



Jan/Feb 2005
Vol. 20, #1

CONTENTS

The Christian's Heavenly Place and Calling Eviscerated by Messianic Judaism: A Heavenly Sanctuary (continued)	1
The Sovereignty of God: Reconciliation	7
Personal Pique "Piously" Covered Up	12
Thine Eye, Is It Single? A Word on Serving	13
Want of Sympathy in Believers Towards the Lord Jesus Christ	18
The Mystery of Christ and the Church and the Covenants (Ch. 2)	27
F. W. Grant Affirmed Divine-Human Personality in Christ	39
Scripture Guidance for Our Feet	40

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

Chapter 5

A Heavenly Sanctuary Part 4

Following upon the last article, "A Minister of the Sanctuary," we will now consider "The New and Living Way," the new, heavenly worship in the heavenly sanctuary. There is no room for any official Christian in the heavenly sanctuary. There is no official Judaism. Let us bear in mind that the Apostle Paul wrote from prison and the time of patience with 'Messianic Judaism' had now come to an end, and the Jewish Christians were told to go outside the camp, i.e., Judaism (Heb. 13:14). Soon, the destruction of Jerusalem would take place, God thus governmentally removing the seat of Judaism. So, the Jewish saints had a short time to act in faith before that happened, obeying the Word of God in separating from Judaism. Of course, Gentile Christians have largely embraced Judaistic elements. From all this we must stand in separation, as going "forth unto Him, without the camp, bearing his reproach." Ed.

The New and Living Way

Heb. 10:19

... we have found that all believers in Jesus are constituted perpetual worshippers, by the will of God, through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. We have now to consider the sphere of their worship.

In Israel, under the law, the high priest being nearer to God than the priests, the priests nearer than the Levites, and the Levites nearer than the people, the sphere of worship was the tabernacle on the earth. But now, not only is all this relative nearness to God done away with, but the once-purged worshippers are introduced into "the sanctuary and true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man," because it is there that Jesus now ministers (Heb. 8:2).

Consequently the pattern of our worship, and of the sphere of it, is not found

in the *people's* worship under the law, but in the *priest's* service (Heb. 8:4, 5). We have properly no *people's* worship -- all is priestly now. Even in the holy city itself, we have prophetically presented to us the outer court, where the people worshiped as cast out -- those alone being owned by God who worshiped as priests in the holy or heavenly places (Heb. 11:2). We are, indeed, a *peculiar* people -- God's own special treasure; and our privilege as such is, that we worship not in the distance of the people, but in the nearness of the priests; not in the outer court, but in the temple itself.

We know, indeed, that there are in the church those who teach, and those who are taught -- those who minister, and those ministered unto -- those who rule, and those who obey -- those who feed, and those who are fed; all this is most true, but this does not in the least degree interfere with the blessing, common to one as well as the other, that they are priests unto God.

And hath made us *kings and priests* unto God and his Father (Rev. 1:6).

Ye are a royal priesthood (1 Pet. 2:9).

The apostle Paul was a priest unto God, but not more so than any of the individuals he salutes in his epistles, or than the most uninstructed believer in the whole church. The diversities among the members, formed by the diverse gifts of the Spirit, must be carefully distinguished from their priestly equality. Our worship, then, is priestly worship, and consequently the heavenly courts are its sphere.

The fearful warning given by the apostle, which at one time or another has made every awakened soul tremble (Heb. 10:28, 29), is a warning against the fatal consequences of turning back to the old order of worship, as if it were to be the pattern of our worship, instead of the contrast unto it. To return, therefore, to the order of worship under the law, is to reject the heavenly order for a copy of the earthly. It marks the apostasy of worship.¹ And is not this the peculiar mark of the professing church? It has followed the old pattern of the law, instead of the heavenly pattern. It has made again the difference in its priests and people, -- a distinction unknown to the New Testament. Thus has the professing church put its priests in a place of comparative nearness to God, and the people at a distance.

1. {It might be well to point out that the "sin" in Hebrews is *apostasy*, i.e., abandonment of Christ and a return to the old system. In Heb. 6 it is viewed as apostasy from the presence and action of the Spirit in the assembly. In Heb. 10 it is viewed as apostasy from the blood wherewith they had been sanctified -- this referring to external sanctification, or setting apart to God regarding the Christian profession. The epistle is replete with warnings of the danger of actual unbelief. Thus, when we read, 'see if there be in any of you a wicked heart of unbelief,' he uses the word "be," not "develop." An earlier warning referred to the mixed multitude coming out of Egypt -- the word of the report did not profit many of them, not being mixed with faith. So, the subject is not about someone having faith, then apostatizing, but of those who entered the Christian profession without having had vital faith at all, and returning to what they had left for Christianity. Ed.)

And what is this but to trample under foot the Son of God? ² As if, after all that he has suffered and done, we were at as great a distance as before; and as if, with his priestly ministrations, we still needed the intervention of others in our approaches to God? God has cast out the outer court, and will not regard worship offered therein; but men have profanely sought to sanctify it, and in so doing have trodden under foot the Son of God. We have already noticed the command given to Moses, to sanctify the people to meet God, and also that we, by the will of God, are sanctified by the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all; but this return to the old form is characterized by the Apostle as accounting the blood of the covenant wherewith we have been sanctified *as an unholy thing*, as that which would still keep us without, instead of that which entitles us to enter into the *holiest of all*. And what an insult to the Spirit of grace, who witnesses to the soul of the wondrous grace of God and of Christ, and who is himself in the once-purged worshiper the power of nearness of worship: for God is a Spirit, and they who worship him must worship him in Spirit {in spirit and in truth; John 4:23}. What an insult to that blessed Spirit to put ourselves back to the distance in which the flesh must ever stand before God. Hence, therefore, this solemn warning. Take heed lest, after having received the knowledge of the truth with respect to your priestly standing and nearness to God, ye wilfully sin {this refers to apostasy}. For to worship God as we think fit, is of the very essence of wilfulness. God leaves nothing to our choice in the matter of worship; it is not allowed us to choose whether we will go back to the old pattern. God has set it aside, and to return to it is to choose the place of judgment. For nothing can await the outside worshipers but a fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. There remaineth no more sacrifice for sin to bring you nearer, or to make you accepted. Jesus is not waiting to offer that -- for He has done it once for all -- but waiting till His enemies be made his footstool.

But even the priest's service in the holy place, near as it was, is but partially the pattern of the service of the saints now. For now *all* relative nearness is done away with, and we must take the sphere of the ministry of the high priest Himself to complete the pattern of our standing now.

While the first tabernacle was standing, the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest; i.e., laid open (Heb. 9:8). The priests, though able always to enter into the holy place, could proceed no further. The beautiful veil concealed from their eye the most holy place. The veil of the blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen, with its cunning work of cherubims, all open to their view,

2. {It needs to be pointed out that trampling under foot the Son of God and crucifying Him afresh (taking the attitude that He deserved to be crucified), is apostasy. However, perhaps the writer is abstracting the character of this, and using the tendency, applying it to the introduction of Judaism into Christianity. So, the introducing Judaism into Christianity is, in its degree, of that character. Ed.}

might indeed tell them of the glories concealed behind it; but the golden altar, the ark of the covenant overlaid with gold, with the golden pot of manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant, were all concealed from their sight. The immediate presence of him who dwelt between the cherubims on the mercy-seat was inapproachable by them. That was accessible to the high priest alone, and to him but once a year, and then not without blood, which he offered for himself and for the errors of the people. Mark: the high priest could not enter into the holiest of all at all times, as the priests could into the holy place; he could not enter there as *a once purged worshiper*, for he went there on the very ground of sin *not* being put away for ever.

But now all is laid open. By the blood of Christ the way is opened into the holiest of all. How significantly was this marked by the veil of the temple being rent in twain when Jesus hung upon the cross. Yea, Jesus himself is the way, the living way. If there be a veil, He is that veil; not to conceal anything of God behind it, but to bring out all that may be known of God to view. And here the worshipers once purged have constant liberty to enter.

"Having, therefore, *brethren*." The Apostle does not take the stand of one in pre-eminent nearness himself to God, inviting others to draw nigh, as though he had been the priest and they the people, he on the inside and they without; but he classes himself with those whom he addresses, calling them brethren, and three times repeating, "Let us." How different this to the order of old. Moses alone was to come near, the others were to worship afar off; but now it was equal nearness, equal liberty of access into the holiest of all.

What has the blood of Jesus left unaccomplished? In the *shedding* of it we have remission of sins. By the *sprinkling* of it we are pronounced clean, and sanctified as worshipers. It is ever on the mercy-seat, and before the mercy-seat; for by it Christ hath entered in, having obtained eternal redemption. His thus entering in is not an annual solemnity, nor one ever to be repeated. The blood of the sin-offering, carried within the veil by Aaron on the great day of atonement, was that he might

make an atonement for the holy place, because of *the uncleanness of the children of Israel, and because of their transgressions in all their sins* (Lev. 16:16).

This has now been done once and for ever. The atonement for the holy place is *unto continuance* -- it is as much once and for ever purged as is the worshiper himself. Yea, no worshiper entering there need fear lest he should bring defilement there, because that blood that cleanseth all sin away is there for ever before God. Why are we so distant in our hearts from God? Is it not because we have so little sense of the real power of the blood *within the veil* as the gracious provision of God himself for our holy and unhindered communion with him?

Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of

Jesus.

But mark the way of access. At Mount Sinai all was distance.

Thou shalt set *bounds* unto the people round about, saying, Take heed to yourself, that ye go not up into the mount, nor touch the border of it: whosoever *toucheth the mount shall be surely put to death* (Ex. 19).

This distance ever characterized the worship under the law; there were constant bounds set, to pass which would have been death. Even Aaron himself could not pass the bounds of the veil at all times, "lest he die." The outside worshiping Israelite could not pass the bounds of the curtains which hung at the door of the tabernacle, "lest he die." To see God and live was impossible under the law; but now Jesus is the way, the living way, into God's presence. To see Him is to see God, and live. He is not the barrier between us and God, but the way to God. All the distance, and every bound, is done away by Jesus. Did an Israelite on the outside gaze on the beautiful curtain, and long to pass it -- but death would have been his portion had he attempted it -- let him look to Jesus, who says, "I am the door: by me, if any man enter in, he *shall be saved*." Yes, the death of Jesus is become to us the living way into the holiest of all. But if, having proceeded within the curtains of the door, the veil seemed to forbid further entrance, let him again look to Jesus, and the veil, says the apostle, is His flesh. The very God with whom we have to do is thus brought before us as full of grace and truth. And if he perceived it rent, again let him look to Jesus and him crucified, and the holiness of God invited, instead of forbade an entrance. What words of blessing to the once purged worshiper!

