of service for Paul (Acts 22:10), and of individual persons to attain eternal life through believing the gospel (Acts 13:48) . . .<sup>11</sup>

While it may be admitted that *tassō* means to appoint, attempts are made to evacuate the true force of this:

In the NT we find "to determine" in Acts 15:2, "to appoint" in 28:23, and "to order" in Matt 28:26. God orders or appoints (passive voice) in Acts 22:10. Christians are ordained to eternal life in Acts 13:48; conferring status rather than foreordination is the point.<sup>12</sup>

So what does Acts 13:48 mean? something like 'and believed, as many as had a status conferred on them to eternal life'? Really, the notion is a ploy to get around the meaning of appointment by God, to eternal life. It is the advocacy of the Arminian and semi-Pelagian free will that is at the bottom of circumventing the plain force of the statement by Luke, which rather is quite in keeping with the emphasis on the sovereignty of God which characterizes his writings, some of which we saw in Ch. 2. There are a number of other ways by which advocates of moral free will towards God attempt to circumvent the bearing of this text. Some persons would like to reverse the sense and read it as if it said that God knew who would believe and then as a consequence of foreseeing their faith, exercised by their moral free will

9. *Collected Writings* 25:371.

10. Fredrick William Danker, *Greek English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, p. 991, third ed., 2000.

11. Colin Brown, ed., *Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, vol. 1, p. 476, 1975.

12. Geoffrey W. Bromily's abridgment in one volume of Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, eds., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, p. 1157, 1985.

towards God (mere human faith), ordained them to eternal life.<sup>13</sup>

It is instructive to compare Acts 13:48 (τεταγμένοι, “were ordained,” JND) and Rom. 13:1 (τεταγμένοι, “set up,” JND). W. Kelly translates “ordained” in both cases. But Alfred Marshall’s Interlinear says “*having been disposed*” for Acts 13:48 and “*having been ordained*” in Rom. 13:1. That does seem like an attempt to escape the force of Acts 13:48.<sup>14</sup> The word in question signifies appointing.<sup>15</sup>

13. Here is an Arminian example of how this is done:

Luke’s statement, and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed, receives a most illuminating treatment by Dummelow:

This expresses the Pauline and Apostolic doctrine of predestination, according to which God desires the salvation of all men (1 Tim. 2:4; 4:10, etc.), but insofar as He foresees that some (in the exercise of their free will) will actually repent and believe, while others will refuse to do so, He ordains the former to eternal life, and the latter to eternal death (Rom. 8:28-30, etc.)

. . . it must be observed that God neither ordains the “act of believing” nor the “act of unbelief” (*The Wesleyan Bible Commentary*, Grand rapids: Baker, p. 572, 1966).

As the Calvinist has his philosophical symmetry in “double predestination” by claiming there is a decree of reprobation, here the Arminian has his philosophical symmetry in the act of disbelieving and the act of believing, anchoring both in the alleged free moral will of man towards God. The Word does not teach the decree of reprobation; nor does it teach that God ordained the “act of unbelief.” However, with the believer it is otherwise: they *are* ordained to eternal life and thus the act of believing is by God-implanted faith.

14. G. Campbell Morgan said that “the word ordained has no reference to any act of God. It refers to the attitude of the *men themselves*,” and then quotes Rotherham’s translation, “*disposed to eternal life*” (*The Acts of the Apostles*, London: Pickering and Inglis, p. 261, 1948 [1924]). The reader should try that reasoning on Rom. 13:1.

I am sorry to see that A. C. Gaebelein fell in with this method of circumventing the force of this Scripture, quoting Dean Alford for “disposed to eternal life” (*The Acts of the Apostles*, New York: Loizeaux, p. 248, 1961 [1912]).

William MacDonald, while acknowledging sovereign election is taught here, nonetheless insists on free will:

This verse is a simple statement of the sovereign election of God. It should be taken at its face value and believed. The Bible teaches definitely that God chose some before the foundation of the world to be in Christ. It teaches with equal emphasis that man is a free moral agent . . . Divine election and human responsibility are both scriptural truths . . . (*Believer’s Bible Commentary, New Testament*, Nashville: Thomas Nelson, p. 439, 1990).

Observe here the implicit notion that without moral free will towards God there is no responsibility; i.e., if a man owed him \$1,000,000 and could not pay, he would not have any responsibility to pay! Or would he? Does incapacity to pay really cancel responsibility to pay? *Forgiving* a debt owed affirms that there *is* responsibility to pay.

Dave Hunt, after citing Greek scholars for the purpose of having the text say that these Gentiles were disposed to eternal life, though admitting that Greek scholars differ about this, says:

That being the case, we ought to come down on the side of a rendering which harmonizes with the rest of Scripture. There are dozens of passages which declare in the plainest language that the gospel is offered to whosoever will believe it and that God desires all

(continued...)

Unbelievers are not disposed to eternal life nor are they disposed to believing. The inverse is true; they are disposed to unbelief and die in their sins except God sovereignly interposes in accordance with sovereign election. Thus we saw in the parable of the great supper that they all, without exception, made excuse. In John we saw that the Father must draw, and must give the sinner to the Son, and the Son gives them eternal life.

Rightly, Stanley D. Toussaint wrote:

**The Gentiles** rejoiced in this turn of events **and all who were appointed for eternal life believed**. It is difficult to miss the doctrine of God’s election here; the words “were appointed” come from the verb *tassō*, a military word meaning “to arrange” or “to assign.” Luke used it here to show that God’s elective decree included Gentiles.<sup>16</sup>

Simon J. Kistemaker wrote:

“And as many as were ordained to eternal life believed.” Luke adds a sentence in which he uses the passive voice *were ordained*. The implication is that God is the agent, for only he grants eternal life (Matt. 25:46; John 10:28; 17:2). In the Greek, the form *were ordained* is a passive participle in the perfect tense. The perfect denotes the action that took place in the past but is relevant for the present. In the past, God predestined the salvation of the Gentiles.<sup>17</sup>

**What About the Context?** The argument is that the notice of human agency in v. 46 militates against the idea of divine agency in v. 48. Allegedly, because the Jews acted on their own choice in v. 46, therefore it follows that v. 48 also refers to human choice. Samuel Fisk has gathered together a series of quotations from others and here are several:

In v. 46 we are told that the Jews had judged themselves unworthy of eternal life, and all that is meant by the words in this verse {46} is the opposite of that expression {J. R. Lumby, *The Cambridge Bible, The Acts of the Apostles*}.

