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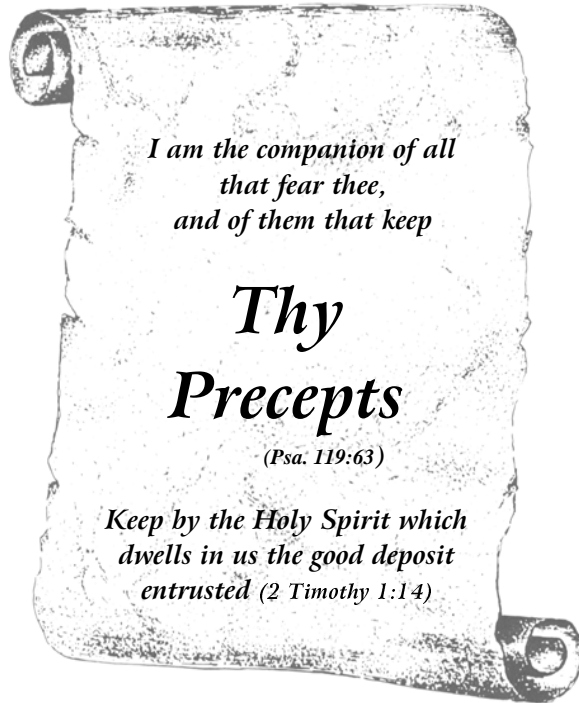
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*The Mystery of Christ and The Church
and The Covenants*

Chapter 3

The Relationship of the Old to the New Testament

(Continued)

Covenant Theology is, in Effect, Based on Denying that the Covenants Are for Paul's Kinsmen According to the Flesh, Who Are Israelites

The Covenants Are for Ethnic Jews

Before proceeding we should note that Rom. 9-11 forms a section within the book of Romans. The presentation of the gospel, with the “no difference” teaching regarding the lostness of all men, the leveling of Jew and Gentile both as to judgment and grace, raises the question concerning the ancient promises to, and special privileges for, Israel. This is considered in Rom. 9-11. What has been promised to Israel, and the call of Israel, is affirmed as fixed. Thus in Rom. 11:25-29 says:

. . . blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the nations be come in; and so all Israel shall be saved. According as it is written, The deliverer shall come out of Zion; he shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob. And this is the covenant from me to them, when I shall have taken away their sins. As regards the glad tidings, [they are] enemies on your account; but as regards election, beloved on account of the fathers. For the gifts and the calling of God [are] not subject to repentance.

“Not subject to repentance” means irrevocable. The covenant in v. 27 refers to the New Covenant (Jer. 31:31-34; Heb. 8). Jehovah will bring them into the bond of that covenant (Ezek. 20:37). It is one of the “covenants of promise”

(Eph. 2:12) that will be sovereignly instated. The covenants belong to Paul's kinsmen, according to the flesh, who are Israelites (Rom. 9:4, 5). “Israel” used some 70 times in the NT always means exactly what the word says: Israel -- not the Church.

We shall now observe that Covenant theology is a denial of the distinctive, *earthly work* that God is going to do for His glory in Christ, in the earthly sphere -- which necessarily goes hand-in-hand with the denial of the distinctive *heavenly work* God is presently doing. Covenantists do this in the face of the second great pointer that we have directly from God, which pointer is quite in keeping with the secrecy of the mystery, namely, the apostle Paul's statement in Rom. 9:3-5 that the covenants belong to “my brethren, my kinsmen, according to the flesh, who are Israelites”:

. . . my brethren, my kinsmen, according to flesh; who are Israelites; whose is the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the law-giving, and the services, and the promises; whose [are] the fathers; and of whom, as according to flesh, [is] the Christ, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen (Rom. 9:3-5).¹

He did not use the expression ‘my brethren, Israel.’ Since Covenant Theology teaches that the church is ‘the spiritual Israel,’ had the Scripture stated that the covenants belong to ‘my brethren, Israel,’ Covenantists would have seized on that to say that the NT church, Paul's spiritual brethren -- as “the spiritual Israel” -- has claim to the covenants.² But Scripture has precluded that claim

1. It should be observed that there are seven things stated in Rom. 9:4, 5 as belonging to Paul's kinsmen, according to the flesh; but there is an eighth matter distinguished from the seven:

. . . and of whom, as according to flesh, [is] the Christ, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen.

Christ does not belong to Israel as the seven things named do, though, as to flesh, He came from Paul's kinsmen, according to flesh. He is “of whom,” not, “whose [is].” This distinction made in the text is illustrative of the wonderful accuracies, the precision, that characterizes the Scripture of truth. May the Spirit teach us to discern!

2. A Covenantist, W. Hendriksen wrote:

. . . the word seems to point to the various affirmations and re-affirmations of God's covenant with his people and/or with their leaders. Even though there was only one covenant of grace, in essence identical in both dispensations, it was revealed more and more fully in the course of time. See, for example . . .

Godfearing people in Israel rejoiced in this covenant. David did (2 Sam. 23:5); so did Mary, the mother of Jesus (Luke 1:54, 55); and so did Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist (Luke 1:72, 73) (*New Testament Commentary, Romans*, Grand Rapids: Baker, 2:312, 1981).

These three persons knew nothing of a Covenant of Grace established consequent upon the fall of
(continued...)

by stating that the covenants belong to *Paul's kinsmen according to the flesh*. The covenants belong to ethnic Jews.

Note that we are told "whose is," not 'whose was.' The things specified continued to belong to Paul's kinsmen according to the flesh at the time he wrote this, and thus continue to belong to them now. They have not been cancelled because of the formation of the church; nor are they absorbed by, or applied to, the church.

At present there are ethnic Jews who are true Jews. In Rom. 2:28, 29 we learn what a true Jew is:

For he is not a Jew who [is] one outwardly, neither that circumcision which is outward in flesh; but he [is] a Jew [who is so] inwardly; and circumcision, of the heart, in spirit, not in letter; whose praise [is] not of men, but of God.