By a new and living way which he hath consecrated for us through the veil, that is to say, his flesh.

But farther. Not only the work of Jesus and his character inspire confidence, but He himself is the High Priest over the house of God. His ministry is never for a moment interrupted. He is in the holiest of all, on the very ground of atonement having been made both for the people and the place, and therefore the present is to us one continued season of worship. How needful is this promise to give us confidence in entering into the holiest! The High Priest has not to go into the house; He is there constantly, and has taken a place which Aaron never could take in the tabernacle; He is *over* the house as his own; He is master of it; He openeth, and no man shutteth.

It is literally a great Priest over the house of God, or "great High Priest," as we have it in the fourth chapter. The worshipers themselves now enter into the privileged place of the High Priest, themselves taking the standing of High Priests in this respect, not simply of priests entering into the holy place. Hence they need a *great* Priest -- one who is *over* the house, even over them (Heb. 3:6). This must not be forgotten. We are not priests in our own right, neither are we free of the house in our own right; all hangs on the great Priest; and our entrance into the

holiest of all, now by faith, and in due time actually, is that which declares to us how much we are debtors to his grace.

May we indeed, by these meditations, find fresh virtue in the blood of Jesus, and learn what its preciousness must be before God, when it can give us liberty to enter into the holiest of all!

And now pause for a moment to contemplate what has been done for us, -- what has been done for every one whose eye has been turned away from the things which are visible, and with which he himself is conversant, to see Jesus now hidden in the heavens from the sight of the world, but revealed to faith as at the right hand of the throne of the majesty of heaven.

The worshipers have been once and for ever purged by His sacrifice once offered. By the will of God they have been sanctified by the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. A living way has been opened for them through the blood of Jesus into the holiest of all. The place of worship is as much prepared for them to worship in by the blood, as they by the same blood are prepared to worship in it. The great Priest is abidingly in that place of worship; no ministration is wanting, He is the minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle which the Lord pitched, and not man. He, too, is *over* the house; and its gates are always opened -- entrance is always to be had, -- all things are ready without our having done anything. What then remains but for us to use our high privileges, and to listen to the word -- "Let us draw near" but this, the Lord permitting, shall be the subject of the next paper.

But is there not reason for deep humiliation on the part of Christians who own assuredly the preciousness of the blood of Jesus for remission of sins, but who do not regard its preciousness as having purged the place of worship for those whose sins are forgiven? An Israelite was taught two things by the blood of the sacrifice. "Almost all things are by the law purged with blood, and without shedding of blood is no remission." Many a soul which has been taught the value of the blood in the latter sense has never regarded it in the former. Many a christian who would be alarmed at anything which would imply that something was yet to be done by Jesus for justification, is quite unconscious of nullifying a most important part of the work of Jesus, that affecting worship, by the ritual to which he is subjected. The truth preached cheers his soul and leads into happy liberty -- the ritual is submitted to as a point of decency, and in many instances tolerated only for the sake of the sermon. But what a fearful degradation of worship is this! What an undervaluing of the blood of Jesus. What a forgetfulness of our priestly place as worshipers once purged for the heavenly courts themselves!

The Lord pardon his saints for having so insulted his grace in the mode and character of their worship: and lead them by his Spirit into the only place of acceptable worship -- the holiest of all.

From *Bible Subjects for the Household of Faith* 3:294-301.

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

Chapter 8

Reconciliation

The word “reconciliation” has appeared many times thus far. It is well to look at this matter more closely. 2 Cor. 5:18-20 and Col. 1:19-22 present the matter of reconciliation in its far-reaching character.

The Ministry of That Reconciliation

... and all things [are] of the God who has reconciled us to himself by [Jesus] Christ, and given to us the ministry of that reconciliation: how that God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, not reckoning to them their offences; and putting in us the word of that reconciliation. We are ambassadors therefore for Christ, God as [it were] beseeching by us, we entreat for Christ, Be reconciled to God (2 Cor. 5:18-20).

We have received the ministry of that reconciliation. Perhaps, it would be of help to us if we knew a little more about it. What is stated here about the content of that ministry? There are three things.

1. GOD WAS IN CHRIST, RECONCILING THE WORLD TO HIMSELF

This refers to Christ in His pathway down here, up to the cross. In Him “all the fullness [of the Godhead] was pleased to dwell” (Col. 1:20). This was true from the instant of the incarnation and was stamped upon all His words, works, and ways. In His ministry to sinners He entreated them, “Come to me” (Matt. 11:28). He did not reckon to them their offences (see point 2 below).

In Ch. 1 we surveyed the end of the testing of the first man. God’s reconciling the world to Himself is also part of the testing of the first man, having to do with the final test in the presentation of Christ to the world. This text does not tell us that God *is* in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself, as

if it might be going on now.¹ It was when Christ was here in the world. This was the character and thrust of His words, works, and ways. The testing of the fallen, first man was to see if he was recoverable -- not to inform God about the outcome, but that we might understand that the first man is not recoverable. What would it have shown if the first man had received Christ? Why, after all, he *was* recoverable and the world would then have been reconciled to God. Instead, the world hated Him and cast Him out (John 1:10; 3:19; 7:7; 8:23; 16:8). He affirmed that:

I spoke openly to the world; I taught always in [the] synagogue and in the temple, where all the Jews come together, and in secret I have spoken nothing (John 18:20).

God’s testing of the *fallen* first man had taken the form of His dealing with the Jews. Thus the Jews were representative of the first man. Therefore the Lord could say, “I spoke openly to the world.” That is how the world was tested and that was how God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself. This testing is seen also in these words of the Lord Jesus:

For judgment am I come into this world, that they which see not may see, and they which see may become blind (John 9:39).

Do you not see divine sovereignty in that text? However, it was not then the time for judgment *to be executed*, but the guilt of man was sealed by the rejection of Christ -- except, of course, that God opened the eyes of some of the spiritually blind ones to see Who He was. God in Christ provided the way of reconciliation to the world. The world rejected Him.

The notion that God does not command the sinner what he is not capable of obeying is absurd. You did not find that in the Word of God; ‘Thy wish was father, Harry, to that thought.’ It is invented by an unwillingness to own that man is totally lost. Man wants to save something for his own will and effort. But God gave the law, and man was not capable of keeping it:

Because the mind of the flesh is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God; for neither indeed can be: and they that are in the flesh cannot please God (Rom. 8:7).

God addresses man in responsibility and it is erroneously *inferred* from that fact that man is capable of paying. That is like saying that since God gave the law man could have kept the law. That is like saying that when God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, the world was capable of responding and

1. The notion that this is going on now might suit a five point Calvinist. They like to make “world” mean the elect. Thus, Christ would now be reconciling the elect. But seeing that it refers to Christ’s ministry when on earth makes a difficulty for that view of the word “world” in this text.

being reconciled.² If a man owed you a million dollars and had not one cent to pay you, when he comes to you and says that he is incapable of paying you, will you say to him, Why, you have *no responsibility* to pay because you cannot?

But this really is not our subject to expand on. The Son came into the world for judgment on this world, judgment yet to be executed in due time, and to act sovereignly in opening eyes and confirming others in their blindness. The judgment, I repeat was not to be executed when He was here. Therefore we read,

2. NOT RECKONING TO THEM THEIR OFFENCES

In keeping with this, John 12:45-48 says:

(45) and he that beholds me, beholds him that sent me. (46) I am come into the world [as] light, that every one that believes on me may not abide in darkness; (47) and if any one hear my words and do not keep [them], I judge him not, for I am not come that I might judge the world, but that I might save the world. (48) He that rejects me and does not receive my words, has him who judges him: the word which I have spoken, that shall judge him in the last day.

Several facts bearing immediately on the matter that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, are evident in this passage:

- (1) God was in Christ (v. 45); and
- (2) Christ was manifesting God (v. 45).
- (3) Christ was not here to execute judgment at that time (v. 47).
- (4) Receiving Christ's and His words and work is the essence of reconciliation (v. 48).
- (4) Christ was rejected by the world and the world was not reconciled to God.
- (5) Judgment is sure, but it will take place in the future, not at the time then present (v. 48).

It is clear that had their offences been reckoned to them when our Lord was here, judgment would have taken place then. This does not mean they were not held guilty of offences; this refers to the time of the execution of judgment.

3. PUTTING IN US THE WORD OF THAT RECONCILIATION

God in Christ was rejected and the world was not reconciled. But that very

2. It is a special feature of John's gospel that the rejection of Christ is given right at the beginning: John 1:10, 11. The world could no more receive Him than it can receive the Spirit sent down. "The Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see him nor know him; but ye know him, for he abides with you, and shall be in you" (John 14:17). Note well the word "cannot." It means inability. Man is totally lost.

rejection of Himself in Christ was used to provide the occasion for the work of Christ of the cross whereby God righteously forgives the sinner and reconciles the sinner to Himself. We have the ministry of this meanwhile before the reconciliation of all things takes place. Christians, as those who have been reconciled to God, have this ministry as ambassadors for Christ. So now God is still working regarding reconciliation (though not for the world, but) for sinners. God is still in Christ, but now we are Christ's ambassadors and "entreat for Christ." And thus this entreaty by Christ's ambassadors made to sinners to be reconciled is done by them on behalf of God. The sinner needs to be reconciled to God (not He to them, of course). Christians *are* reconciled to God *now* (Col. 1:21, 22).

The Reconciliation of All Things

. . . for in him all the fulness [of the Godhead] was pleased to dwell, and by him to reconcile all things to itself, having made peace by the blood of his cross -- by him, whether the things on the earth or the things in the heavens. And you, who once were alienated and enemies in mind by wicked works, yet now has it reconciled in the body of his flesh through death; to present you holy and unblamable and irreproachable before it . . . (Col. 1:19-22).