It would seem much more relevant and accordant with the context to understand

14. (...continued)

mankind to be saved. Consequently, it would be improper to adopt here a questionable interpretation as the basis for rejecting the overwhelming weight of Scripture (*What Love Is This?*, p. 210).

This claim about the dozens of passages is not proof. He *assumes*, according to his doctrine of moral free will towards God, that these passages prove man has the moral free will towards God to believe. It is circular reasoning, not proof. And he uses this argument repeatedly. Moreover, God has given proof of its falsity in all the appeals He made to Israel under the law. None could keep it. The repeated appeals do not prove that they could do so. What harmonizes with the rest of Scripture is, in reality, that God ordains some to eternal life.

15. See the usage in *The Englishman’s Greek Concordance*, p. 721.

16. *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, Wheaton: Victor Books, p. 390, 1983.

17. *New Testament Commentary: Acts*, Grand Rapids: Baker, p. 496, 1990.

the word rendered 'ordained' as meaning 'adapted' or 'fitted,' than to find in it a reference to divine foreordination . . . The reference then would be to the frame of mind of the heathen, and not to the decrees of God" {Alexander Maclaren, *Expositions of the Holy Scripture*, Acts 2:48}.

Man's choice regarding the things of God is always wrong. In John 1:11 we saw that the Jews rejected Christ, except for those upon whom God sovereignly acted. But the nation rejected Him. In the preaching of the gospel consequent upon Christ's sacrifice, in the ways of God the gospel went first to the Jew. They confirmed the rejection of Christ and the gospel went to the Gentiles. There was, of course, from among the Jews an election of grace:

Thus, then, in the present time also there has been a remnant according to election of grace (Rom. 11:5).

The frame of mind of the heathen is the same as the frame of mind of the Jews. The Gentiles are not saved because they have a different frame of mind. The notion violates the "no difference" teaching of Romans. The salvation of the Gentiles now, as well as the salvation of the Jews saved, is the result of God's purpose sovereignly implemented in spite of man being totally lost.

The fact is that both books written by Luke *do* lay emphasis on the sovereignty of God and *do* set forth that doctrine. It is one of the objects of the Spirit of God in the two books by Luke to emphasize this. And when we considered Luke 13, 14 (Ch. 2) we saw what the alleged "free self-determination" amounts to. Invited man is determined not to come to God's great supper -- *without exception* (Luke 14:18).

Let us look at one more of the quotations gathered by Samuel Fisk:

These words {v. 46} have been wrested to teach the doctrine of predestination in the rigorous sense which they do not necessarily bear . . . *had marshaled themselves* on the side of, or rather with a view to capture, eternal life {B. Rackham, *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 221}.<sup>18</sup>

Speaking of wresting words, look how this quotation wrests the words "were ordained." It is a form of spiritual alchemy to transmute the words "were ordained" into what is alleged here: *had marshaled themselves*.

The quotations from advocates of "free self-determination" are examples of how the Scriptures are handled by those who force upon the Word of God the doctrine of man's alleged moral free will towards God.

### *Paul's Christian Blessings Were Predetermined and He was Chosen Beforehand*

The book of Acts dwells at length on the history of the apostle Paul, the model

18. Samuel Fisk, *Divine Sovereignty and Human Freedom*, Neptune: Loizeaux, pp. 110, 120, 1974.

believer. All the truths that apply to all believers apply in particular to Paul. So let us go outside of Acts for a moment to touch on a few Scriptures that apply to every believer, including Paul. Christian blessing is predetermined:

But we speak God's wisdom in [a] mystery, that hidden [wisdom] which God had predetermined before the ages for our glory . . . (1 Cor. 2:7).

This comes out more fully in Eph. 1:

Blessed [be] the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ; according as he has **chosen us in him before [the] world's foundation**, that we should be holy and blameless before him in love; **having marked us out beforehand** for adoption through Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure<sup>19</sup> of his will, to [the] praise of [the] glory of his grace, wherein he has taken us into favour in the Beloved: in whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of offences, according to the riches of his grace; which he has caused to abound towards us in all wisdom and intelligence, having made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he purposed in himself for [the] administration of the fulness of times; to head up all things in the Christ, the things in the heavens and the things upon the earth; in him, in whom we have also obtained an inheritance, **being marked out beforehand** according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his own will, that we should be to [the] praise of his glory who have pre-trusted in the Christ . . . (Eph. 1:3-11).

The emphasis is, of course, added. What a stunning exhibition of unconditional, sovereign grace we have unfolded here. Being chosen, and for what purpose, are linked together. Not only is the Christian chosen by God for blessing, but those blessings themselves have been chosen by God -- before the world ever existed.

Because whom he has foreknown, he has also predestinated [to be] conformed to the image of his Son, so that he should be [the] firstborn among many brethren. But whom he has predestinated, these also he has called; and whom he has called, these also he has justified; but whom he has justified, these also he has glorified (Rom. 8:29, 30).

Notice something here which will be elaborated in the chapter on Romans: *foreknowledge of persons* means that every one of them is predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son. Look at it again: "whom he has foreknown, he has also predestinated . . ." If foreknowledge here meant the same as omniscience then God foreknows every one and everyone would be glorified. Contrariwise, this is particular, a selective foreknowledge, and it applies to Paul as much as any believer.

19. {It is well if our souls rest in the fact that God acts according to the good pleasure of his will, acknowledging that we are not privy to the reasons for His choice, other than that it pleased Him to do so.}

**PAUL CHOSEN BEFOREHAND TO . . . (ACTS 22:14, 15)**

Paul's case is remarkably and instructively consistent with God's predetermination of all believers:

The God of our fathers has chosen thee beforehand to know his will, and to see the just one, and to hear a voice out of his mouth; for thou shalt be a witness for him to all men of what thou hast seen and heard (Acts 22:14, 15).

Was the case this -- did God see that Paul would choose Christ of his own will, and know God's will, and that Paul would see Christ in glory on the Damascus road, and that Paul would hear a voice out of Christ's mouth, and *therefore* choose Paul for these things beforehand? Clearly, it is the other way around. God had predetermined these things and struck Paul down right while He was headed to persecute Christians. The plain fact is that God *does* predetermine such things. But many want to hang on to the notion that God has not predetermined their salvation in the way that He has predetermined these things in Paul's case. Do you think that God *did* actually predetermine these things in Paul's case, but *did not* predetermine Paul's salvation? I suppose that if you insist on the notion of moral free will towards God you are bound to say that Paul's salvation was not predetermined by God. I understand Peter to view Paul's salvation as predetermined of God, just as the other things in Acts 22:14, 15:

. . . elect according to [the] foreknowledge of God [the] Father, by sanctification of [the] Spirit, unto [the] obedience and sprinkling of [the] blood of Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace be multiplied (1 Pet. 1:2).