Such presently are also "the Israel of God" in Gal. 6:16. In keeping with this we read:

for not all [are] Israel which [are] of Israel; nor because they are seed of Abraham [are] all children (Rom. 9:6, 7).

Such are presently part of the company of those seated in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus (Eph. 2:6). All Jews under Messiah's future reign will be in the condition described in Rom. 2:28, 29. This is consonant with our Lord's description of Nathaniel:

Behold [one] truly an Israelite, in whom there is no guile (John 1:47).

Under messiah's future reign all ethnic Jews will be under the new covenant, and all Israel will be saved (Rom. 11:26). They shall all be righteous (Isa. 60:21). At that time Israel will be ethnic Jews and all will be spiritual Jews at the same time, "truly an Israelite."

At the present time all true Christians, whether ethnically Jews or Gentiles answer to the spiritual meaning of circumcision:

See to dogs, see to evil workmen, see to the concision. For we are the circumcision, who worship God, and boast in Christ Jesus, and do not trust in flesh (Phil. 3:2, 3).

"Dogs" points to apostates, "evil workmen" points to professed Christians

2. (...continued)

Adam. 2 Sam. 23:5 refers to what we call the Davidic Covenant; Luke 1:55 the Abrahamic covenant; and Luke 1:72, 73 also the Abrahamic covenant. It is the hermeneutic of spiritual alchemy that sees the Covenant of Grace in these statements, because Covenantists say that these covenants are administrations of the Covenant of Grace. Godfearing people in Israel rejoiced in the "covenants of promise," not on the Covenantists' mythical Covenant of Grace, concerning which they knew nothing.

doing evil work, and "the concision" is a disparaging reference to circumcision as a mutilation, referring to Jews, because:

For [in Christ Jesus] neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision; but new creation. And as many as shall walk by this rule, peace upon them and mercy, and upon the Israel of God (Gal. 6:15, 16).

Circumcision in the flesh is presently not anything! It is a mutilation in the flesh when done for some supposed spiritual reason. Note also that there are two groupings in this verse, spite of Covenantist efforts to make one group by equating the church with the Israel of God.

The Seven Things Belonging to Paul's Kinsmen According to Flesh, Who Are Israelites

There are writers who say that the words "who are Israelites" is the first of the privileges Paul speaks of. That is a mistake, for there are seven things (a number signifying something complete) summing up the sovereignly-bestowed blessings for Israel, and the eighth one (signifying a new beginning -- as resurrection, for example) is Christ, Who is *of* Israel -- thus not a distinctive and peculiar blessing for Israel alone. In Christ, God acts sovereignly beyond Israel and her distinctive blessings. And this is shown to be so in this chapter; yet, Israel's distinctive blessings are certain to be established in God's good time. The gifts and calling of God are without repentance (Rom. 11:29). Thus the apostle does not set aside Israel's privileges, but shows that God can sovereignly bless as He will, consistently with the setting aside of disobedient Israel now, and with the establishment of Israel in their privileges in due time.

THE ADOPTION

This does not refer to the adoption, or placement as sons, as now, which is of individuals. And this adoption (sonship) of Christians, their position of sonship, is sealed by the Spirit of adoption, i.e., of sonship (Gal. 4:6; Rom. 8:14-16). Our place before the Father is the same measure as Christ's, because we are one with Him, taken into favor in the Beloved (Eph. 2:6). Thus we are placed into such intimacy with the Father that, having "the Spirit of his Son" in our hearts, we cry "Abba Father." Thus did the Lord Jesus, as recorded in Mark 14:36. This is an unspeakable blessing we have in the heavenlies, in Christ Jesus. Such intimacy is not the portion of Israel.

Israel's adoption is a *national* adoption, involving supremacy among the nations. Ex. 4:22, 23 and Deut. 7:6, and 32:6, 18, point to this as Jer. 3:19 and Hos. 11:1 confirm it. See also Jer. 31:9 and Amos 3:2, etc. Israel's national adoption is earthly. The Deliverer will come to Zion and turn away ungodliness

from Jacob (Rom. 11:26). Then will He reign before His ancients in glory (Isa. 24:23).

THE GLORY

This refers to the Shekinah, the cloud of glory that first appeared to stand between Israel and the pursuing Egyptians (Ex. 14). Jehovah looked out of the cloud upon the Egyptians, a very ominous thing indeed for the enemy. It settled on the Tabernacle (Ex. 40:34), even between the cherubim on the mercy seat (Lev. 16:2) upon the Ark of the Covenant. It abode also on Solomon's temple (2 Chron. 5:13, 14; 7:1, 2); but later, upon Judah's continued, rebellious way, Ezekiel saw the cloud remove (Ezek. 10:18; 11:23); but it will again return (Ezek. 43).

It is indicated in Scripture that the millennial temple (Ezek. 40-48) is morally the same house that Solomon built, and morally the same house rebuilt in Haggai's day; i.e., in God's view there is a continuity such that Haggai spoke of these structures as if it is one house:

The latter glory of this house shall be greater than the former, saith Jehovah of hosts; and in this place will I give peace (Hag. 2:9).

"The latter glory" refers to the millennial glory, glory being greater than that of Solomon's day, for what he built was a foreshadow of the millennial temple to come, when He Who is the antitype of David and Solomon combined, reigns before his ancients in glory:

And it shall come to pass in that day, [that] Jehovah will punish the host of the high ones on high, and the kings of the earth upon the earth. And they shall be brought together, as a snare of thorns for the feet, and shall be shut up in prison, and for many days shall be visited. And the moon shall be confounded, and the sun ashamed; for Jehovah of hosts shall reign on mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before his ancients in glory (Isa. 24:21-23).