Clearly, the reconciliation of all things is yet future. The power of God will be put forth to establish God's relationship to all things in accordance with the value of the shed blood of Christ. That value is commensurate with the glory and value of Christ's person, which glory and value has been imparted to the work accomplished on the cross. The "peace by the blood of his cross" is the grand basis. *We have peace with God now*, as we are reconciled now, but there remains the application of this to the things on earth and in the heavens. J. N. Darby wrote:

Thus, in Israel, the blood was put upon the mercy-seat, and expiation -- peace, was made; but besides this everything was sprinkled, and the sins of the people were confessed. This, with regard to Israel and to creation, has not yet been done. As to that which is outward, it remains still at a distance from God, although peace is made. We know that it is the good pleasure of God to reconcile all things in heaven, and on the earth, by virtue of this blood. All things shall be restored to order under a new rule. The guilty, remaining in their sins, will be outside this scene of blessing; but heaven and earth will be completely freed from the power of evil (and even from its presence during the millennium, as regards manifestation -- still later, absolutely from its presence itself), according to the virtue of that blood which has separated between good and evil, according to the character of God Himself, and so glorified God that peace is made. God can act freely for blessing; but here the work is twofold, like the glory of the Person of Christ, and refers to the same objects as His

glory. It is in the counsels of God to reconcile unto Himself all things in heaven and on the earth through Christ. But Christians He has already reconciled. Once not only defiled, like the creature, but enemies in their minds, He has already reconciled them in the body of His flesh by means of death. The perfect work which Christ accomplished in His body, blotting out our sins and perfectly glorifying God His Father, has brought us into relationship with God in His holiness according to the efficacy of that work; that is to say, it is efficacious to present us, perfectly reconciled, holy, without blemish and without blame before His face; and with the consciousness of it, and of the love that has wrought it, and the favor into which we are brought, so that in the sense of this the heart is brought back to God: we are reconciled to God. This supposes that we continue steadfast in the faith unto the end.³

The wicked will not be reconciled to God, spite of what universalists claim.⁴ Infernal beings will certainly bow at the name of Jesus (Phil. 2:11), but for all that they will have their portion in the outer darkness, which is not part of the new heavens and the new earth. Hell does not form part of the new heavens and new earth.

The Lord Jesus died to take away the sin (not sins) of the world (John 1:29). Sin is not yet removed. Heb. 9:26 tells us Christ has been manifested for the putting away of sin by the sacrifice of Himself. The point is that the basis for the removal of sin, involving the reconciliation of all things, has been laid in the work on the cross. Its actual removal awaits the new heavens and new earth.

The Son of God has been manifested that He might undo the works of the devil (1 John 3:8). But the works of the devil are not yet undone, and will not be, until the new heavens and the new earth come. In Heb. 2:14 we read that it was through death that Christ “might annul him who has the might of death, that is the devil.” The Devil still “has” that might. The cross laid the basis to accomplish this (Heb. 2:14), but it still awaits the future. And so in 1 Cor. 15:24-26 we read that the last enemy that will be annulled is death. That occurs with the close of the millennial kingdom, following the “little season.” It is all preparatory for the new heavens and the new earth.

What about John 12:31?

Now is [the] judgment of this world; now shall the prince of this world be cast out.

Is Satan cast out yet? Of course not. Scripture tells us that now he is the god of

3. *Synopsis, in loco.*

4. See J. N. Darby’s examination of Andrew Juke’s “The Second Death and the Restitution of All Things,” in *Collected Writings* 31:75-123; and F. W. Grant’s *Facts and Theories as to the Future State*, found in *The Conscious, Eternal Punishment of the Wicked, available from Present Truth Publishers.*

this age (2 Cor. 4:4). Has judgment been executed on the world? Not yet, but it lies under judgment to be executed in the due time upon it. John 12:31 speaks anticipatively of these things. And so we read that “the ruler of this world is judged” (John 16:11), but that judgment has not yet been executed. The time will come when the devil and his angels will be cast into the lake of fire, which is prepared for them, and will be joined by the wicked in eternal, conscious punishment. All opposed to God will be removed and when the new heavens and the new earth are brought into existence, all opposed to God will be outside. They are outside of what “the reconciliation of all things” points to: the new heavens and the new earth.

Acts 3:21, “the restoration of all things,” is considered in detail elsewhere; it has to do with the millennial reign of Christ.⁵

In these things God’s Word speaks of results of the cross. But not all results of the cross are actually realized yet. And faith believes Him Who so speaks, as Abraham believed God, “who quickens the dead, and calls the things which be not as being” (Rom. 4:17).

Ed.

Personal Pique “Piously” Covered Up

A Christian becomes piqued; i.e., his pride is wounded and he is irritated -- with someone in a congregation of Christians, or, because things are not conducted according to his will, etc. He determines to withdraw from those Christians

But it will not do to state the real reason: I am irritated; I am offended; My pride is wounded; You will not do things the way I want them done; etc.

So, some spiritual-sounding reason is generated for leaving those Christians. They must be denigrated as harboring some evil in their midst (when it is not the case). Or, they are sectarian. And so on.

Then they go elsewhere, and oh, the light and fellowship they now enjoy compared with those narrow-minded ones from whom they withdrew. Perhaps they are more at home, however, because they have found more like-mindedness with their own thoughts and ways. Christ was not the cause of their leaving; rather, their flesh was the reason, but the pretension is that they have found more of Christ. See 2 Cor. 5:10.

Ed.

5. *Elements of Dispensational Truth*, vol. 1, sec. ed., chapter 4.4 (available from the publisher).

Thine Eye, Is it Single?

A Word on Serving

If therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light (Matt. 6:22).

If a child has been habitually heedless of its father, and taken no pains to get acquainted with his thoughts and wishes, one can readily foresee that that child, in presence of a difficulty, would be in no position to understand what would please its father. There are things God leaves in *generalities* for the testing of *individual* condition of soul. Suppose, instead of the child just referred to, the question to be one of a wife in relation to her husband; would not a wife, with the feelings and mind of a wife, be able, in all probability, without a moment's hesitancy, to know what her husband would desire, and that even though he had never expressed a will on the subject? Now you cannot escape this testing, and God, moreover, will not let His children escape it. "If thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light."

As for an easy and comfortable way of knowing God's will, as one might have a receipt for this or that, there is no such thing, of knowing it, I mean, without reference to our own state of soul.

Again: we are frequently of vastly too great importance in our own eyes, and deceive ourselves in supposing that there is a "will of God" at all, in such or such a case. He may have nothing to say to us about it. The evil is in our having set ourselves at work. God's will may be that we should quietly take a less prominent place.

Again: we are searching at times after "the will of God," desiring to know how to act in circumstances when *that we should not be found in them at all* is His only will; and then, were conscience in exercise, its first effect would be to make us get out of them. Our own will has placed us there, and yet we would enjoy the comfort of having God's guidance in a self-chosen path. This is a very common case.

We may rest assured, that if near enough to God, we shall not be at a loss to know His will.

In a long and active life it may happen that God, in His love, does not always just at the moment show us His will, and this in order to make us realize our dependence when there is the disposition to do our own will. Nevertheless, "if thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light." Hence it is certain, when the whole body is not full of light, the eye is not single. You will say, "A poor consolation that." I reply, "A rich one to those

whose sole desire it is to have the eye single, and to walk with God" -- not, so to speak, to avoid the trouble of learning His will in an objective way, but whose desire it is *to walk with God*.

If any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world, But if a man walk in the night, he stumbleth, because there is no light in him (John 11:9, 10).

Still the same principle:

He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life (John 8:12).

We cannot get from under this moral law of Christianity.

For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the *knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding*; that ye might walk *worthy of the Lord* unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God (Col. 1:9, 10).

The connection of these things, the one with the other, is of immense importance to the soul: we must know the Lord intimately, in order to "walk worthy" of Him; and so shall we grow in the knowledge of His will,

And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; that ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ (Phil. 1:9, 10).

Finally, it is written,

He that is spiritual judgeth *all things*, yet he himself is judged of no man (1 Cor. 2:15).

It is, then, the "will of God," a blessed will, that we should not be able to discern His will otherwise than according to our own spiritual state. In general, when we suppose we are judging as to circumstances, God is judging our condition. That which we have to do, is to keep near Him. He would not be good to us, were He to permit us to find out His will otherwise. It might be convenient, in the way of having a director of consciences, but we should thus be exempted from the discovery and correction of our moral condition. So that if we are seeking to know the "will of God," apart from that, we are *seeking* wrongly. And this is of daily occurrence.

One Christian is in doubt, in perplexity; to another, more spiritual than he, the thing is clear as the day, he is astonished -- where can there be any difficulty? there is none to him, and it ends in the discovery, that the difficulty lies altogether in the condition of soul of the former.

As to *circumstances*, I believe that a person may be led by them. Scripture has settled that. But this is what it calls being "held in by bit and bridle"

(Psa. 32:9).

I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye,

such is the promise to, such the privilege of him who has faith. Near enough to God, to comprehend through one look of His. God, who is faithful, has promised to direct him thus. He warns us against being “as the horse or the mule,” which have no understanding of the will, the thoughts, the desires of their master. They must be “held in by bit and bridle.” Without a doubt! even that is better than stumbling, or falling, or jostling against Him who has us in charge, but it is a sorry condition to be in. And there we see what it is to be *directed by circumstances*. It is merciful on the part of God to do it; but it is very sad on ours to require it.

Here, however, we need to distinguish between forming a judgment as to what it is right for us *to do* in certain circumstances, and our being *directed by* them. He who allows himself to be *directed by them* is ever acting blindly as to the “will of God.” There is absolutely nothing of that which is moral in it -- that which influences is from without. But it is very possible that I may have no judgment arrived at beforehand as to what I should do; I know not what circumstances may transpire, and consequently my mind is not made up. Yet so soon as the circumstances are there, I judge, with a full and divine conviction, what is the path of “the will of God,” and of the intent and power of the Spirit. This requires spirituality. It is not a being guided *by* circumstances, but being guided by God *in* circumstances, through being near enough to Him to judge at once what is right to be done when the circumstances are there.

With regard to impressions, God may suggest them, and as to fact, it is certain that He does suggest a thing to the mind; but then the suitability of that which is so suggested, and its moral character, will be as clear as the sun at noon-day. When we are in prayer, God may free our hearts from certain influences, the which being removed, other and spiritual influences are allowed to have all their own place in the soul; or He makes us feel the importance of a duty which, it may be, has been entirely lost sight of through the pre-occupation caused by some engrossing object.

This may occur between two individuals.

A person may not have sufficient spiritual discernment to find out what is right, whilst he may assent to the truth at once, when it is pointed out to him by another. Everybody is not an engineer, but a simple waggoner knows a good road when once it is made. Thus those impressions which are from God do not always remain simply impressions. But they are usually clear when of

God. I have no doubt, however, that He often makes them on our minds when we are walking with Him and listening to His voice.

When you speak of obstacles raised by Satan; it is not said that God Himself has not permitted these obstacles to a right desire, obstacles occasioned through the abounding evil of circumstances around us.

A person acting without the knowledge of God’s mind, is a case that ought to have no existence. The only rule that could be given is, never to *act* when we do not know the will of the Lord. Acting in ignorance of it we are at the mercy of *circumstances*; God making all turn, nevertheless, to the good of His children. But why act when we do not know God’s will; is there at all times such an exceedingly pressing necessity for action? If I do a thing with the full certainty that I am doing the will of God, it is clear that an obstacle then is nothing more than a test of my faith, and ought not to stop me. We get stopped, perhaps, through lack of faith; because, if not walking sufficiently near God, in the sense of our own nothingness, we shall lack faith to accomplish that which we have faith enough to *discern*.