This election is according to that particular, selective foreknowledge, noted above, where all persons foreknown are predestinated to be conformed to His image.

## *Repentance*

**GOD NOW COMMANDS ALL MEN EVERYWHERE TO REPENT**

God therefore, having overlooked the times of ignorance, now enjoins men that they shall all everywhere repent (Acts 17:30).

A five-point Calvinist might say that "all everywhere" means only all the elect everywhere (although Calvin did not say that). An Arminian would say that this text shows that "all everywhere" means all people, and that therefore all *can, of their own free will* repent because God would not command men to do something they cannot do.<sup>20</sup> The fact is that "all everywhere," without exception, are placed on

20. Commenting on Acts 17:30, Dave Hunt wrote:

To say that God commands men to do what they cannot do without His grace, then withholds the grace they need and punishes them eternally for failing to obey, is to make a mockery of God's word, of His mercy and love and is to libel His character. Rather than

(continued...)

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responsibility before God to repent -- just as the case of "whosoever will may come" puts man on responsibility. However:

And all began, without exception, to excuse themselves (Luke 14:18).

Ye will not come to me that ye might have life (John 5:40).

No one can come to me except the Father who has sent me draw him, and I will raise him up in the last day (John 6:44).

**REPENTANCE IS GRANTED BY GOD**

But without faith [it is] impossible to please [him] (Heb. 11:6).

So without faith being there, repentance cannot please God. Of course there is no true repentance without faith being there. Moreover, faith cannot precede the new birth because of the moral disposition of the old nature controlling the will. *Hearing* (John 5:25), *new birth*, and *faith* are all communicated together by the operation of the Spirit upon the soul, using the Word of God. Thus, having the new nature, the person is in a position to repent. Faith, the gift of God, **precedes** repentance, something which pleases God. Thus, what pleases God has its source in God. So, we read:

. . . the goodness of God leads thee to repentance (Rom. 2:4).

Note also that Acts 11:18 shows that God *grants* repentance:

. . . Then indeed God has to the nations granted repentance to life.

20. (...continued)

affirming any inability, the Psalmist declares, "The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God" (Psalms 10:4).

I suppose the words "will not" is taken to imply that the wicked could seek God. Thus, the wicked could (*ability*) seek after God. But in fact, the Scripture declares:

They have all gone aside, they are together become corrupt; there is none that doeth good, not even one (Psa. 14:2; see Psa. 53:2, 3).

. . . there is none that seeks after God (Rom. 3:11).

Not only do *these texts imply inability*, Rom. 8:7 *affirms the inability* of the mind of the flesh to be subject to the law of God. Rom. 8:8 declares that those "in the flesh {the standing of the wicked in their fallen-Adam responsibility} cannot {*inability*} please God." So the wicked will not and cannot (and this order reminds us of John 5:40 and John 6:44), for we are taught that not one ever sought God, if we believe the express statements of Scripture about it. It is **good** to believe God, to have faith, to bow to His word. "There is none that doeth **good**." Man's will is bound by "sin in the flesh" (Rom. 8:3) and "captivity to the law of sin which exists in my members" (Rom. 7:23). D. Hunt's inference is false, just as false as is the parading of all the gospel appeals as evidence that man could of his own alleged moral free will respond. The answer why a man seeks God, why he believes God, is because God implants life and faith into the soul. And that is why he can repent. It is the notion of moral free will towards God that makes a mockery of God's sovereignty, a mockery of the true character of His mercy, love, and grace, to ever rescue even one wicked person. It is the overthrow of God's testimony to the condition of man, particularly in view of the trial of the first man coming to an end in the cross. Thank God I was compelled to come in to the great supper of the celebration of His grace (Luke 14). My soul shall bow in everlasting gratitude for it.

It is not said in Acts 11:18 that ‘God has to the nations granted *an opportunity of repentance to life.*’ Suppose we were to treat 2 Tim. 2:25 in the same way:

. . . if God perhaps may give them repentance to acknowledgment of [the] truth  
. . .

Does this say, ‘if God may give them *an opportunity for repentance*’? The idea of making an *opportunity* out of these verses is fathered by the desire to maintain the notion of moral free will towards God.<sup>21</sup>

He has “granted repentance to life.” Obviously this does not mean to every last Gentile. It refers to persons of the nations. Those who are saved are saved because God has granted to them repentance to life.

Acts 5:31 is a different case and will be fulfilled for Israel in a coming day (Rom. 11:26), but we do learn that it is God who gives repentance:

. . . to give repentance to Israel and remission of sins.

This has the nation, as such, in view. Meanwhile, at the present time the election of grace (Rom. 11:5-7) has repentance and remission of sins for those who have pre-trusted in Christ (Eph. 1:12), i.e., before the millennial blessing for Israel.

Just as “your fruit unto holiness” (Rom. 6:22) does not mean that fruit precedes holiness; just so, “repentance unto life” (Acts. 11:18) does not mean repentance precedes life.

. . . it {repentance} is a fruit of faith and of life, and not a condition to be fulfilled before these.<sup>22</sup>

Like faith, repentance comes from God. It is “granted.” So we see in 2 Tim. 2:25, where it is God Who gives repentance. On the other hand, there are works worthy of repentance (Matt. 3:8; Acts 26:20). These follow repentance.

The reader will find more, concerning the order of God’s dealing with the soul concerning new birth, faith, and repentance in *From New Birth to Eternal Life*, Chapter 1.2, “When Does Repentance Take Place,” available from the publisher.

#### REPENTANCE BEFORE FAITH MEANS BELIEVING NOTHING AT ALL

J. N. Darby put it quite trenchantly:

But all who know what grace is believe that faith precedes repentance, and everything else that is good and right in man. Otherwise he would have what is

21. N. Geisler wrote:

This clearly does not mean that all Gentiles will be saved but that all will have the opportunity to be saved (op. cit., p. 185 [192]).

I was not aware that all Gentiles have the opportunity to be saved. I did not know that every one has heard the gospel these last 2000 years.