This is the time of the fulfilment of Isa. 60:7:

. . . I will beautify the house of my magnificence.

Haggai had also prophesied: "and in this place will I give peace." That place is Jerusalem, the place that God had chosen, to dwell there.

And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, standing as a banner of the peoples; the nations shall seek it; and his resting place shall be glory (Isa. 11:10).

It may be that Isa. 4:5, 6 refers to the Shekinah -- present once again in the city of Jehovah's choice, consequent upon the awful application of the "the spirit of judgment, and the spirit of burning" (Isa. 4:4).

THE COVENANTS

The covenants belong to Israel, not to the Gentiles, and not to the Church. As

always, many opinions have been expressed concerning what covenants are included in this. While the Mosaic covenant was for the nation, it is not, as a covenant, to be made good to Israel in the future day of her glory. A covenant of promise was given to Abraham. The Mosaic covenant, given 430 years later, was part of the test of the fallen first man to see if he was recoverable. Could he gain what was sovereignly given by *promise* to Abraham by *working* for it (i.e., by *meriting* it)? Thus, the Mosaic covenant was provisional, something brought in meanwhile in order to bring the state into relief -- as was Shiloh (where the tabernacle was at first) before Jerusalem, the city of Jehovah's choice was marked out by fire falling upon the burnt-offering in the threshing floor of Ornan (1 Chron. 21:26 - 22:1).

The phrase in Eph. 2:12, "covenants of promise," would be the covenants spoken of here. The Mosaic covenant differed in that it was conditional, while the Abrahamic, the Davidic, the new covenant (Jer. 31:31), and also the covenant of the priesthood for faithful Phinehas (Num. 25:12, 13), all await fulfilment by God's sovereign action in Christ, for His glory, in the earthly sphere.

THE GIVING OF THE LAW

That is not the equivalent of the Mosaic Covenant, which has been permanently terminated. However, the law is not dead:

Now we know that the law [is] good if anyone use it lawfully . . . (1 Tim. 1:9).

Rather than the law being dead, there is a lawful use of the law.³ The Christian is, of course, dead to the law (Rom. 7:4) as well as to sin (Rom. 6:8), as he is also dead to the world (Gal. 6:14). See Gal. 2:20. He is not under the law as the rule of life but under the rule of the new creation (Gal. 6:15, 16); and we see that both Gentile believers and Jewish believers (i.e., the Israel of God) are to walk by the same rule. The new creation was begun by Christ in resurrection, thus on the other side of death. The Christian has died with Christ and has been raised up together with Christ (Eph. 2:5, 6). This is consonant with having died with him.

Concerning the New Covenant with Judah and Israel (reunited -- Ezek. 37), we read:

Giving my laws into their mind, I will write them upon their hearts (Heb. 8:10).

3. The law was not nailed to the cross and then someday it will come down from the cross in order to be on the hearts of the Israelites under the New Covenant. Col. 2:14 does not mean that the law was nailed to the cross, but rather the obligation to it. Not the law, but the hand-writing. In a footnote to JND's translation of this he has:

Hand-writing, obligation to which a man is subject by his signature.

In the millennium, Israel will observe the Sabbath, the seventh day of the week.

With the hermeneutic of spiritual alchemy, covenantists have transmuted the Sabbath (the seventh day of the week) into the first day of the week, the Lord's day. After all, if, as Covenantists say, the Christian is under the law as the rule of life, he must be under ten commandments, not nine of them. One of them concerns keeping the Sabbath. Therefore the Sabbath must be changed from the seventh day of the week to the first. It is necessary to the system. And, if you (erroneously) say the law is written in the heart of a Christian, Sabbath keeping is written in his heart. And, since it is clear to Christians (other than to "Messianic Jews") that the Lord's day, the first day of the week, is the Christian day (see Acts 20:7, etc.), and if the law is written on the heart of a Christian, and he must keep the Sabbath, then the Sabbath must be the first day of the week. All untrue: the law is *not* the Christian's rule of life; nor does it make the Christian "lawless" to say so. But we cannot develop this here.

THE SERVICE

This refers to the ritual that God gave to Israel (see Heb. 9:1). It was given through Moses, and David added to it, as did Solomon subsequently, regarding the temple. The millennial temple will have a service (Ezek. 40-48) of course, since "the service" belongs to Israel. The nations will be required to bring honor to where Israel has the service (Zech. 14:16-21).

The service had its place, where the earthly worship is carried on, where the tabernacle was. God looked forward to pointing out the place He would choose where the center for Israel's service would be (Deut. 16)). Shiloh was provisional, something to bring out the state of the people before He indicated His choice of Jerusalem as the place. He also gave a king according to the people's wishes (Saul) before He appointed David as ruler of His people, and it was through David that the place of the service was pointed out by fire falling from heaven to consume the burnt-offering (1 Chron. 21:18 - 22:1). The choice of God is celebrated in Psa. 78:67-72. It is a Gentile conceit that God shall not yet choose Jerusalem. The prophesied regathering of Israel was not the return from the Babylonian captivity. First of all, Babylon is not the place from which God will regather them for "the service" which is theirs:

And it shall come to pass in that day, [that] the Lord shall set his hand a second time to acquire the remnant of his people which shall be left, from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea. And he shall lift up a banner to the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth (Isa. 1:11-12).

Not only does this not refer to the regathering from Babylon, it speaks of a gathering "the second time." Moreover, after the regathering the first time,

from Babylon, the prophet Zechariah prophesied:

Cry further, saying, thus saith Jehovah of hosts: My cities shall yet overflow with prosperity, and Jehovah shall yet comfort Zion, and shall yet choose Jerusalem (Zech. 2:17).