When we are doing our own will, or are careless as to our walk, God, in His mercy, may warn us through an obstacle, which arrests us if we give heed to it, while “the simple pass on and are punished” (Prov. 27:12). Where there is a good deal of activity and occupation in the work, God may allow Satan to raise up obstacles, in order that we may be kept in dependence on the Lord; but He never allows Satan to act otherwise than on the flesh. If we leave the door open, if we get away from God, Satan may harm us; otherwise it is but a trial of faith, to warn us against some danger or snare -- something which would have the tendency to exalt us in our own eyes. It is a means for our correction. That is to say, God allows Satan to afflict the spirit and make the flesh suffer outwardly, that the inner man may be preserved from evil. If it is something else than this, then it is probably our “*buts*” and our “*ifs*” that are stopping us, or the results of our carelessness which has given an open door to Satan to trouble with doubts and seeming difficulties between God and ourselves, through our not seeing more clearly.

He that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not (1 John 5:18).

In a word, the question is wholly *moral*.

If a question presents itself, which on first looking at we are unable to determine, we shall very often find that there would be no such question at all, were our position not a false one, had we been antecedently in a good state of soul, had a genuine spirituality kept and preserved us. All we have to do in such a case is, to humble ourselves about the whole matter. Then let us

examine if Scripture does not furnish us with some principle suited for our direction ; and there, it is evident, spirituality is the essential thing -- is all.

‘Do that which Jesus would have done in such or such a circumstance’ has been given as a rule -- an excellent one *where and when it is applicable*. But are we often in the circumstances in which the Lord would have been found? It is frequently useful to ask oneself, *Whence* have I such a wish? or the thought of doing this or that? I have found that that in itself settles more than half the perplexing cases in which Christians find themselves involved. Two-thirds of the remainder result from our rashness or from former sins.

If a thought is from God, and not of the flesh, we have only to look to God as to the manner and means of putting it in practice, and we shall soon get guidance.

There are cases where one has need of being guided not altogether apart from motives, as, for instance, where I hesitate as to a visit, or the like. A life of more fervent charity, or charity in more intelligent exercise, or called out in drawing near God, will make plain the motives of charity on the one hand or the other; and we may frequently discover that ours was only egotism.

Do you say, But what if the question be one neither of charity nor of obedience! Then I answer, You owe me a reason for *acting*; for if it is only your own will, you cannot make the wisdom of God bend to your will. Here again we have the source of a numerous class of difficulties which God will never solve.

In such cases He will teach us, by His grace, obedience, and make us see how much time we have lost through our own activity. “The meek will He guide in judgment, the meek will He teach His way.”

Let us remember that the wisdom of God leads us in the path of the will of God. If our own wills are at work, God cannot accommodate Himself to that. This is the essential thing to discover. It is the secret of the life of Christ. I know not of any other principle on which God could act, though He pardons and makes all turn to our good.

He guides the new man which has no other will than Christ, He mortifies the old, and in this way purges us that we may bear fruit.

Lo, I come to do thy will, O my God; I delight to do it.

It is the place of a door-keeper to wait at the door, but in doing that he is doing his master’s will.

Rest assured that God does more in us than we for Him; and what we do is only for Him, just in so far as it is Himself that works it in us.

From *The Christian Friend*, 1876, pp. 349-355.

Want of Sympathy in Believers Towards the Lord Jesus Christ

If I am not deceived in my judgment, and if I have not mistaken the statements of the Divine Word, there is such a thing, and there *ought to be*, as sympathy between the members of the body of Christ and Christ Himself, who is the Head of His body, the church.

But that there is a great deficiency of that sympathy on the part of the children of God, I am compelled to believe; and on that subject I now write. I speak plainly, and I speak from conviction, when I say, that there is a sad lack of sympathy, not of Christ towards His people, who are the members of His body, but of His people, who ought to be here in every thing the servants of His glory, towards Christ Himself. The affections of *His* heart, and the thoughts of *His* mind, do not rise as they ought, through Him to God, from hearts and minds that are satisfied with His abundant grace, though the wilderness be still their present path.

What I demand, then, on behalf of the Lord Jesus, is, that those who are His, take an interest in all that is His! His love is worthy of it; and of all our various privileges, that is the most precious which makes it an impossible thing for us to separate between ourselves -- worthless as we are -- and Him the Heir and Lord of every glory. For we cannot, and we know we cannot, divorce ourselves from association with Him in His honor, His affections, and all the deep and gracious thoughts of His heart.

Hence it is, that all which does not honour Him, is an affliction to those that love Him; and all that honours Him is a joy to their hearts. For, being the members of His body, that which sets aside His word is against their testimony; and all that grieves His Holy Spirit tries and afflicts them. Yes, if we love Him who first loved us, if we are members of His body -- and He that is joined to the Lord is one Spirit with Him -- may God vouchsafe grace to give proof of our love to Him, and of our oneness in life with Him!

There are three things which are sometimes blessedly united together; but which, in the present case, must be distinguished. 1. There is in Christ Jesus the testimony of the grace of God towards poor sinners; 2. There is in Him the blessedness which belongs to us who believe in His name; 3. There are the experiences which, as being already saved, we have here below in the wilderness.

1. How blessed a thing it is for us that the work, by which God has made the light of His nature to dawn in our hearts, and by which His compassion and His mercy become so known to the poor sinner, that he not only *may*, but is bound to, draw near to God, is finished! That Christ, being risen from the dead and sat

down at the right hand of God, all the light of the beauty of the character of God shines down upon the world! And if indeed the darkness comprehends it not, still the light which shines in darkness is always the light of the glory of the gospel of Christ, who is the image of God (2 Cor. 4:4), the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ (v. 6, and Heb. 2:9). In spite of all the darkness, in the midst of which the light shines here below, it is still the light of life, which the love of God has caused to shine, and is the answer to every question and to every need of the poor sinner who seeks God. In it *God* finds His rest; *Christ* is satisfied with the same; and the Spirit of God gives us to find there the true foundation for eternity for our souls. It is the answer, perfect and satisfactory, to all that Satan, or the world, or the flesh, can object against us; because it has met the requirements of an ever holy God, and is the fitting basis of His mercy, and foundation of His throne as the Throne of Grace.

That a poor sinner, who is a child of wrath, and under the power of the prince of darkness, should take an interest in God is clearly impossible; and if he thinks to do anything for God, the thought can proceed only from pride of heart; for, until he has received Christ Jesus and salvation by Him he has no knowledge of the true God. The God of his imagination is . . . I will not say what; but the word of God tells us,

This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent (John 17:3);

and this is enough to set aside the thought. Not having found the door (John 10), the proper business of the poor sinner is to seek and to find it; and not to pretend to do anything which is an expression of gratitude toward one whom he despises even by being ignorant of Him. From such a one sympathy cannot be required nor received.

2. But it is quite another thing as to those who have received the word of which Peter speaks (1 Pet. 1:23 and 25), who are

born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever . . . But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the Gospel is preached unto you.

They walk in the way, and they find not only a most entire deliverance from all that was against them; whether in God or in themselves, or in their circumstances; but, walking in the way, they find in it incomprehensible riches. They are Christ's; and the God that gave them to His Son, chose them in Him before the foundation of the world; and though they feel their own weakness, they see also that they are accepted of God in the Beloved; and that He is their beauty and their robe of righteousness before God. Born of God, they are partakers of the divine nature {2 Pet. 1:4}; they are children of God and sealed with His Spirit of promise, as the earnest of the inheritance which they are waiting for in hope. Moreover, the blessing with which they are blessed is not

according to what they were, nor according to what they are in themselves; it is Christ, the faithful servant of God, by whom and for whom they are, and their blessing is according to the exigency of the love of God, who will have His Son, as Son of Man, honored in the heavenly places. Therefore He has given Him a glorious bride; for all God's counsels revolve around Christ; and all are for the glory of that Christ who is our all. We read, in the Ephesians, what is the fruit of Christ's love to the church:

Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the Church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish (Eph. 5:25-27).

What, then, is the blessing which we have in Christ? Who can answer? Yet, blessed be God! it is not now, because we see nothing in Him that we would fain be silent. No; it is rather because there is so much in Him, and because we see so much in Him; so much that tells His perfect beauty and entire preciousness, that we sometimes feel the expressiveness of silence. It is a kind of homage, at least, rendered to the unbounded fulness and immeasurableness of His love. Who can measure the majesty of the position of Christ? Who can scan the boundless future of glory prepared for Him? But, if that were possible, it would not suffice; for it is neither that which surrounds Him now, nor that which will hereafter surround Him, that can fully express what He is in His person, and what is the joy which God the Father finds in Him; nor what that is, which, in His infinite grace, He sees, to His pleasure, to exist for Him in the church. No; it is impossible to fully fathom what the blessing is which is ours as the just and perfect expression of His love to the church of His God. But let us pause a moment upon this sympathy of the church towards Christ. However defective in practice, it is in principle most sure, and of all her privileges the most precious, to love Him for His own sake who first loved her. And if one cannot, by reason of the infinitude of His love, speak of our love to Him; because it is so feeble in comparison that it is hardly worthy of the name of love when seen in the presence of His; yet we know we love Him. It may indeed be, that around us are multiplied proofs of our having walked in the flesh and not in the spirit, yet can we, through grace, appeal to Him as Peter did, and say,

Lord, thou knowest all things: thou knowest that I love thee {John 21:17}.

Most surely this is true; because it is He himself who has shed abroad in our hearts that love of God, which is the distinctive privilege which the betrothed one seeks in looking forward to her position of wife. Is it the fortune, or the domains, or houses of her Lord? Is it the being better lodged, and better clothed, that she would think of, as that which is to distinguish her from the servants? Never! *She is to be the wife*: there is to be the tenderest of relationships between her and her

husband; and it is Himself she loves and not His possessions. She is a help-mate for Him, His pride, His Joy. And out of this position, which alone belongs to her, out of this relationship which is her's alone, flows a life peculiarly her own. How frequently is this seen, even in this world of sin and misery, both among the rich and the poor. The person, honor, and interests of her husband (cost her what it may), find their defender in the wife. But such affection is but a feeble picture of what the church ought to be and may be here below towards Christ.

3. In what, then, do we fail as to that sympathy towards Christ? Alas! does not the very question produce a singular and painful feeling in our bosoms that are so little warmed by His love; and in our souls that are so little occupied with the beauty and glory which are in Him? It would be a great deal more easy to enumerate all the inconsistencies in the life of Abraham than in the life of Lot. The very brightness of the light that shone around him; the pilgrim-strangership, the daily walk of him who looked for a city, throw out into relief all his inconsistencies. Abraham's ordinary life made evident his occasional failures; but the normal state of Lot was so sadly in habitual conformity with the world, that it is not a particular action, rarely, if at all, repeated, nor even a particular habit, which was slow of correction, that strikes the mind, in the review of his history; but after a careful study of his life, one is rather astonished to find that amidst such a heap of worldliness the eye of God, which cannot err, found in him, however smothered, a faith which identified itself with God. Sad business to be thus obliged to look for the proofs of the existence of faith. It is greatly to be feared that those (if there be such) who may stand in need of an answer to the question -- "In what have we failed?" will receive with hesitation the reply. But be it so, I will yet speak out freely my thoughts without fear.