22. *Helps by the Way*, New Series 3:5.

good before he believed the truth at all; he would have it without God. And as to repentance, substantially the whole moral change, the essence and substance of his return to God, would have been effected without any truth at all. For if he repents through the truth, he must believe the truth in order to repent. Nothing can be more absurd than putting repentance before faith; for a man then repents believing nothing at all. The word of God has not reached his soul, good or bad; for if it has, he is an infidel, or he believes it, and it has thus wrought repentance. That a man does not understand redemption and salvation before repentance, be it so; certainly, he does not really know it for himself. But that does not say faith does not precede it.<sup>23</sup>

#### WHAT REPENTANCE IS

W. Kelly concisely remarked about what repentance is:

It is not correct to confound repentance with conversion to God, which is surely a turning from sin with earnest desire for holiness. Repentance is the soul as born of God sitting in judgment on the old man and its acts, its words and its ways. And as repentance for remission of sins was to be preached in Christ’s name, so He was exalted to give both. It is not a changed mind however great about God in Christ, which is rather what faith is and gives; it is the renewed mind taking account of the man and his course according to God’s word and nature. Hence it is said to be not about God, but “toward God” or Godward; for the conscience then takes His side in self-judgment before Him, and all is weighed as in His sight. It is of course of the Spirit, not intellectual but moral. “Surely after that I was turned, I repented.” It follows conversion and consequently that application of the word which arrests the soul by faith, though it be not yet the faith of the word of truth, the gospel of salvation, which brings into peace.<sup>24</sup>

A very wholesome answer was given to a question regarding repentance, one that takes into account the total ruin of man and the incapacity of the flesh:

Repentance involves the moral judgment of ourselves under the action of the word of God, by the power of the Holy Ghost. It is the discovery of our utter sinfulness, guilt, and ruin, our hopeless bankruptcy, our undone condition. It expresses itself in these glowing words of Isaiah -- “Woe is me; I am undone”; and in that touching utterance of Peter -- “Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.” Repentance is an abiding necessity for the sinner, and the deeper it is the better. It is the ploughshare entering the soul, and turning up the fallow ground. The ploughshare is not the seed, but the deeper the furrow, the stronger the root. We delight in a deep work of repentance in the soul. We fear there is far too little of it in what is called revival work. Men are so anxious to simplify the gospel, and make salvation easy, that they fail to press upon the sinner’s conscience the claims of truth and righteousness. No doubt salvation is as free as

23. *Collected Writings* 10:128. See also “Does Faith Go Before Repentance?” *Things New and Old* 23:18-24.

24. *Notes on 2 Corinthians*, London: Morrish, p. 152, 1882. See also *Collected Writings of F. G. Patterson*, “Repentance,” pp. 83-84, available from the publisher; *The Bible Treasury* 5:306.



the grace of God can make it. Moreover, it is all of God, from first to last. God is its source, Christ its channel, the Holy Ghost its power of application and enjoyment. All this is blessedly true; but we must never forget that man is a responsible being -- guilty sinner -- imperatively called upon to repent and turn to God. It is not that repentance has any saving virtue in it. As well might we assert that the feelings of a drowning man could save him from drowning; or that a man could make a fortune by a deed of bankruptcy filed against him. Salvation is wholly of grace; it is of the Lord in its every stage and every aspect. We cannot be too emphatic in the statement of all this; but at the same time we must remember that our blessed Lord and His apostles did constantly urge upon men, both Jews and Gentiles, the solemn duty of repentance. No doubt there is a vast amount of bad teaching on the subject, a great deal of legality and cloudiness, whereby the blessed gospel of the grace of God is sadly obscured. The soul is led to build upon its own exercises instead of on the finished work of Christ -- to be occupied with a certain process, on the depth of which depends its title to come to Jesus. In short, repentance is viewed as a sort of good work, instead of its being the painful discovery that all our works are bad, and our nature incorrigible. Still, we must be careful in guarding the truth of God; and, while utterly repudiating Christendom's false teaching on the important subject of repentance, we must not run into the mischievous extreme of denying its abiding and universal necessity.<sup>25</sup>

#### REPENTANCE TOWARD GOD AND FAITH IN OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST

We close these brief observations concerning repentance with a quotation from J. N. Darby regarding Acts 20:21:

One text remains which gives its character and full force to repentance, "repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts 20:21). He looked, not merely that crimes and wickedness should be judged, but that a man should judge all his state in the light of God's own presence, and in reference to His divine character and authority over him, and in the thought of His goodness. This is true repentance; man judged and judging himself in the presence of God, to whom he belongs and to whose nature he has to refer with mercy before him. Faith in our Lord Jesus Christ meets this; because there God has judged sin according to His own nature and authority, and His love is perfect, and we are reconciled to God according to that nature and righteous claim. But this requires a word of explanation. It is not that repentance comes first by itself and then in an absolute way faith. But that repentance, the judgment of what we are before God and in God's sight, is one great effect of the truth; it refers to God as God with whom we have to do; whereas faith in our Lord Jesus Christ is faith in that sovereign intervention of God in which in grace He has met our state in the gift of His Son. Repentance is not change of mind as to God, though this may produce it, but self-judgment before Him, the soul referring to Him who is over us, with whom we have to do. It is not that repentance precedes faith. We shall

25. *Things New and Old* 19:223, 224. See also an article by E. Dennett, "Repentance and Faith," *The Christian Friend* 1886, pp. 152-158.

see that it is not so: but it is first the heart returned into divine light, and then faith in the blessed intervention of God that fitted the state it finds itself in.<sup>26</sup>

## *The Ark that Moses Made*

### *Exodus 25:1-22*

When Moses was in the mountain with God to receive the tables of stone on which the Law was written, Jehovah spoke to him about making the tabernacle. Abundant details of the pattern of the tabernacle and its priesthood are recorded in Ex. 25-31. But a certain pre-eminence is given to the ark of God in these chapters in that its pattern is set out first. Also, the ark appears in so many other OT passages that its typical significance must be of more than ordinary importance. Many details of Israel's history are of spiritual significance to Christians (1 Cor. 10:11), including the ark of the covenant (Heb. 9:4), concerning which the author of Hebrews says that it was "not now [the time] to speak in detail." So there do exist profitable details connected with the ark of the covenant, but we just can't read about them in Hebrews. No doubt the spiritual needs of Hebrew Christians made the perfection of the sacrifice of Christ on the cross more necessary when the book of Hebrews was written. Yet, with God's help, we may glean some good by meditating on the details of the ark together.

#### THE HEAVE OFFERING

Exodus 25 opens with instructions to the children of Israel that they should bring a heave offering to Jehovah. Now a heave offering is not the same as a wave offering. A wave offering was waved to and fro, from side to side, and signifies the breadth or extent of the love of God (see John 3:16). God is love. The heave offering, on the other hand, was raised and lowered, up and down. It signifies an appreciation for the height of the majesty of God and the depths to which Christ descended in grace for us. God is light. The materials for the tabernacle, including those for the ark, were heave offerings, not wave offerings. What lesson does this have for us?