Having returned to the city of God's choice the first time, the returned remnant is told that Jehovah "shall yet choose Jerusalem." Certainly so; for there was to be a "second time" of regathering a remnant. The first was but a faint foreshadow of what yet awaits Israel when the Man Whose name is The Branch (Sprout) builds the temple of Jehovah and will be priest upon His throne (Zech. 6:12, 13). It is then that He shall be King, and exercise the Melchizedec, the millennial, priesthood. Then shall the sons of Zadok minister in the priests' office (xxx) in fulfilment of the covenant to Phinehas (Num. 26:12, 13), for the Zadokites are the progeny of Phinehas the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest. The line of Eli, progeny of Ithamar (Eliazar's brother), the son of Aaron, had somehow obtained a chief place instead of Phinehas' line. Abiathar, who was thrust from the priesthood by Solomon, was the progeny of Eli, to whom Jehovah swore that He would cut off His house. ⁴ And Solomon, type of the great King of the house of David that will yet come, established Zadok in the chief place. This is all typical of what is yet coming, which will transpire in due time to establish Israel in "the service." It has been said that the wheels of God's government grind slowly, but they grind surely! Think of Jehovah above the cherubim with the terrible wheels beside those cherubim, the executioners of God's government, seen in Ezek. 1.

The Melchizedec priesthood is founded on the once-for-all finished work of Christ. It is His Melchizedec priesthood that imparts its character to the sacrifices in the millennium. It's being offered as based on the once-for-all finished work shows that the sacrifices will be memorial in character of the work done by Christ.

However, this is earthly, and Christian worship is in the sanctuary above where Christ, after a heavenly order of priesthood, is Minister there (Heb. 8:2) and leads the singing (Heb. 2); for that is where we have boldness to enter (Heb. 10:19-22).

THE PROMISES

The promises in Christ Jesus, for us, are not what are referenced in Rom. 9:4. Israel knew nothing about the mystery of Christ and the Church, for silence had

4. The priests at Nob, who were killed by Saul through Doeg the Edomite, were also of the house of Eli. The wickedness of man is used to serve the governmental ways of God. He makes the wrath of man to praise Him, and the remainder He restrains (Psa. 76:10).

been kept about that. This is above and beyond the new covenant too, of course. There are many promises for Israel throughout the prophetic writings of Israel's prophets that are not expressly named in a particular covenant. Jehovah will make all good in Christ, for His glory in the earthly sphere.

THE FATHERS

Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, belong to Paul's kinsmen according to flesh. As to Christians being the seed of Abraham because of their oneness with the great Seed of Abraham, that will be considered when we consider the Abrahamic Covenant, if the Lord will.

THESE SEVEN THINGS ARE FOR THE PRESENT EARTH AND WILL END

None of these things will continue in the eternal state, though the church, as such, will (Eph. 3:21). Jer. 31:35-37 shows that as long as the ordinance of sun and moon, etc., continue, so long will Israel be a nation. They will not be a distinct nation among men in the eternal state. Israel's promises that are to be in force "forever" means while the present heavens and earth continue. A careful searching into the whole matter leads to this conclusion, though some texts might be taken otherwise, if the entire corpus of relevant material is not brought to bear. W. Kelly rightly takes Isa. 66:22 to speak of the millennium from the Jewish point of view, not in the same way as 2 Pet. 3.

Christ, of course, continues eternally in manhood, indissolubly taken into His Person. We have already noted that it is not said, as in the other seven things, that He belongs to Paul's kinsmen according to flesh. He is "of" them.

The Present, Partial Blindness of Israel

Presently, "blindness in part is happened to Israel" (Rom. 11:25), and some natural branches (Jews) have been broken out of the olive tree (Rom. 11:17). Is this "in part," and "some," permanent? No --

blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the nations be come in (Rom. 11:25).

"The fulness of the nations" refers to the completion of God's present work among the Gentiles -- and with an "election of grace" (Rom. 11:5) from Israel sprinkled among them (i.e., "the Israel of God" of Gal. 6:16).

The olive tree is figurative of *the line of privilege* starting from Abraham. That is not a figure used for the body of Christ as is clear from the fact that branches can be broken out of it. No member of the body of Christ can be severed from Him. That professors of Christianity may not actually belong to Christ is quite clearly the fact. As Israel acted perversely regarding privilege (and they had such (Rom. 3:1-3)), so the Gentile profession has not continued

faithfully and is threatened with (likewise) not being spared (Rom. 11:21), "cut away" (Rom. 11:22). And such will happen subsequent to the rapture of the saints. Then God will do a work with a Jewish remnant, preparatory to the fulfilment of the covenants of promise when Christ reigns and all Israel shall be saved, the rebels having all been purged (Ezek. 20:34-38), and Jehovah then having brought them "into the bond of the covenant" (Ezek. 20:37) -- the new covenant, no doubt.

And *they* too, if they abide not in unbelief, shall be grafted in; for God is able again to graft them in (Rom. 11:23).

This sovereign action of God to implement His sovereignly-given promises will bring the nation, thus all saved, into what Rom. 11:12 calls "their fulness" and likens this to resurrection:

. . . what [their] reception but life from among [the] dead (Rom. 11:15).

Thus will Jehovah seal to His earthly people, in fulfilment, the things spoken of in Rom. 9:3-5. At this future time, Paul's kinsmen according to the flesh will be saved.

The saved of the Gentiles during the millennium are not looked at as in the olive tree; if they were in the olive tree, that would swamp the distinctiveness that Israel will have at that time. But Israel has "the adoption." This refers to a national adoption, a nationally distinct place, a place of supremacy with respect to the nations.

The Death of Christ Has Provided for Israel's Future, National Blessings

Indeed, the death of Christ made provision for these blessing for the nation of Israel, for the Lord Jesus died for the nation; not only for that nation, of course, but He did die for the nation (John 11:51, 52):

. . . but, {Caiaphas} being high priest that year, prophesied that Jesus was going to die for the nation; and not for the nation only, but that he should gather together into one the children of God that were scattered abroad.