I suppose, then, that we greatly fail in having the same thoughts and feelings as our Lord Jesus, *as to testimony which has to be rendered to Him, in these last days, and as to the gospel*. I speak not of that love for the souls of poor sinners who lie perishing all around us, which might well induce us to sacrifice everything if, peradventure, they might be saved. The value of the soul -- of one's own -- of that of a human being, is worth more than we can sacrifice; but I speak not as weighing its worth, I speak of the sentiment of love for Him who is the light of eternal life, and of that interest in all the thoughts of God with respect to Him which is enough to make us feel, that --

the name and grace of the Lord Jesus Christ ought to be proclaimed, whether unto the condemnation of those that reject, or to the salvation of those that receive it,

as St Paul expresses in 2 Cor. 2:14-17

Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place. For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that

perish: to the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things? For we are not as many, which corrupt the word of God: but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ.

Do I speak thoughts which are peculiar to myself? or do I not rather utter what every disciple recognises to be suitable in itself and according to the will of God? Is not such honouring of Christ due from the love which each disciple bears to Him? I speak not as feeling in my own heart the zeal and fervency of love for that blessed name which I would; but I do appreciate it; and I am at least ashamed, and confess my want of zeal and fervency, and seek, notwithstanding, to do what I can. "She hath done what she could"! was a blessed word of praise from the lips of Christ to a poor feeble one. If little in ourselves, may the like praise be ours! But is it not astounding, that the poor sinner, who possesses knowledge of such a panacea as the gospel is, should forget not only its worthiness to be proclaimed, and the needs of those around Him; but also the privilege announcing it, that is put within his power.

Much the same is it, if we consider the testimony which God has placed in the hands of the disciples of Christ who are on earth; a testimony which has always to be rendered to the grace of God; but which, in measure, changes its form according to the epoch in which we live. It is always (or, alas! must we not rather say it ought always to be) a testimony to the person and glory of the Son of God, as to the position in which He is, and as to what pertains to Him in that position, or in that which He is about to take, when He leaves His Father's throne, to take His own. Moreover, there are all the spiritual blessings in heavenly places which pertain to us as being His, and the responsibility flowing from thence. The responsibility is inseparable from the blessing, if God, who will not give His glory to another, does nothing except for His own honor. God will not, cannot, nourish our love of self. We are not, and we cannot be, the object and the end of, counsels of God. It is CHRIST ALONE who can be that. All, therefore, in us which comes from God, and which is the expression of the goodness of God, tends to the glory of Christ, and has this alone as its natural object of research. That which does not strengthen us in our service and devotedness to Christ, our Lord, is not a blessing but a snare.¹

The declension and failure upon earth of the church has greatly changed the effect of many a truth upon heart of the child of God. Truth which, when first revealed, was but a subject of pure and unmixed joy now necessarily awakens in the heart that has understanding another sentiment than joy, a feeling inseparable from humiliation.

1. This shows the mistake of those who walk according to providential blessing; our blessings are spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.

If I take the history of the churches of God, of Christianity in its manifestation upon earth; -- it has now continued 1800 years; -- at first salvation by grace; the value of the word; the presence of the Spirit, were well-known truths. But where can we find the presence or the effectual power of these things, between the 12th and the 16th centuries? No; salvation of free grace, through faith, had been exchanged in the professing world, for salvation by the deeds of the law; human traditions -- many of them of the most senseless kind -- had superseded the Word of God; and an ecclesiastical head had usurped, not only the place which belonged to the Holy Ghost, but he had also, by usurping the power of the kings of the earth, declared in opposition to Christ, that His kingdom was of this world; and thus utterly changing the character of the kingdom of Christ.

In the early days of the Church's history, there can be no doubt as to the place which the heavenly calling, the mystery of the union of Christ and the church, and the doctrine of His return as Bridegroom held. These were the doctrines, recognised as of all-absorbing interest. But how difficult is it to trace their existence between those first days and these, the last! Here and there, perhaps, one finds a rare and curious statement, which shows that they were not altogether forgotten through the whole interval; and, alas! how feeble is our faith in them now! If salvation of free grace, the blessedness of having the Bible as the open book of God's word, the presence of the Spirit, the heavenly calling, the mystery, and the coming of Christ, are, to those that have light, subjects of joy and thanksgiving, can we forget the fact, that all these precious truths have been lost on earth to those who should have held them fast? Can we forget the dishonor thus put upon our Lord? Can we forget the actually existing state of things in this respect of those around us who are our brethren in the Lord, and whose hearts have not yet received, to their blessing, these things? If the taste of these truths in the mouth is that of the sweetest honey, nevertheless in the inward parts, when it comes there, it is bitterness. In the discovery to us of these most precious truths, there is a blessed token of the faithfulness of God and our Savior, who is the same yesterday, today, and for ever; a token in itself as precious as the truth it reveals. But it is the faithfulness of God to Himself, and to the glory of His Son, in spite of the sin of His people upon earth. We taste the grace of God in its height and in its depth; for it is *grace* which gives us to taste that truth which the people with whom we are in fellowship upon earth have forgotten and lost: and in this, for those at least who love God, there is certainly a subject of the deepest humiliation. I would, that that mixture of the bitter with the sweet, which these truths produce, especially when we think of who it is to whom they are discovered almost as a fresh revelation, may exist in us, and exist in a very unmistakable form.

The actual effect of the law upon the Jews, is a very grief to think of. The

law was in itself a rule of life, to show to those, to whom it was given, what their state really was. Their walk was not according to the law: it condemned them, at every step, their acts, their lives, and their ways. Nothing in them was according to its holy requirements. The effect of such a law ought to have been anguish to all who were under it. For they were condemned and hopeless through it.

As to a part, a very small part who had conscience, it was so : but not to the nation as a whole. They were quite satisfied with, and proud of, . . . what? Being condemned? They thought not at all about *that*; for that would have supposed a recognition of rightful subjection to God, holy and present. The Jews gave Him not that honor: but, seeking their own glory and desiring to turn every thing to it, they forgot all in the law which was against them, and thought only of the distinctive peculiarity of having received a law from God. Of this privilege they boasted, and availed themselves of it as a means of judging and condemning others. Alas ! it was like the madness of a prisoner, who, when arraigned and condemned to death, instead of recognising his own forfeiture of life, should please himself with the honour done him by the judge in addressing him so peculiarly before the whole court; and should find in his own sentence a mere clue to the judgment of others.

But such is flesh! The effect of the law upon Christ was very different. The law was against every man except Himself -- but so far from its being against Him it did Him honor. It was, to a certain extent, a description of Himself; for, having no sin in His flesh, He could obey the law, and He found it a path for His feet, and walked in it perfectly all His lifetime here below. But what was the effect of the law upon Christ? The light which was in Him, to which, in its measure, the law did homage, showed Him also man's state of rebellion and his coming judgment; and this was sorrow to His heart. Instead, therefore, of its being to Him a pleasure to judge others, His heart was full of sorrow on their account; and He gave Himself for them.

May the children of God judge themselves in this also; whether the effect of the light of the ruin, and apostasy, has been to them the means of self-exaltation, or of profound humiliation, for the dishonor done to God and to Christ (in which we have our full part), and for the state of ruin amidst which the objects of divine affection are found. Are the histories of the church fables? Or, however defective, are they the writings of sober men? And are we to learn a lesson from them? Has there been a need, felt, owned, acted upon, for the reformation, in order to bring afresh into due prominence the foundations of the faith. Is it true that there are churches many and opposed to each other, and yet, amidst the wide choice, there seems to be none which, in the world's dotage, will suffice for either rationalist or religious? If I speak these things as a man, according to man's range of thought, there is enough to condemn and humble. But if I see in

scripture predictions of such a state of things and of Gods judgment upon it, I ought, I admit, to be thankful for the light of His precious word, but I ought to be humbled on account of it. It is a privilege, no doubt, to have the light by which I know these things beforehand, but what can I say of the sin itself all around me; sin which God has predicted, which He is about to judge -- sin which I cannot remedy -- sin of the body of which I find myself a part? I ought to humble myself: I do humble myself before God, and with so much the more of liberty of spirit and heart, because He has given me grace to see that He is for me, spite of all. But can I stop there? No, I must announce it to the children of God. But if I announce it, it is not, certainly, as a glory, nor as a distinctive privilege. There may be *some* that have ears to hear, though there are *many* who deny and reject this truth. But can one be content, can one boast over the ignorance of those who will not regard it? No. That would not be like Christ nor like His Spirit. Christ has no pleasure in such things; nor can His Spirit in him who, while he feels the privilege of truth possessed, lose sight of the fact of individual fellowship with the system about to be judged. If I am of the church, as a body on earth which has failed, my distinctive privilege, in regard to the sad truth of ruin all around, consists in readiness, while vindicating God and condemning man, to humble myself for all, to confess the sin of those who cannot see it, and to bewail their loss and the dishonour done to Christ by their state.

I would that the experience of Jeremiah were now ours; and I freely confess, that I fear God does not see the state of soul suitable to the light He has given us in His word. God forbid, that any of us should find in that sad truth of the ruin, a subject of self-exaltation, as if we were not livingly interested in, and forming part of, what is ruined, and as if the honour of Christ and the blessedness of His people were not involved. That the revivals of late in Europe have always been connected with such humiliation of spirit, and that they stop when the sense of blessing given has led, in any place, to forgetfulness of that state of humiliation, -- a sense of which, first brought with it the blessing, -- is a fact of large deduction.

Again, that the truth of the Lord's return should be recognised as the only true hope of the church, and that the man of God should find therein his joy and consolation is good and altogether according to the will of God. Also, that a child of God should taste the love of God in the fact, that, in a day like the present, this hope should be his own portion to enjoy, is easily understood; but that this truth should produce in us nothing but joy, is not true. This truth casts its light upon a dark world in rebellion against Christ, which has grieved and vexed His Holy Spirit, and is lying under the power of the wicked one. Its light reveals many a sad cell of darkness in the world's church; and if one contrasts the days of its infant joyfulness with those of its old age, what a force and energy in the

one, what folly and decrepitude are now visible in the other! Is it the same body? Alas it is the same body which was set in witness, -- in the responsibility of witness, -- on the day of Pentecost; but, taken possession of by an adversary, it can scarcely be recognised for the same. It was the place of the manifested presence of God, heavenly, full of love, apart from the world, a constant judge of the flesh and of all the devices of Satan. Are these the features which we trace now? I see not how the soul which loves Christ, which loves the members of His body to whom His honour is dear, can avoid, in the light of the hope of His return, feeling that there is much to humble, all around, though that hope will bring with it the position of the highest individual blessedness.