Thank God for evangelists whose love for souls takes them to and fro with the gospel from one end of the world to the other! But the gathering together of the people of God around Himself in their midst must begin with an appreciation for the height of the majesty of God and of the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ Who came down so far! The details of the tabernacle do not, in general, signify provisions for man's need. Carried to an extreme, that would be an Islamic idea, a tabernacle as a paradise of earthly delights for man's entertainment and lusts. Instead, God's pattern for the tabernacle, including the ark, corresponds with what suits the majesty and grace of God and what is due to Him. The tabernacle had no pews. But there was a seat in the tabernacle. It was the mercy seat upon the ark that Moses made,

26. *Collected Writings* 10:223.

about which more will follow later.

### MATERIALS

The materials for the tabernacle were of seven kinds: three metals, three dyes, four coverings, wood, oil, spices, and two classes of stones (Ex. 25:3-7). When they were all collected together, there was a divine fulness of building materials. These building materials came from Israelites whose hearts were touched by God (Ex. 25:2). So every time one of these materials is mentioned later, we should remember that there was responsive affection in some heart or hearts that had given it. Have we ever had such a privilege? Some, at least, of the materials were costly, too. Have we ever been able to spend and be spent in connection with the sanctuary of God? Let us remember that those who provided materials had no part in designing the pattern of the tabernacle. They were not consulted as to the use of their gold or precious stones. This violates one of the first principles of aggressive fund raising: the more you can involve a potential donor in a project, the more he is likely to give. Evidently, God's way involved humility on the part of the donors in that they were excluded from the design process and given no preference in the construction work.

### THE ARK

Well, then what part of the tabernacle comes first in the pattern that God showed Moses? The curtains of the tent itself? Or, the boards that held up the curtains? Or, the sockets that held up the boards? If we were going to write out a plan for a tabernacle, we might decide to start with one of these structurally important items and leave the furnishings for later. But the Bible gives pre-eminence to the ark (Ex. 25:10-22). Without the ark, the tabernacle was an empty tent. To make a place for the ark was the reason for building the tabernacle.

What if someone could imagine God dwelling in the midst of Israel without an ark? What if someone could imagine that without an ark God's presence would keep the tabernacle from being empty? What if someone could imagine that the reason for building the tabernacle was to make a place for God to dwell in Israel without an ark? Such notions are not what the Bible teaches. "There will I meet with thee" (Ex. 25:22) specifies the place of meeting. Remove the ark, and the designated place is no more. Remove the ark, and what remains is an Ichabod tent (cf. 1 Sam. 4:21).

The ark itself is a figure or symbolic object that represents the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. He should, writes Paul, "have the first place in all things" (Col. 1:18). He is the one Mediator between God and men (1 Tim. 2:5). He is the revealer of the Father and His presence defines the place where the assembly of God is found (Mat. 18:20).

### THE WOOD

The first recorded detail about the ark is that it was a box made of acacia-wood. What kind of wood was that? You may look it up yourself in books. Here is what I found:

'The acacia tree' says Dr. Shaw, 'being by much the largest and most common tree in these deserts . . . we have some reason to conjecture that the *shittim* wood was the wood of the acacia' . . . It is very probable therefore that it yielded the shittim wood of scripture.<sup>1</sup>

Therefore, exposition of the details of the ark often start with this conjecture and the probability that "acacia" is the wood meant. Are acacia trees deciduous? Are the leaves green? Are the trunks upright? Is the wood strong? Are the roots deep? Is the wood unusually resistant to decay (without defining "unusual")? Perhaps, so. But faith does not rest on probabilities or conjectures. And acacia wood is not perfectly resistant to decay or infinitely strong or surpassingly excellent as far as woods go. Hence, perhaps, it would be better to leave botany and seek an exposition for this detail in the gospel of Luke (where faith finds neither probabilities nor conjecture).

In Luke's gospel, the Lord Jesus Christ is set out as the perfect Man. His humanity was perfect in every way at every stage of his life as a Man. In the womb, He was "the holy thing" (Lk. 1:35). His genealogy reaches back to Adam (Lk. 3). At the cross, His perfect human soul was revealed in His words (Lk. 23:34); His perfect human spirit was commended to God (Lk. 23:46); and when He had died, "the body of Jesus" was taken down from the cross (Lk. 23:53). What do these things have to do with the wood out of which the ark was constructed?

Well, one time when a blind man received his sight, he said, "I behold men, for I see [them], as trees, walking" (Mk. 8:24). And David wrote of the blessed Man, "He [is] as a tree planted by brooks of water" (Psa. 1:3). When Nebuchadnezzar dreamed of a tree, Daniel said, "It is thou, O king" (Dan. 4:22). As trees grow, so do men (even kings as in Dan. 4:20,22). The branches that reach out are analogous to the influences that men have (or "dominion" in the case of kings, Dan. 4:22). Men also bring forth fruit (Matt. 7:17-19). Indeed, almost every time the Greek word "dendron" is used in the gospels it refers to men under the figure of trees. As trees are symbolic of men, then wood is a symbol of their humanity. The wood of the ark is, therefore, symbolic of the perfect humanity of the Lord Jesus Christ.

### THE DIMENSIONS

The second detail about the ark is its dimensions. A cubit was about a foot and a half long. So the ark was about 3.75 feet long: a man's outstretched hands could easily reach from one end of the ark to another. The ark was about 2.25 feet broad: a man's arm could easily reach across it. The ark was about 2.25 feet tall: its top was about waist high. The numbers of the dimensions in cubits are so seldom found in the Bible that it is not possible confidently to assign them spiritual significance in

1. John Kitto, *A Cyclopaedia of Biblical Literature*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Edinburgh: A. and C. Black, 1876, p. 841.

the way that “seven,” for example, is understood to imply “divine fulness”. But note that the table of showbread had the same height as the ark (Ex. 25:23). The ark, therefore, was an object that was built on a human scale, not so small that it could be dismissed as a toy, not so big that it inspired awe like a great cathedral does to many people.

### THE GOLD

The third detail about the ark was that it was overlaid with pure gold. Now gold is so well known that there is no need to conjecture what metal is meant. Gold is with great difficulty oxidized (but it can be done as 1 Pet. 1:18 assures us). It is malleable and can be spread thinly. More information can be obtained in books on metallurgy. But let us turn instead to John’s gospel.