Thus, that work accomplished on the cross to glorify God has provided for the nation's blessings.

In Rom. 9:3-5 we also are told that the promises belong to Paul's kinsmen according to the flesh. Another Scripture that speaks of a two-fold purpose of the cross is Rom. 15:8, 9:

For I say that Jesus Christ became a minister of [the] circumcision for [the] truth of God, to confirm the promises of the fathers; and that the nations should glorify God for mercy . . .

The apostle the went on to cite some OT texts that show that in connection with His people, Israel, nations would receive blessing. But the promises belong to Paul's kinsmen according to the flesh. Eph. 2:12 declares that Gentiles were strangers to the covenants of promise. The OT covenants of promise are for Israel and do not include Gentiles, whatever blessing God may give Gentiles. Covenant Theology includes Gentiles in the New Covenant. Gentiles are not Paul's kinsmen according to the flesh. Covenant Theology's hermeneutic of spiritual alchemy transmutes believing Gentiles into being spiritual Jews, into being "the Israel of God," and makes of the church a "spiritual Israel."

Such texts as Paul quoted from the OT that speak of Gentile blessing are not fulfilled now. They are brought forward to show that God had blessing for Gentiles in mind, and the blessing going out to Gentiles now, while not the fulfillment of such OT Scriptures, are *not incompatible* with God's intention to bless Gentiles. The blessing to Gentiles now is a blessing ahead of the time of the millennial blessing for Gentiles. The present Gentile blessing ahead of that time is noted in an instructive expression in Eph. 1:12, 13:

. . . we . . . who have pre-trusted in the Christ . . .

The word "pre-trust" refers to trusting before the millennial blessing is brought about.

It is not purposed here to pursue additional Scriptures along these lines, but to indicate that Scripture is consonant with the fact that the mystery of Christ and the church is a secret disclosed subsequent to the cross, and involves a work of God before the promised kingdom for Israel is brought in sovereignly by Christ's power. *That*, meanwhile, awaits while a heavenly people, with a heavenly calling (Heb. 3:1), and seated in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus (Eph. 2:6), is formed.

God's Purpose to Glorify Himself in Christ in Two Spheres, the Heavenly and the Earthly, Is What Gives Scripture Its Unity

The Scofieldian Testing System Is Not What Gives Scripture Its Unity

The Scofieldian Dispensational system erroneously carries testing forward, past the cross, to a "church age" and the subsequent kingdom period. In addition, C. I. Scofield interlocked a "Dispensation of Innocence" into his testing

scheme. This appears to me to be an attempt to find "continuity" between the OT and the NT in the concept of testing as a uniting factor -- as Covenant Theology finds "continuity" in the Covenant of Grace and redemption. The Scofieldian idea of testing in innocency, as part of the whole system of testing, does Covenant Theology one better in that it places testing in Innocency in a continuum of testing, thus having testing from Eden to the consummation of all; for Covenant Theology has a break in man's history -- in that Adam had a Covenant of Works, and having fallen, God introduced another covenant. Scofieldian Dispensationalism has no such break because of making Innocence to be a dispensation among the dispensations *in all of which* the testing of man takes place. But it is an artificial construct -- confusing ages with dispensations, though it has more truth in it than Covenantism. Note that innocency in Eden had its own distinctive character, preparatory to what was to come in God's dealings with the first man. Making Innocency a test along with the testings of fallen man to see if he was recoverable is to mix two things of entirely different character. The trial of man that we speak of is the trial of fallen man, standing in Adamic responsibility, standing "in the flesh," having "sin in the flesh," to see if he was recoverable. None of this was true of Adam in innocency. Moreover, Adam did not become the head of a race while innocent. Under trial, Adam is viewed as the head of a fallen race. In the fall, his state changed from innocency to fallen, with "sin in the flesh" then in him and in those of his race.

It should be noted that the trial of the first man, as fallen, closed with the cross, the final test being the rejection of the revelation of the Father in the Son (John 15:24). The end of the testing of fallen man to see if he was recoverable, does not mean that men are not now responsible to God. The creature is always responsible to obey.

The cross marked the great transition point in the ways of God with man. Consequent upon the termination of the trial of the first man, there is this new declaration from God:

God . . . now enjoins men that they shall all everywhere repent, because he has set a day in which he is going to judge the habitable earth in righteousness by [the] man whom he has appointed, giving proof [of it] to all [in] having raised him from among the dead (Acts 17:30, 31).

Place emphasis on the word "now." This is announced because the first man has been displaced by the Second Man. To say that the trial of man is still proceeding is to give the first man a continued place before God when in fact he has been set aside -- his total ruin, his lostness, being preached consequent upon the death and resurrection of the Second Man. Thus there is a **NOW**, since the cross, in contrast to before the cross.

The Second Man Established in His Place*. . . then that which is spiritual (1 Cor. 14:46)**. . . the second man, out of heaven (1 Cor. 15:47)***NOW**

The Second Man has displaced the first man.

In view of the end of the testing
of the first man at the cross, God declares:

Wrath of God revealed from heaven (Rom. 1:18)

All under sin (Rom. 3:9; Gal. 3:22)

Every mouth stopped (Rom. 3:20)

All the world under judgment (Rom. 3:20)

All have sinned and come short of the glory of God (Rom. 3:23)

For God has shut up together all in unbelief, in order that he might show
mercy to all (Rom. 11:32)

Man is the slave of sin (Rom. 6:20)

Thoughts of the unbelieving are blinded (2 Cor. 4:4)

All are dead (2 Cor. 5:14; Eph. 2:1; John 5:24, 25; 1 John 3:14)

Now is the judgment of this world (John 12:31)

In due time Christ died for the ungodly (Rom. 5:6)

Christ died for all (1 Tim. 2:6)

Christ gave Himself a ransom for all (1 Tim. 2:6)

Christ is the propitiation for the world (1 John 2:2)