To individualize that hope down, to the measure of one's own future joy, and to forget to enjoy it in sympathy with the heart of Christ, which takes in God and all that is dear to Him, is not a proof of manhood in any.

We are Christ's, and, as so blessed of God, we have to own responsibility to His name on the earth; and, as led by the Spirit of Christ, have to feel for His honour and name, and not merely to seek our own individual joy and comfort.

As God has bowed down in grace and mercy to us, they that are in the Spirit find it easy and natural to themselves to bow down in humiliation before Him and for one another. For self is abased in the presence of grace. The flesh, however, will show itself in another way, and either not feel the need of humiliation or, admitting it, be occupied in demanding humiliation from others, rather than interpose itself to bear the burden. To deny the suitability of humiliation, and not to feel that which produces it, is one and the same thing as forgetfulness of that supreme fulness of grace which has found us, notwithstanding the misery of the fallen state of all around. It shows a want of sympathy with the heart of Christ, in respect of that which is to Him such dishonouring ruin. On the other hand, to be occupied with pressing that others should humble themselves, is not a proper expression of the sense of our own failure, nor of our own state of weakness. For if all have need to confess, and if we are in a low estate, who am I, to take a position of strength and to demand of others humiliation, instead of humbling myself before God, and for them if need be. No: I can, in very humbleness, and in the sense of ruin and weakness, humble myself for my own part in the evil, and for the sins of others, and then rest counting upon God to do what still remains to be done. Whereunto we have already attained, let us mind the same thing, let us walk by the same rule; and if in any matter, a man be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto him.

From *The Present Testimony* 6:339-351.

*The Mystery of Christ and the Church
and The Covenants*

Chapter 2

Objections Regarding The Hiddenness of This Mystery

(Chapter 2 continued)

Romans 16:25, 26

The importance of Rom. 16:25, 26 to this matter is too great for us to fail to take notice of how those opposers who are spiritualizers of the prophets attempt to nullify the force of the statement that “silence has been kept in [the] times of the ages.” They view the word silence as meaning partial silence and say that the OT was not silent concerning the mystery.

The Mystery Made Manifest by Prophetic Scriptures

Now, either silence was kept or it was not. Spiritualizers of the prophets are compelled by their theological systems to say that silence was *not* kept. Consider how the amillennialist John Murray, commenting on Rom. 16:25, thought he was doing justice to the OT revelation (meaning that he finds the mystery in the OT):

The clause “now is manifested,” when taken in conjunction with the emphases on “silence” and “revelation” in verse 25, might create the impression that there had been no revelation whatsoever of this mystery in the OT Scriptures. This impression, however, is decisively excluded or corrected by the words “by the scriptures of the prophets.” These are the Scriptures to which Paul appeals repeatedly in this epistle for confirmation of the gospel he preached (cf. especially in this connection 1:2; 3:21; 11:25,26). Hence the OT was not silent on this mystery; it was the medium of revelation concerned with this subject.¹

1. *The Epistle to the Romans*, Eerdmans: Grand Rapids, 1968, pp. 241, 242. Used by permission.

John Murray virtually (erroneously) equates Paul’s gospel and the mystery. That appears, at first sight, to help the system because there are OT Scriptures that speak of Gentile salvation (it is millennial) and they say that was a prediction concerning Gentile salvation now. Thus by virtually equating Paul’s gospel and the mystery, they think that they can find the mystery in the OT predictions of Gentile salvation.²

Note well that John Murray attempts to circumvent the force of “silence” by stating that “by the scriptures of the prophets” is meant the OT prophets. And having done *that*, he boldly contradicts the text and says,

Hence the OT was not silent on this mystery; it was the medium of revelation concerned with this subject.

Such is theology; it can make black white and white black; it can make “silence” be talk.³ If commentators so handle Scripture, of what use is it to begin by discussing ‘literal’ versus ‘spiritual’ interpretation? But there it stands: “as to which silence was kept.” John Murray, in effect, says that silence was not kept about the mystery in the times of the ages.

W. Kelly expressly addressed the matter of the prophets:

. . . Carefully remark that the true word and thought is “prophetic scriptures,” that is, not “the scriptures of the prophets” or OT, but those of the NT, for we are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets. Paul’s writings, for instance, are prophetic scriptures, and in some of these the mystery of Christ and the church is fully made known, not merely touched on as in Romans 12:5.⁴

2. Paul’s gospel and the mystery, though connected, are not the same thing. Additionally, Paul’s gospel has *aspects* that are not the subject of OT prophecy. The reader may obtain the pamphlet, *Paul’s Gospel*, from Present Truth Publishers.

3. Something analogous to treating “silence” this way is *necessary* also in the case of Eph. 3:5. Commenting on this, E. K. Simpson, (*Commentary on the Epistles to the Ephesians and the Colossians*, London: Marshall, Morgan and Scott (1957, p. 72), boldly says: “Hebrew prophecy had not been silent respecting this divine secret (cf. Isa. 56:5).” This shows that he does not understand the mystery. So J. Eadie, *A Commentary on the Greek Text of the Epistle of Paul to the Ephesians*, Baker: Grand Rapids (1979 reprint of 1883 ed.), p. 219:

The general sense of the verse is evident. The apostle does not seem to deny all knowledge of the mystery to the ancient world, but he only compares their knowledge of it, which at best was a species of perplexed *clairvoyance*, with the fuller revelation of its terms and contents given to modern apostles and prophets.

As to “hid in God”, he says, “not concealed from the ages, in the sense of Macknight, but hid from of old.” Thus are the words of God contradicted to sustain a theological system.

4. *Notes on . . . Romans, in loco* . So he says in his critique of the Revised Version in *The Bible Treasury* 13:352. See also New Series 3:31, 4:127 and 6:12; and *The Present Testimony* 10:103.

Another said:

Accordingly there is no article with “prophetic scriptures,” as would be correct if “the prophets” had been meant; whereas the anarthrous form was requisite, if new scriptures were intended, written by those who had prophetic gift, whether by apostles who had that gift also or by such as Mark and Luke, who were prophets inspired to write though not apostles.⁵

A. Marshall’s *Interlinear* has “through writings prophetic.” J. N. Darby and W. Kelly read “by prophetic scriptures.”

What J. Murray’s comments lead to is the idea that *now* the OT prophetic Scriptures are making manifest the mystery about which the OT spoke. What is at the base of such notions is that the mystery is the gospel that Christ died for our sins, and Jew and Gentile may now believe. *That is not the mystery of Christ and the church!*

Is the Mystery Now Made Known by the Fulfillment of the OT Prophecies?

Another amillennialist, W. Hendriksen, wrote:

It was this mystery that had been hidden for long ages past, for though the decision had been made in God’s eternal plan and though even during the old dispensation there had been foreshadowings of the realization of God’s promise of salvation for both Gentile and Jew, the period of fulfillment on any large scale had not been reached until now. But *now*, the new dispensation having arrived, and the gospel being proclaimed far and wide, this mystery was being made manifest, was becoming abundantly clear. It was being manifested in *the fulfillment of prophecy*. Think of Gen. 12:3; 22:18.⁶

These Scripture references, and others similarly cited, will be fulfilled in the millennial reign of Christ.

Note that this quotation shows that his thought concerning the mystery is that there would be salvation for both Jew and Gentile. Well, of course the OT prophesied that fact. But instead of learning from the three texts we are considering, and concluding that salvation prophesied for Jew and Gentile is not the mystery, he rather *defined* the mystery to be salvation for Jew and Gentile, and then has to work on the three texts to force them to conform. And this method of dealing with God’s word is at the heart of covenant theology. Salvation for Jew and Gentile is not the same thing as the union of Jew and

5. *The Bible Treasury*, New Series 4:128.

6. *Exposition of Paul’s Epistle to the Romans*, Baker Book House: Grand Rapids, 1981, v. 2, p. 517.

Gentile in one body formed by the Spirit sent from the glorified Head in heaven (Acts 2:32, 33; 1 Cor. 12:13) and they being seated in the heavenlies, in Christ Jesus (Eph. 2, 3).

Note also that his assertion that the mystery “was being manifested in the fulfilment of prophecy” (1) assumes that the salvation of Jew and Gentile is the mystery, and (2) that the mystery was couched in the language of a coming kingdom for Israel, a kingdom for which Israel would be regathered and have Messiah as king over them. In reality, then, God used descriptions which, literally understood, meant exactly that.

The Jews who heard the OT prophecies had no basis whatsoever than to understand that there was to be a future blessing and kingdom under Messiah’s reign. What were they to understand other than that? And that understanding of the prophets is exactly consistent with the fact that silence had been kept regarding the mystery of Christ and the church, which leaves room for the future accomplishment of the OT prophecies. The problem with this appears to be that that means covenant theology is false.

What Scripture in the OT directed the hearers to understand the prophecies in another way than as speaking of a literal kingdom, wherein the covenants of promise would be made good to them? There is no such Scripture. And certainly his “Think of Gen. 12:3; 22:18” is neither proof that the mystery of Christ and the church are found in the OT, or that the prophecies of the kingdom for Israel (i.e., the new Israel under the new covenant) do not refer to a kingdom for Israel.⁷ That is evident in the quotation from W. Hendriksen in which quotation it is implicit that the Jewish hearers of those prophecies could not know the explanation of covenant theology. The meaning of the prophecies, he says, is being manifested *now*, not then. So God couched the meaning that covenant theology has discerned by the present manifestation in fulfillment of the prophecies, in terms the meaning of which those Jewish hearers could not possibly know. What this amounts to is God telling them words that justified them in a literal understanding (how else could they possibly understand those words?), but He meant something altogether different.

Finally the day arrived when John came preaching that the kingdom of the heavens had drawn near, but is absurd to think that he thought he was announcing a different form of the kingdom than the Jews understood from the prophets -- namely a literal kingdom. And that is how the people (including the godly remnant) understood that preaching, else they would not have regarded John as a prophet. And our Lord at first preached the same kingdom as drawn

7. The reader should note that these errors are part of the system wherein the church is made to be the spiritual Israel.

near, until the rejection of Himself became clear (as marked in Matt. 12), upon which the mystery form of the kingdom was taught by our Lord (Matt. 13). And He never told the disciples that there was not going to be a literal kingdom for Israel in which the covenants of promise would not be made good to them. The disciples still expected it, and rightly so, as recorded in Acts 1, only their time was wrong; for God was going to do a new work involving the mystery of Christ and the church before fulfilling the prophecies and the covenants of promise.