In John’s gospel, there is no genealogy of the Lord Jesus, no birth, no childhood, no growth. God does not grow. God is. And in the Person of Jesus, God has come down into His creation (John 1). In Luke’s gospel, Jesus was blindfolded (Luke 22:64, cf. Matt. 26:68, Mark 14:65). But it is not possible to blindfold God Who is omniscient, and so the incident is not found in John. When Jesus wrote on the ground (John 8:8), He wrote with the finger of God and the light of His Person scattered the guilty. When He said, “I am,” His divine power sent men backwards to the ground (John 18:6). What do these things have to do with the gold with which the ark was overlaid?

The gold is a figure or symbol of the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ and His divine righteousness. In Lam. 4:1, gold has this kind of figurative meaning: the destruction of Jerusalem makes the weeping prophet declare that the gold had become dim. Now gold is never dim, but its symbolism is not a material object. In Rev. 1:13, the Lord Jesus Christ is seen in glory as Judge with His affections held in by a golden girdle of divine righteousness. Does Acts 17:29 stand against understanding gold as a figure of the deity of Christ? It reads, “We ought not to think that which is divine to be like gold”. But finish the verse: “like gold . . . the graven form of man’s art and imagination.” Idols were made of gold for the very reason that this most costly metal was connected with the idea of deity, and the idols are condemned for their idolatry, not for their misuse of gold as a figure of deity.

### THE WHOLE ARK

The ark then was of two essences: wood and gold. It was not a wood box only. It was not a gold box only. It was both. Yet it was just one box. So Jesus our Lord is both God and man. Not God only. Not man only. He is both God and man. Yet He is just one Person.

Gold can be found in various conditions. The Bible speaks of pure gold and of the gold of Ophir, etc. Does it make sense to speak of the gold of Ex. 25:11 as being in the condition of an ark? No. It **was** the ark, just as much as the wood **was** the ark. There is only nonsense in thinking that the gold was in the condition of a box while really remaining something else instead. May God preserve each soul

from foolish and evil thoughts connected with speculations about the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Hypocrites appear on the outside to be different from what they are on the inside. Scribes and Pharisees may “appear beautiful outwardly, but within are full of dead men’s bones and all uncleanness” (Matt. 23:27). The words that come out of men’s mouths do not confess the truth about what is inside them, because men hide their evil nature with fair words. In contrast to this, the ark was overlaid with pure gold “inside and outside” (Ex. 25:11). “Who art thou?” asked the Jews and the Lord Jesus answered, “Altogether that which I also say to you” (John 8:25). Between His words and His Person there was no variance.

### THE BORDER OF THE ARK

Next we find that the ark had a border (Ex. 25:11). What is this? The word for “border” occurs only a few times in the Bible. Its meaning is “jail or castle; in the sense of security: stability.”<sup>2</sup> The border, therefore, represents God’s holy jealousy for the truth of Christ’s Person. On the mountain with Jesus, Peter spoke, “not knowing what he said” (Luke 9:33). His words, however ignorantly uttered, lowered the blessed Person of the Lord Jesus to the level of Moses and Elias, and there was no man there who was awake enough to defend His Person. Hence, the voice out of the cloud! God Himself spoke in defense of Christ’s Person. Psa. 110:1 sets forth the same jealousy of God for Christ’s glory, and the apostle Paul was “set for the defense of the glad tidings (Phil. 1:16), showing that we also have responsibility as defenders of His Person. But if man fails, the teaching of the border of the ark is that God Himself will never fail in the defense of Christ’s Person.

In a secondary sense, we may consider also the table of showbread, a table whose height exactly matched that of the ark. It also had a border (Ex. 25:24). On the table, the priests laid the twelve loaves that represented the twelve tribes of Israel in their standing before God. There is no hint in the Bible that any one of those loaves of bread ever slipped off the table. No. They were securely placed on the table. Yet still there was also a border that gave extra security to those loaves. The border of the table of showbread is a typical or symbolic reminder of the assurance of eternal security that belongs to each believer on the Lord Jesus Christ. Of believers today, the Lord Jesus said that they are in His hand. Yet still, they are also in the Father’s hand (John 10:28-29). Why the extra protection? To assure every one of Christ’s sheep that he or she has eternal security. Although there were no loaves or other small objects on the ark, the ark also had a border. This was not to provide security for the mercy-seat as if it was somehow loose or in danger when the ark was carried by the staves. But because the ark sets forth the Person of Christ, God’s holy jealousy is shown in the border of the ark. The Table has a border also, but the typical teaching is different there because the loaves set forth the people of

2. E.C.P., *Notes of Lectures on the Tabernacle in Israel*, London: W.H. Broom, 1874.

God and so the symbolic remembrance of the eternal security of the believer is present in the construction of the Table.

### THE RINGS

Each of the corners of the ark had a golden ring. In number, they match the number of gospels in the NT. That they were circular can be inferred from the use of the same word in Gen. 41:42 where Pharaoh gives Joseph his royal ring. Now the ark was not to be touched by the hand of a fallen man. It was holy. In the Bible, only one man is said explicitly to have touched the ark. When Uzzah was smitten by God, he had “put forth his hand to hold the ark” (1 Chron. 13:9). A similar reverence and honor are due to the Person of the Son of God as come into the world that He created. He is not to be handled as if He was like other men, a good topic for a biographical essay, for example. But God has given us four gospels by which He may be revealed to our souls. These are, if you please, the golden rings, and they are pure gold, given by divine inspiration. Two gospels portray the Lord Jesus in His offices of King (Matt.) and Servant (Mark) whereas the other two portray Him in His essential being: His humanity (Luke) and His deity (John). Thus, two are upon this side and two upon the other side, just like the rings of the ark.

### THE STAVES

Two staves were made for the ark. The word used for “staves” is not the same as that used for a pilgrim’s walking stick. Each was of acacia wood, overlaid with gold. Like the ark itself, they are figures of Christ Himself, expressing His humanity and His deity. The gold of the staves made them heavier and increased the burden of those who carried the ark, but the symbol was more important than the convenience of the bearers. The so-called “quest for the historical Jesus” starts with scholarship in the mind of man and technical skills. It progresses by discarding the four evangelists and their books as much as possible. And it ends, too often, in spiritual darkness. Is there not a better way?