The whole world lies in the wicked One (1 John 5:19)

Satan declared to be the God of this age (2 Cor. 4:4)

NOW: Rom. 3:21; 2 Tim. 1:9-10; Eph. 3:10; Heb. 9:26

God "NOW enjoins that they shall
all everywhere repent" (Acts 17:30)***"Upon whom the ends of the ages are come" (1 Cor. 10:11)****(ages of testing)****What Is the True Relationship of
the Pre-cross and the Post-cross Epochs?***

There are two great epochs in the history of the world. They are separated by the cross, resurrection, and glorification of Christ. What these two epochs are really about is the history of *the first man, the man of responsibility*, under trial, to see if he was recoverable; and that being settled (the answer is *no*, and he is declared "*lost*"), and the subsequent actings of *the Second Man, the Man of God's purpose*. The relationship of the Scriptures having to do with these two epochs is not found in redemption, or salvation-history, or covenants, or even a system of dispensations of testing of man, including Innocence, a "Church age," and Kingdom, so as to have seven of them. God has acted with only one of the two men at a time as having a place before Him. The Second Man has displaced the first man. As to the first man, consequent upon the cross the sentence of "lost" has been passed upon him and Romans makes his state and position before God quite clear. In Romans, men are looked at as alive in sins, running from God as fast as they can, and the saved are looked as having died with Christ, out of that situation, and being alive unto God. In Ephesians the sinner is looked at as spiritually dead towards God and in need of sovereign, spiritual quickening (Eph. 2:1,2).

Interestingly, Eden had two special trees. There was the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, of which man ate. Subsequently, God took up the first man as under the responsibility of having the knowledge of good and evil (to show he was not recoverable from the fall). We can discern from this that the tree of the knowledge of good and evil is the tree of responsibility; while the tree of life speaks of Christ. The two trees of Eden foreshadow the relationship of the two epochs we are considering, and the characteristic difference between them.

Concerning the two men, J. N. Darby has written on this matter.

See especially: "The Testimony of God; or The Trial of man, The Grace and the Government of God," *Collected Writings* 22:335-364.

See "The Rejected Man, Genesis 3," 12:305-315.

"The Accepted Man, 2 Corinthians 3," 12:328-339.

"The First Man and the Second, Genesis 3," 19:111-116. Also, 7:270; 9:321; 23:134-151; 32:236-238.

"Man's Responsibility and God's Promises, Galatians 3," 12:227-238. Also 17:307-313.

"The Responsible Man and the Man of Purpose, John 17," 34:389-392. Also 23:347; 26:15, 113-119; 28:36.

Regarding man in the flesh being irrecoverable, see:

Collected Writings 10:275, 290-291, 351; 21:170; 32:234-236.

For the moral history of man, see:

Collected Writings 1:205; 4:359; 7:241, 269; 10:273-275; 12:175; 16:262-264; 18:252-254; 21:273; 22:337-345; 23:137-139, 179, 315; 26:22; 32:232-236; 34:6.

For the headships of Adam and Christ, see:

Collected Writings 1:211-213; 5:84; 7:290; 8:29, 104; 9:292; 10:79, 108, 286, 358; 13:160, 208-210; 15:259-260; 16:351; 21:222-225; 26:296; 27:187; 31:265.

For the first and last Adams, see:

Collected Writings 5:88-89; 10:162; 14:28; 16:3; 26:295-297; 34:2.

The last Adam substituted for the first Adam, see,

Collected Writings 7:242-245, 270, 290; 10:143-145; 26:256.

In addition, the reader may also consult the *Synopsis*, the three volumes of *Letters, Notes and Comments* and also *Notes and Jottings*.

The answer to Dr. Robertson's chapter title, What Structures Scripture -- Covenants or Dispensations? ⁵ is: **neither**. The dispensational truth espoused herein has overlap with the Scofieldian Dispensationalism that Dr. Robertson comments upon, but what is espoused herein has considerable differences. It is a mistake to equate Scofieldian Dispensationalism with what was brought out through J. N. Darby. Important differences have been noted in my *Elements of Dispensational Truth*, vol. 1. Here, I would mention this.

1. The OT is the history of the first man, as fallen, (see 1 Cor. 15:45-49) to show that he was not recoverable. After the fall, and up to the flood, man was left to himself (an age often erroneously referred to as "the dispensation of conscience"). ⁶ Subsequent to the flood, government was introduced.

5. *The Christ of the Covenants*, ch. 11.

6. Innocence and conscience are not dispensations. God did not dispense innocence or conscience. He created man innocent, meaning ignorant of good and evil, but by self-will Adam fell and acquired the knowledge of good and evil, but was held captive to what Rom. 8:2 describes as "the law of sin" in our members. God, of course, acted sovereignly in implanting a new nature in certain persons, but consequent on the fall of Adam, man was left to himself. In the fall, man had acquired a conscience with respect to good and evil. Until the flood, man was left to himself. It was not a *dispensation* of conscience, but it was a distinguishable age from the fall to the flood.

(continued...)

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God afterwards introduced many more things and man failed in all of them. It should be noted that it is God's purpose that Christ will take up all things wherein the first man has failed and discharge them perfectly to God's glory. This is part of the history of the two Adams (who are noted in 1 Cor. 15:45-48).

None of this trial of the first man was for the purpose of informing Him Who is omniscient of anything, but it demonstrate the condition and lostness of the first man under all circumstances and all favors of God. The testing of the (fallen) first man *ended with the cross*. The rejection of the presentation of the Father seen in the Son is given thus:

. . . but now they have both seen and hated both me and my Father (John 15:24; see also John 14:9).

This is the worst act of the first man (fallen man) and formed the crowning act of defiance and contempt of God. Think of it: the first Adam cast out the last Adam; the first man cast out the Second Man! ⁷ Since the end of the trial of the first man to see if he was recoverable, i.e., since the cross, God is acting in Christ, in resurrection; first to gather the heavenly people, ⁸ and then subsequently the earthly people, Israel.