Of course, W. Hendriksen is not alone in making “manifest” mean manifesting something that was in the OT. C. E. B. Cranfield wrote:

. . . a manifestation which is properly understood in its true spiritual significance only in light of its OT foreshadowing and attestation.⁸

This assumes that the word “manifestation” refers to the manifestation of something in the OT. But it was not *there*. Where was it? Scripture explicitly tells us: it was *hid in God* (Eph. 3:9) and now it is manifested. Is that too difficult for theologians, exegetes, and expositors to understand? I doubt it. Then an agenda is at work.

Thomas R. Schreiner wrote:

The mystery fundamentally relates to Jesus Christ (cf. 1 Cor. 2:1, 7; Eph. 1:9; 6:19; Col. 2:2; 4:3) and the gospel in which he is proclaimed . . . the mystery relates to the gospel of Jesus Christ that was previously hidden . . . The “prophetic Scriptures” . . . refers to the OT.⁹

He had stated that mystery

often relates to the inclusion of the Gentiles into the community of the redeemed, for that the Gentiles would be fellow members with the Jews in the people of God was not clearly revealed in the OT (cf. Eph. 3:3-6;

8. *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark 2:812 (1979).

9. *Romans* (Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament), Grand Rapids: Baker, p. 813, 1998.

Douglas Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, p. 939, 1996, said:

This hiddenness, as Paul will make clear in v. 26, does not mean that one could have no knowledge of the contents of the mystery. What it means, rather, is that one could not fully understand it nor -- and this is the special emphases -- experience it.

So there was, after all, no silence kept. Rather, there was knowledge of the contents of the mystery in OT times, and it could be partially understood, but the special emphasis of this passage in Romans is that it could not be experienced in OT times! Covenant theology depends on such treatment of the words of God.

Col. 1:26 27).¹⁰

Much covenant theology is packed into these few sentences. We see the confusion of the mystery of Christ and the church lowered to the gospel (precious as that is in itself). We see that the OT had not been silent about the mystery. The phrase “the community of the redeemed” is a phrase that fits with the notion of a church in all ages (not a distinctive thing now). That phrase, along with the word “covenant,” are what expresses the Scripture-unifying idea in covenant theology. And then there is the statement that “the Gentiles would be fellow members with the Jews in the people of God” -- for covenantism rejects the distinction between the heavenly people of God and the earthly people of God, merging all into one people of God.¹¹ This is implicit in the covenantist idea of the progress of the unfolding of redemption, of which the present is the final unfolding. Thus is the distinctive truth of the mystery of Christ and the church merged into this scheme imposed upon the Scripture. And finally note the words, “was not clearly revealed in the OT,” in direct contradiction of the three Scriptures we are considering. So, “not clearly revealed” means it was revealed, but not clearly.

It is clear that covenantists do not understand the mystery of Christ and the church though they use the same phrases from Scripture. Different meanings are

10. *Ibid.*, p. 812.

11. Thus, the Covenantist, Vern S. Pythress wrote:

Union with Christ is an organic relationship that includes in a tightly interwoven way both salvation (including justification, adoption, and sanctification) and corporate unity. One cannot be saved except in union with Christ, and union with Christ means being part of one people of God.

Concerning the salvation of OT saints, he wrote:

They were saved by the anticipation of these things and by a kind of preliminary “working backward” of their effects -- else there is no just salvation at all in the Old Testament.

Concerning a Millennium, he wrote:

That salvation, whether now or in the Millennium, constitutes Jews and Gentiles as “members” of Christ. They are corporately one as a new humanity. Hence one cannot now contemplate splitting apart the new humanity that is under one head, under Christ. One cannot contemplate a Millennium in which salvation is in union with one man, the last Adam, Jesus Christ, but in which that union is undermined by the distinctiveness of two peoples of God with two inheritances and two destinies, on earth and in heaven (*Understanding Dispensationalists*, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, p. 129, 1987).

These quotations appeared under a heading, “Reasoning from Salvation to Corporate Unity in Christ.” What is distinctive of both the Church and of Israel are thus swamped and everything is equated with salvation. As we shall see, the Covenant of Grace, spanning from Adam’s fall to the consummation, and redemption, are what gives the OT and NT unity for Covenantists. Chapter 3 will touch on this more.

attached to those phrases that makes them conform to covenant theology.

“Dispensationalists Falling Into Covenantism”

Daniel P. Fuller, a professor, and former dean of the faculty at Fuller Theological seminary, in effect disbelieves this Scripture, choosing this way to make it sound as if it was the gospel:

[The] gospel [is] . . . according to the revelation of the mystery hidden for long ages past, but now revealed and made known through prophetic writings by the command of the eternal God, so that all nations might believe and obey him.¹²

Then, of course, he is able to find some OT hints -- and silence had not been kept. Notice the covenantist confusion of the gospel with the mystery of Christ and the church which we have been noting is found in this quotation.

The covenantizing pretribulationist, Darrell Bock, having quoted C. E. B. Cranfield, claims:

What is crucial in this passage is the explicit declaration that the gospel preaching about Jesus Christ and the nations' obedience of faith is tied to what the OT revealed.¹³

“Tied.” Was he at a loss for another word? That sounds like obfuscation. Here, as in C. E. B. Cranfield's case, all is lowered to the gospel. The distinction between the mystery and the gospel, made in this very text itself, is obliterated. Why should covenantizing dispensationalists be regarded as dispensationalists? Merely because they have not yet jettisoned the truth of the pretribulation rapture? As V. Poythress said somewhere, it is an unstable position.

Colossians 1:24-27

Scripture says:

Now, I rejoice in sufferings for you, and I fill up that which is behind of the tribulations of Christ in my flesh, for his body, which is the assembly; of which I became minister, according to the dispensation of God which [is] given me towards you to complete the word of God, the mystery which [has been] hidden from ages and from generations, but has now been made manifest to his saints; to whom God would make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the nations, which is Christ in you the hope of glory

12. *The Unity of the Bible*, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, p. 421, 1991.

13. “Current Messianic Activity and OT Davidic Promise: Dispensationalism, Hermeneutics, and NT Fulfillment,” *Trinity Journal* 15NS (1994), p. 84.

(Col. 1:24-27).

There is something spoken of as “the riches of the glory of this mystery . . . which is Christ in you the hope of glory.” Where is even one OT Scripture that speaks of Christ being in you, the hope of glory? “Christ in you, the hope of glory,” may be “somewhat cryptic” to covenantists:

With reference to Paul's somewhat cryptic description of the “mystery” in Colossians 1:27 as “Christ in you, the hope of glory . . .”¹⁴

Yes, it would be cryptic to you if you look for it in the OT because it is not there -- any aspect of the mystery of Christ and the church is not found in the OT. The predictions of Gentile blessing have the millennium in view, when the new Israel under the new covenant is the head of the nations. That Gentiles are blessed now is not contradictory of the OT, though not prophesied; Gentile blessing is *compatible* with what the OT says. Thus, NT quotations from the OT concerning Gentile blessing are used, not as stating a present fulfilment, but of confirming the consistency of God in blessing Gentiles now -- for God had indeed spoken of blessing Gentiles. The Jew cannot complain about the matter of Gentiles being blessed, for their prophets had predicted Gentile blessing. However, *the present order of Gentile blessing* is not found in the prophets. What is proper to, and distinctive of, the church, is a mystery revealed since the death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ. It was never said in the OT that Christ would be in Jew and/or Gentile. Indeed, the grain of wheat must die and rise from among the dead for Christ to be in anyone (John 12:24). We are in Christ; and Christ is in us. This is not “somewhat cryptic.” Elsewhere we read that Christ dwells in our hearts by faith. In Col. 1:27 it is rather that Christ in us is the hope of glory. The Jewish prophets, when their words are not spiritually alchemized into church blessings, present as a hope to the Jews that Christ would reign over them here on earth, as Israel's glory. He would bring in earthly glory for the nation. Simeon said of the child Jesus that he held in his arms (think of that privilege!):

. . . a light for revelation of [the] Gentiles and [the] glory of thy people Israel (Luke 2:32).

This will be so in the millennium when the distinction between Jew and Gentile is maintained. And the One in Simeon's arms will be the glory of Israel. It is here on earth and it is an earthly order of glory. But Christ in us is the hope of glory above with Him in all that He has acquired as man. We will have heavenly glory with Him, being with Him, like Him, and reigning with Him, heirs of God, and co-heirs with Christ.

Note that “God would make known the glory of this mystery among the nations” (Col. 1:27). The work that God is doing now is chiefly a work among

14. *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith*, Nashville: Nelson, p. 541, sec. Ed., 1998.

the Gentiles. The election of grace among Jews now do participate in the mystery, but it is chiefly and characteristically a work among the Gentiles. In the millennium, the chief and characteristic work of God will be with the new Israel under the new covenant, when they are all saved (Rom. 11:26). Regarding the millennium, Christ is not said to be the glory of the Gentiles, but “a light.” At that time He will be the glory of Israel here on earth. Immense as that is, it does not reach to the height, fulness, and wealth of the heavenly glory concerning which Christ in us is the hope of glory.

This fact that Christ in us is the hope of glory is an immense fact, and living reality, having a great moral bearing on our walk while we await His coming to receive us unto Himself (John 14:1-3). It should be formative of our practical life here. It separates us in practice from the world. It causes us to think of the immensity of His greatness and glory. It occupies us with Himself and His interests. It causes us to think of God’s glory in Christ. Not only will this glory be displayed when all things are headed up in Christ in the millennium (Eph. 1:10), but God and Christ will have glory in the church eternally (Eph. 3:21). This special and eternal glory will be central in the new heavens and the new earth.

The greatness of the Person of the Son was brought before the Colossians in ch. 1. This is the Christ Who is in us. Exhortations are founded on Christ being in us, the hope of glory. In Col. 2:10 we see that not one thing can be added to the believer; and so in Col. 2:16-23, the issue is, why are you trying to add to Christ in you, the hope of glory? We are to seek the things above where the Christ is sitting (Col. 3:1). He is our life:

When the Christ is manifested who [is] our life, then shall ye also be manifested with him in glory (Col. 3:4).

The truth of the mystery of Christ and the church is truth which is formative of true *Christian* walk. This is beyond being saved, though that be necessary. It is the unfolding of the mystery of Christ and the church that completes the Word of God. The thought is not the writing of the last book in the canon of the NT. It refers to revealing God’s glory in Christ in the heavenly sphere. The OT had dealt with the earthly side. This mystery manifests to the saints what completes divine revelation concerning God’s purpose to glorify Himself in Christ. His purpose is to glorify Himself in the earthly sphere and the heavenly sphere. Psa. 8 did not embrace the heavenly sphere of which the mystery speaks. God’s glory will thus be displayed in Christ in both spheres in the millennium (Eph. 1:10). And that the distinction of these two spheres is maintained in the new heavens and the new earth is clearly seen in the fact that the church will subsist eternally as such (Eph. 3:21, with Rev. 21:1-3).