In Exodus, the ark represents the Person of Christ according to the peculiar character of the book. Deliverance from Egypt was Israel’s national redemption from oppression and slavery into a known covenant-based relationship with God. It is the single most important event in the OT connected with that nation. Then, to bear the ark was, for Israel, to hold fast to their Redeemer as connected with their great redemption from Egypt. To begin to bear the ark, they had to lay hold on the staves, that is, on Christ Himself, the Way. But the staves were inserted into the four rings, so that laying hold on the staves made connection with the rings. The rings were fastened to the ark itself, so that having made use of the rings, those who held the staves lifted up the ark to carry it with the people of God. When we read the gospels, do we begin by going to Christ Himself in prayer? And having prayed, do we submit our souls to Himself as we read the gospels? And having read them, are we satisfied with anything less than the revelation of Christ Himself, the Truth? Is this Christ, carried in this manner, what our spirits hold and cherish, even Christ, our Life? Then never let the staves come out of the rings (Ex. 25:15)!

### THE TESTIMONY IN THE ARK

The testimony was the two tables of stone upon which the ten commandments were written. These commandments lay at the root of Israel’s relationship with God. They were “holy, and just, and good” (Rom. 7:12), but they do not have their application “to a righteous person, but to [the] lawless and insubordinate, to the impious and sinful . . .” (1 Tim. 1:9). In short, they convince and convict the guilt of their sins. They work death, the penalty of sin in the case of each sinner.

In no way is the presence of the testimony inside the ark a symbol of Christ’s righteous law-keeping being applied to the believer. The ark itself was unchanged, as to its construction or appearance by the storage of the Law within it. Nor did storing the Law in the ark alter the application of the Law to the children of Israel, or remove or lessen their guilt when they sinned. Instead, there is a figurative testimony here to the sinless perfection of Christ, as it is written, “Thy word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against thee” (Psa. 119:11). Guilty sinners distance themselves from the Law, not being comfortable under condemnation. But the holy One Who could not sin had, not the Law only, but all that God had said hidden in His heart.

### THE MERCY-SEAT OF PURE GOLD

The mercy-seat figures “Christ Jesus; whom God has set forth a mercy-seat through faith in his blood” (Rom. 3:24-25). The mercy-seat was made of pure gold, signifying that the mercy of God is never exercised at the expense of God’s glory or majesty. The glory of pure gold is that it shines, and “God is light” is never forgotten when God exercises His great mercy. If it were otherwise, God would cease to be the God that He is.

### THE DIMENSIONS OF THE MERCY-SEAT

The mercy-seat functioned as a lid or cover for the ark so that if the mercy-seat should be lifted up, there was access to the ark’s interior. Accordingly, its length and breadth just match those of the ark. In figure, what expresses Christ as the glory of God is of the same dimensions as what expresses Christ in His Person as both God and Man, yet one Person. The thickness of the mercy-seat, however, is not specified. Perhaps, this missing detail may remind us that the divine glory of the Lord Jesus is immeasurable. Persons of practical mind will suppose that its thickness was appropriate for a lid, strong to support the cherubim, not so thick as to prevent the ark from being carried, etc. The actual thickness of the mercy-seat was, perhaps, enough to put the blood on the mercy seat at the same height as the loaves of showbread on the table of the Lord, which two prefigure the body and blood of the Lord Jesus.

### THE TWO CHERUBIM

Cherubim and seraphim are both kinds of angels. The seraphim have six wings each and proclaim the holiness of God (Isa. 6:3). The cherubim execute God’s government in the world (e.g., Gen. 3:24). As executors of God’s government, they

are not to be confused with artistically depicted winged infants, a foolish imagination common in the world. In specifying that the cherubim should be made of gold, the Bible lets us know that His government is of the same nature as His glory. God should be honored for His governmental dealings with His creatures as He should also be honored because of His glory.

#### **BEATEN WORK**

The cherubim were to be made of beaten work. That is to say, a hammer is lifted up and brought down with force upon the gold metal, and each blow leaves its mark. Over and over again the hammer falls! It takes a lot of blows to beat a lump of gold into two cherubim at opposite ends of a golden lid. Do you think that this technique was like that used in the making of idols?

In the OT, there are several references to graven images and molten images. The molten images were made by pouring hot liquified metal into molds, in which the cooling metal solidified. Evidently, the mold was more important than the idol because its shape controlled the appearance of the idol that resulted. Graven images were made by cutting off parts of an object until the shape of the idol appeared. The scraps that were removed were not valued like the idol that remained. Sometimes, both techniques were used on the same idol (Isa. 40:19). But beating into shape was not the way to make idols in the OT. Those who made idols knew about hammers and anvils (Isa. 41:7), but the idol maker is called a “founder,” a caster of molten images, and the idol was being made by “soldering” together its pieces. Idols made by soldering always have marks that indicate how many pieces were put together to make them. Idol makers also made use of blacksmiths (Isa. 44:12) who worked with coals and with hammers. But beaten work was different in that there was no fire of coals to soften the metal.

In the OT, only the mercy-seat, the candlestick (Ex. 25:31) and Solomon’s shields (2 Chron. 9:15-16) are said to be of beaten work. The unity of each piece of beaten work is maintained throughout its fabrication. If you don’t care about unity, then one of the other methods can be used. If unity matters, then it is worth all the labor of making a piece of beaten work. The Candlestick, for example, was “all of one beaten work of pure gold” (Ex. 37:22). Note how its unity is stressed. To be a piece of beaten work was to have suffered many blows in order that there should be no break in the oneness of the object. Thus, the cherubim were neither soldered on, nor sculpted by removal of chips with a chisel. They were one unity with the mercy-seat out of which they had been beaten.

#### **THE TWO ENDS OF THE MERCY-SEAT**

The mercy-seat had two ends, with a cherub at each one. Authority to act so as to implement the government of God is now given by the Lord Jesus, in part only, to the assembly of God (cf. Matt. 18). When the assembly “binds,” it acts for God and all who own the authority of the name of the Lord Jesus Christ will bow to that action. So Paul joined his spirit with the action taken at Corinth (1 Cor. 5:4). When the assembly “looses,” it acts for God and all who own the authority of the name of

the Lord Jesus Christ will bow to that action. So Paul joined his spirit with the act of forgiveness at Corinth (2 Cor. 2:10) when the guilty person had repented. Refusing to bow to assembly decisions is one way Satan gets an advantage over believers (2 Cor. 2:11). So when contemplating the two ends of the mercy-seat, we can remember the two ends, so-to-speak, of assembly discipline: binding and loosing. Together they maintain holiness and separation from evil in the assembly of God.