2. Consequent upon the cross, the whole world is declared to lie in the wicked one (1 John 5:19) and Satan has been pronounced to be the god of this age (2 Cor. 4:4). The cross did not change the age. The Mosaic age continued on and meanwhile the mystery of Christ and the church has been unfolded. There is no "church age"; and no testing of man now, for that was completed with the cross. The church is above, and outside, ages. The saints are seated above, in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus (Eph. 2:6), though their testimony is here below while waiting for Christ to come and receive them unto Himself. But that is the *position* in Christ that we have, and we are so bound up with Himself that:

6. (...continued)

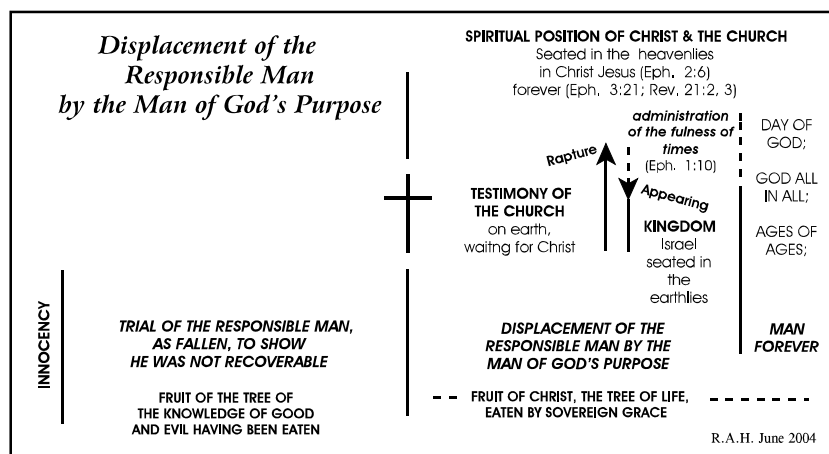
Dispensations (administrations) and ages are not synonymous, though a particular age may be characterized by a particular administration -- the Kingdom, for example (see the chart below). Following the flood God dispensed government as the rule for man. This is the first dispensation; or, better, administration.

7. When the Son entered the world as man, He was *in His Person* the Second Man and the last Adam. It is in resurrection that He takes *the place* proper to the Second Man and last Adam. God is not now testing the (fallen) first man. The cross ended his standing before God and he has been displaced by the Second Man.

8. Much discussion has taken place whether there is one people of God (Covenantism) or two peoples of God, i.e, a heavenly and an earthly (Dispensationalism). It is hoped to address this at some point.

. . . and such as the heavenly [one], such also the heavenly [ones] (1 Cor. 15:48).

We shall be taken above, physically (John 14:1-3), and in “the end of the age” (i.e., the end of the present, Mosaic age) a godly Jewish remnant will be formed preparatory to the introduction of the Kingdom, when the new covenant for Israel will be put into force, and the whole earth subdued under Messiah’s reign before His ancients, in glory. Thus, the present, Mosaic age will give way to “the age to come,” the events following the rapture preparatory to the establishment of the kingdom in power taking place during “the end of the age”;



i.e., the end of the Mosaic age.

So, we have very briefly touched on two spheres, the heavenly and the earthly. The church is prominent in one sphere and Israel in the other.

God’s purpose is to glorify Himself. There is but that one purpose of God. He has purposed to glorify Himself in Christ. There is but that one purpose of God. He has purposed to glorify Himself in Christ, in two spheres; the heavenly and the earthly spheres. There is but that one purpose of God. And thus we read:

. . . having made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he purposed in himself for [the] administration of the fulness of times; to head up all things in the Christ, the things in the heavens and the things upon the earth (Eph. 1:9, 10).

The “administration of the fulness of times” is not the eternal state -- it is

something in the times on earth. The trial of the fallen, first man, to show that he was not recoverable -- ending with the rejection of the Father and the Son -- was used of God for providing the work of Christ on the cross, to establish the righteous moral basis for all His actings (past, present, and future). Consequent upon the rejection of Christ, God placed in suspension His dealings with the earthly side of His purpose, that a heavenly company might be formed. When that heavenly work is finished, then His work in preparation for the kingdom of Christ will commence and He will establish His king upon His holy hill of Zion (Psa. 2).

What gives unity to the Scriptures is God’s purpose to glorify Himself in Christ in two spheres, the heavenly and the earthly.

During the millennium there will be a distinct, earthly people -- Israel under the new covenant. There will be saved Gentiles in the early kingdom also, yet Israel has a distinctive place and relationship to God.

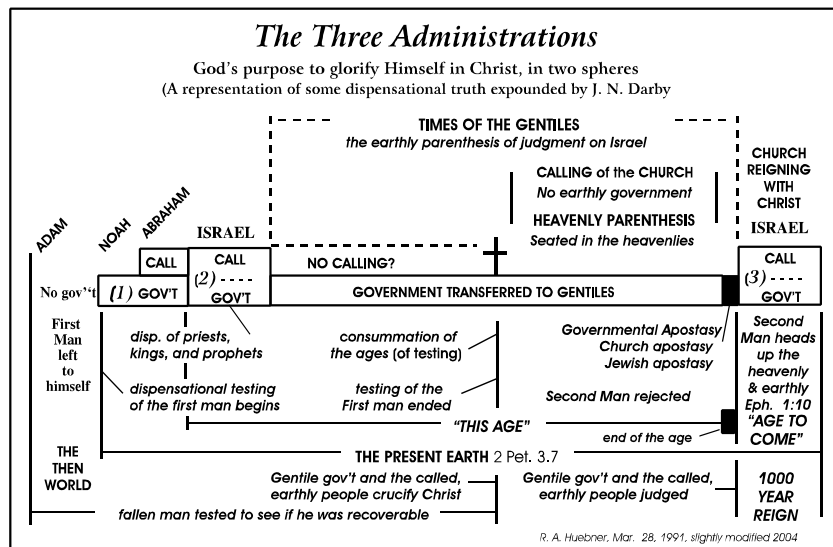
During the millennium there will be a distinct heavenly people, the saints united to Christ as members of His body (as indeed they are right now). There will be others in heaven also, but the church has a distinctive place and relationship. We might note here that the church will have a distinctive place for eternity (Eph. 3:21; cp. Rev. 21:3).⁹