It is indeed helpful to understand that there is no such thing as a church

age.¹⁵ The church is not an age. The assembly, as to its constitution and position in Christ is already outside of ages, which are for the earth and are earthly. The assembly is not an earthly thing at all. It is above ages, though its testimony is here on earth, in responsibility. As to being above ages, being heavenly, and being seated in Christ Jesus in the heavenlies, that position in Christ will never change. That is permanent. And when our Beloved comes, His power will bring our very bodies into the good of this (Phil. 3:21; note, “body of glory”). Thus, in every respect we shall be in a position that transcends the dissolution of the present heavens and earth. Then ages will have ended, and the assembly which is outside of, and above, ages abides unchanged from its already glorified state and passes into the new heavens and the new earth. God’s glory in the assembly in Christ Jesus subsists eternally (Eph. 3:21).

A great distinction between how the mystery of Christ and the church is presented in Colossians as compared to Ephesians is this: in Colossians Christ is in us, we viewed as here waiting for Himself and the glory; in Ephesians we are in Christ, seated above in the heavenlies, in Him. W. Kelly said of Colossians:

Hence we learn, it may be seasonable to remark, that the shape given to the mystery here is not that Christ is exalted in heaven, and that the church, by the Holy Ghost sent down thence, is united to Him the Head there. This is the doctrine of the epistle to the Ephesians. Here we see the other side — Christ in or among you Gentiles, “the hope of glory.” In the epistle to the Colossians, glory is always that which we are waiting for. There is no such thing here as our sitting in heavenly places. It is heavenly glory that is waited for, but only in hope. Christ was now in these Gentiles who believed the hope of a heavenly glory in prospect for them. It is another aspect of the mystery, but as true in its place as what we find in Ephesians; not so high, but in itself precious, and not less differing from the expectation raised by the Old Testament. What we read of there is that, when Christ had come, He forthwith sets up His kingdom, in which the Jews are promised to be His specially favored subjects. They are not indeed to reign with Him: this was by no man and at no time promised to them. But they are to be the people in whose midst the glory of Jehovah will take up its abode. Here the apostle speaks of another system altogether: Christ come, but the glory not yet apparent, but only coming. Meanwhile, instead of the Jews enjoying glory along with Christ in their midst, rejected by the Jews, Christ is in the Gentiles; and they who receive His name are waiting for heavenly glory with Christ. It is a quite different state of things from what could be gathered from the Old Testament. Not a prophet, not even the smallest shred of any prophecy, reveals such a truth. It was an absolutely new truth, in contrast with

15. The present age is the Mosaic age. “The end of the age” in Matthew refers to the end of the Mosaic age. The cross ended the Mosaic system and meanwhile the whole world lies in the wicked one (1 John 5:19). These things have been discussed in my *Elements of Dispensational Truth*, vol. 1.

the ancient and millennial order, yet altogether different from what is found in the Ephesians; nevertheless they both constitute substantive parts of the mystery.

Thus the mystery includes, first, Christ as Head above, we though here being united by the Holy Ghost to Him glorified. Secondly, Christ, meanwhile, is in or among the Gentiles here below. Were He among the Jews, it would be the introduction of the promised earthly glory. But it is not so. The Jews are enemies, and unbelieving; the Gentiles are specially the object of God's present ways. Having Christ among them, heavenly glory is their hope, even to share with Him that glory. This, then, shows Christ, in a certain sense, in the Gentiles here below; as, in the Ephesians, Christ is seen above and we in Him. There Jew or Gentile is all alike, and those who believe the gospel are by the Spirit united to Him as His body. Here the Gentiles in particular have Him in them, the pledge of their participating in His heavenly glory by and by. And as this was so blessed and novel a truth, the apostle states his own earnestness about it -- "whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ."¹⁶

* * * * *

L. B. Radford wrote:

The phrase 'from ages and generations' means not 'hidden from the knowledge of men' but 'hidden since the beginning of history'. The emphasis is not on the withholding of truth from mankind, but on its contemplation in the mind of the Creator, e. g., Eph. 3:9. Cp. Rom. 16:25, 'kept in silence through times eternal'. The silence was not absolute; glimpses of the mystery were given to psalmist and prophet, e.g., in various phases and forms of the Messianic hope, cp. Heb. 1:1, where these partial divine intimations are contrasted with the full revelation given in Christ.¹⁷

Rom 16:25 is evacuated of its meaning by claiming that it refers to silence in eternity, whereas the text really says, "silence has been kept in [the] times of the ages," as well as "hidden from ages and from generations." He equates the mystery with the Messianic hope. Moreover, "hidden" really means 'partially hidden.' "The silence was not absolute"; why? because he tells us so. And why does he say that? Well, it certainly would be the end of covenantism if it was hidden exactly as Scripture states explicitly. Hidden from *ages* means that it was hidden from the time periods between Adam and the formation of the body united to the Head in heaven. Hidden from *generations* means that it was hidden from the peoples that lived in those time periods. That is not difficult to understand -- unless we have a theological system with which the facts and statements of

16. *Lectures Introductory to the Study of the Epistles of Paul the Apostle*, London: Broom, pp. 302-304, 1869.

17. *The Epistle to the Colossians and the Epistle to Philemon* . . . , London: Methuen, p. 203 (1931).

Scripture conflict. Heb. 1:1 has nothing to do with the point at issue, nor does the Messianic hope.

The learned J. B. Lightfoot claimed that:

But the one special 'mystery' which absorbs St. Paul's thoughts in the Epistles to the Colossians and Ephesians is the free admission of the Gentiles on equal terms to the privileges of the covenant.¹⁸

He has set aside the words of God and has imported his notions about covenant theology into this matter. Now, observe that by doing this, he is then able to acknowledge what is really the force of these Scriptures that the mystery was, *as he erroneously defined it*, completely unknown:

Not only was this mystery unknown in remote periods of antiquity, but even in recent generations. It came upon the world as a surprise. The moment of its revelation was the moment of its fulfillment.¹⁹

One way or another, covenant theology must be maintained in the face of the Scriptures which plainly contradict it.

C. F. D. Moule's view is:

. . . the incarnation summed up that divine secret which had long been hidden but was now divulged . . . The μ . {mystery} is 'that Christ is among you (Gentiles)' -- or (better still) the μ . is *both* Christ himself *and* the fact that he is among them.²⁰

Really, is any comment needed on the notion that the mystery is the incarnation?

Robert W. Wall wrote:

For the believers at Colosse, whose crisis stems from their overly Jewish understanding of Christian faith, the central issues, and therefore the substance of *the glorious riches of this mystery* (1:27), are God's election of Gentiles for salvation and Christ's work that makes God's election effective. Therefore, most commentators agree that Paul uses *mystery* as a metaphor for God's plan of salvation for the Gentiles, which was unknown apart from divine revelation. Paul's proclamation of the gospel merely articulates the "mystery" that God has revealed to him, presumably on the Damascus road.²¹

The covenant pretribulationist, R. L. Saucy, joins in with the more general view of those who espouse covenant theology by saying:

18. *Saint Paul's Epistle to the Colossians and to Philemon* . . . , Grand Rapids: Zondervan, p. 168, reprint of the 1879 ed., n. d.

19. *Ibid.*

20. *The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon* , Cambridge University Press, p. 82, 1962.

21. *Colossians and Philemon* (IVP New Testament Commentary Series), Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, p. 91, 1993.

A mystery may be hidden in the sense that its truth has not been realized.²²

He retrogradingly speaks like those who hold covenant theology while pretending to “progressive dispensationalism.” Compare his comment with that of the amillennialist commentator, W. Hendriksen:

The mystery of which the apostle is thinking here in Col. 1:26, 27 had been “hidden”; that is, for ages and generations (lit. “since the ages and the generations”) it had not been historically realized.²³

The NT mysteries were hidden in the sense that they were *not spoken about*.

Ed.

(To be continued, if the Lord will)

F. W. Grant Affirmed *Divine-Human Personality in Christ*

F. W. Grant wrote to FER:

Your very illustration of how He was *not* Man in the sense that He was God is that He was *personally* God, but man in condition.

You had said this also before, and the question has been thereupon put, “Why is He *not personally* man?” and you reply, “He is personally the Son. You cannot have two personalities in one” (p. 132).

This makes it plain also what you mean by “He could not change His person.” We all believe that in the sense in which, no doubt, J.N.D. said it. When the Word became flesh, He was still the Word; the eternal Son in manhood was still the Son . . .

The glorious “Man” that Scripture presents to us has disappeared. **Divine-human personality** you must own is not in your mind; and what this means every Christian heart should be able to say.¹

Yes, your Christian heart should be able to say it is fundamentally evil teaching.²

Ed.

22. In C. A. Blaising and D. L. Bock, eds., *Dispensationalism, Israel and the Church*, p. 144.

23. *New Testament Commentary, Philipians, Colossians and Philemon*, Grand Rapids: Baker, in Coalescence, p. 88, 1990.

1. *Open Letter to Mr. F. E. Raven*, of Sept. 28, 1897. Boldfaced emphasis added.

2. Extract from my, *An Affirmation of: The Divine-Human Personality of the Person of Christ, His Human “I” and Human Will, With a Note on His Impeccability*.

Scripture Guidance for Our Feet

Vengeance is mine, and recompense, For the time when their foot shall slip . . . (Deut. 32:35).

* * * * *

Truly God is good to Israel, to such as are of a pure heart.

But as for me, my feet were almost gone, my steps had well nigh slipped.

For I was envious at the arrogant, seeing the prosperity of the wicked . . .

When I sought to know this, it was a grievous task in mine eyes;

Until I went into the sanctuaries of God; [then] understood I their end.

Truly thou settest them in slippery places, thou castest them down in ruins (Psa. 73).

* * * * *

When I said, My foot slippeth, thy loving-kindness, O Jehovah, held me up (Psa. 93:18).

* * * * *

My foot standeth in an even place; in the congregation will I bless Jehovah (Psa. 26:12).

* * * * *

My son, let them not depart from thine eyes; keep sound wisdom and discretion: so shall they be life unto thy soul and grace upon thy neck. Then shalt thou walk in the way securely, and thy foot shall not stumble . . . (Prov. 3:21-23).

* * * * *

Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be well-ordered. Turn not to the right hand nor to the left; remove thy foot from evil (Prov. 4:26, 27).

* * * * *

The highway of the upright is to depart from evil: he that taketh heed to his way keepeth his soul (Prov. 16:17).

* * * * *

Let everyone who names the name of [the] Lord withdraw from iniquity (2 Tim. 2:19).

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