#### **THE WINGS OF THE CHERUBIM**

The wings of the cherubim stretched out over the mercy-seat and covered it. The KJV says “on high” and these words could lift our hearts to heaven. But J.N.D.’s translation is focused on the mercy-seat itself. Usually, wings are for flying, but these are for covering the mercy-seat. They are like the wings of a mother hen under which the little chickens hide. But it is not as though God needed a place of security and protection, as though He were weak and defenseless. No, but God’s government, executed by cherubim, have made a safe place and there – in that place – **there** is the place where faith takes refuge: “Hide me under the shadow of thy wings” (Psa. 17:8), prayed the psalmist (see Psa. 36:7; 57:1; 63:7). And, “I will take refuge in the covert of thy wings. Selah” (Psa. 61:4). Now, “selah” means to pause and meditate. Where is the covert of God’s wings? Is it not the mercy-seat? If we pause and meditate, we will find an easy passage from Psa. 61:4 to Ex. 25!

And those wings are cherubim-wings, connected with the execution of God’s government. Thus, cherubim wings have an important role in Ezek. 10. The ultimate act of God’s government in Israel is His removal of His glory from the temple. At that time, “the sound of the wings of the cherubim was heard to the outer court, as the voice of the Almighty God when he speaketh” (Ezek. 10:5). On this occasion, “the glory of Jehovah departed” (Ezek. 10:18), “And the cherubim lifted up their wings, and mounted up from the earth in my sight” (Ezek. 10:19). It does not appear from the historical records in 2 Kings that anyone in Jerusalem was listening for the sound of the cherubim wings, except possibly Jeremiah the prophet.

#### **THERE ABOVE THE ARK**

There was only one place of meeting for Jehovah in Israel. It was “above” the ark (Ex. 25:21). There was no occasion for choosing which of two places an Israelite might prefer when he wanted to meet his God. No. There was only one place. It was “there” (Ex. 25:22). It was the special place of communion. Now “meeting” is not the same as “dwelling” because “meeting” could be brief. “Dwelling” implies a long time, and there is nothing in the word “meeting” that requires a long duration. But God loves to meet His people. He loves their company. He loves them. In specifying a place of meeting, His thought from the beginning was to  **dwell** there (Ex. 25:8).

Searching through a concordance under the word “meeting” reveals that there is only one case in the OT after the Exodus of anyone “meeting” God except at the ark that Moses made. Of course, there are many cases of prayer to God, or of

visions from God, or of sacrifice to God, etc., but the word for “meeting” is not used without the ark except in one case. In Num. 23:3, Balaam who was hired to curse Israel goes to a high place and says, “Perhaps, Jehovah will come to meet me.” Uncertainty is sure if the ark is not the place where one tries to meet with God. Again, in Num. 23:16, “Jehovah met Balaam.” The third time, “he went not, as at other times, to seek for enchantments” (Num. 24:1). From this we may discern the only alternative to the ark: pagan enchantments with uncertainty.

Some of what was so unique and precious about the ark can be learned from the details in Ex. 25. Perhaps, also, reference should be made to Lev. 16:13 where the cloud of incense (the excellency of Christ) rose up to meet the cloud of the glory of Jehovah. Now there was the place of meeting, indeed: it was the meeting of the two clouds! This was truly the one unique place of meeting.

#### THE ARK THAT MOSES MADE

In conclusion, the ark that Moses made was a figure of the Lord Jesus Christ. The wood figures His humanity, the overlaid gold His deity. Its border reminds us of the eternal security of the believer. Its four rings are like the four gospels. The staves are figures of Christ, the Way, and of our responsibility to hold fast to the truth. God’s word was hid inside. The gold mercy-seat figures the glory of God and the two cherubim figure the government of God. The beaten work points to “unity”. Binding and loosing are at opposite ends of assembly discipline. The wings of the cherubim are our refuge. And the place of meeting was there in the place where the blood was sprinkled on the mercy-seat!

But what, we may ask, is the significance of all this to us? Is it only a dry-as-dust collection of historical details? Is it, perhaps, entertaining to the mind to trace the interconnection of the typical teachings? Is that all?

#### WHAT DOES THE ARK MEAN TO ME

The blood was to be sprinkled on the “front” of the mercy-seat: “And he shall take of the blood of the bullock, and sprinkle with his finger upon the front of the mercy-seat eastward” (Lev. 16:14). This shows that the ark with its mercy-seat was supposed to mean something to every one who stands in front of it. After all, God was above it, but man stands in front of it. And God has a message for every soul that thinks about the ark that Moses made.

When a guilty sinner contemplates the ark that Moses made, he ought to “see” the judgment of God against himself. The cherubim look down from one side and from the other in a straight line towards the tables of stone as they lay inside the ark. There is the Law that condemns my sins. And the guilty sinner should greatly fear the righteous execution of God’s wrath against his sins! Hell is real. But, wait! To faith, the blood of Jesus lies in between! The fixed gaze of the cherubim lands fully on the blood on the mercy-seat. The execution of God’s judgment is blocked by the blood of Jesus and mercy flows righteously, when faith in the Lord Jesus and His precious blood is reckoned by God for righteousness (Rom. 3,4). Do you, dear

reader, see the ark that way? More importantly, have you seen the Lord Jesus that way?

The good news is that whosoever believes on the Lord Jesus Christ that way (i.e., as the God-man Who shed His precious life’s blood vicariously as a sacrifice for sins between the execution of God’s judgment and the Law that condemns our sins) receives the salvation of their soul. Believe it (Eph. 2). If any reader knows not the salvation of the Lord, they are invited to read Ex. 25:1-22 again. This time, take more care that your soul looks both on the words of the text and also upon Christ the Savior. If any reader does know the salvation of the Lord, then let us lay hold of the staves and lift up the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ in praise to God for Him!

Dennis Ryan

### {A New Commandment}

“A. C.,” Oxford. In John 1:1 we are taken back to the past eternity: “In the beginning was the word.” In eternity *was* the self-existent, the blessed, and glorious Person of Him who became flesh, and dwelt among us. “That which was from the beginning” (1 John 1) means the beginning of Christianity in the Person of Christ. The old commandment, which they had from the beginning, was the obedience of Christ. There could be nothing new, or further, or superior to that. It was the delight of His heart to do the Father’s will. It was not obedience contrary to His own will. It is new to us, in a sense, as the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth -- true in Him and in us. He is now in glory, and we now take His place, the same principle of obedience true in us. Partakers of the divine life, we delight to do His will; it is our new nature (1 John 2:7, 8). It was when He was about to depart, for the present, He says,

Whither I go ye cannot come . . . A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another, as I have loved you, that ye also love one another (John 13:33, 34).

It is old, as seen in Him on earth; it is new, as seen in us now He is in heaven. The Epistle of John was written to those whose sins are forgiven (1 John 2:12). It is important to remember this, in love one to another.

(Answer to a question (no. 4), by C. Stanley, in *Things New and Old*, Vol. 26.)