Below is a chart that summarizes the teachings of J. N. Darby on these matters, as I understand him; and that is the understanding undergirding this book. The reader will notice that there is no dispensation of innocence, or of conscience. God did not dispense those things. Man was created upright; and by disobedience to God acquired a conscience. There is also often a confusion of *dispensations* with *ages*. But even innocence was not an age. The testing of man that we have been considering did not begin with innocence. It began with the fall, to see if fallen man was recoverable. Moreover, that ended with the cross, and thus, consequently, man was *formally* pronounced *lost* in Romans, etc.

What is on the chart below is the position from which Covenant Theology as a system, as well as errors in the prevalent Dispensational Theology, is viewed.

9. Those in heaven need undergo no change when the dissolution of the present heavens and earth takes place and the new heavens and earth are brought into existence. Such would not be the case with those on earth -- a change would have to take place. Nor will Israel have a distinct place eternally. The use of *everlasting* in promises to Israel in the OT will be seen, on careful inquiry of *all* the texts speaking of what will be *forever* as concerning man and Israel, mean as long as the present sun and moon continue -- not beyond that -- not into the new heavens and new earth.

It should be understood that it was not until the truth of the mystery of Christ and the church was unfolded that God’s purpose to glorify Himself in Christ, in two spheres, the heavenly and the earthly, could be made known. Silence had been kept regarding this mystery; it was not made known to ages and generations, previous to the cross.



The Key to the OT

The key to understanding the OT is that it is the history of the (fallen) first man to show that he was not recoverable, with a view to setting him aside and introducing the second Man and last Adam, through Whom God’s purpose to glorify Himself is carried out. The crowning act of the first man’s implacable hostility to, and enmity against, God was the rejection of the revelation of the Father in the Son (John 15:23, 24), nailing the Son to the cross. This terminated the testing of the (fallen) first man to show he was not recoverable. Of course, during that time God acted in sovereign grace in the case of individuals, making saints of them. Moreover during that time God also brought in certain things (for example such things as government, priesthood, judges, kingship, etc.) wherein man failed, but Christ will take up all wherein man has failed and make those things good, redounding to God’s glory. It is not so, as Covenantists claim, that “Dispensationalism” holds to two purposes of God -- because of

holding that there is a heavenly people and an earthly people. The unity of the Scriptures is seen in God’s one purpose, to glorify Himself in Christ in the heavenly and earthly sphere (Eph. 1:9, 10) -- Christ in resurrection, as the second Man and last Adam, having displaced the first man, the first (fallen) Adam. That there is a heavenly people and an earthly people involved in this display of God’s glory in Christ is not a valid basis to say that this means God has two separate purposes and that this amounts to undermining the unity of Scripture. Such a conclusion is merely in the eye of the Covenantist beholder. It is his erroneous system which makes it appear that way to him.

Redemption is the way God changes sinners into saints who participate in the display of His glory in Christ, in the two spheres. But redemption is not what unifies Scripture.

(To be continued, if the Lord will)

Ed.

Self-Judgment

I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth Thee, wherefore I abhor myself (Job 42:5, 6).

For if we would judge ourselves we should not be judged (1 Cor. 11:31).

It is a common saying that “self-preservation is the first law of nature,” and, without doubt, nature does prompt self to preserve itself in every condition and circumstance. *Naturally* man cares for self before any other object, and whether it be in connection with his life, his possessions, his ease, or his character, self has the first place in his thoughts and affections. Even the law of God fully recognizes this, for (addressing man as it does in his unregenerate state, 1 Tim. 1:4, 10) it says, “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as *thyself*.” Greater love than this God’s law does not exact from man to his fellow.

Now, as self is a selfish and a jealous being, justification is its first impulse when accusation or conviction is brought against it. *Naturally*, if it can avoid it, self will never condemn, but will always justify, self; and thus self-judgment is a work not of nature, nor of willingness, but of compulsion and constraint.

Self-judgment, however, lies at the very basis of Christianity in the individual soul, and it is the inseparable condition of a walk in communion with God.

I think we may say that self-judgment is an effect of the conscience of a man (sinner or saint) being brought into the presence of a higher standard of righteousness than it has hitherto apprehended; for although self-judgment is a spontaneous act of the conscience of man -- as distinguished from his being

judged by another -- yet self cannot judge self apart from a standard, and that standard or measure must be outside self, and to be of any value to the soul in the way of comparison, it must also be altogether above it. True self-judgment is therefore always in the presence of God, and of His revelation or word, for here alone a *perfect* and *unchanging* standard is to be found. No judgment of self by any lower standard can avail either to arouse the conscience or to raise the condition of a soul.

Indeed we may say that self-examination or self-judgment by any lower than a divine standard, must always partake of, and end in, self-justification. Thus, for instance, if the uneasy conscience or dissatisfied soul commences a comparison of its present with a past condition, whatever may be the discovery as to advancement, or declension, it cannot profit or raise the soul above its *own* either present or past experience. So we find with Job's case, his remembrance of what he had been in the past, gave him no power in the present (chs. 29, 30, etc.). He was measuring himself by himself, and though dissatisfied enough with his present, yet he boasted in his past condition; and was proved after all to be "righteous in his own eyes" (Job 32:1). But no sooner does he apprehend the righteousness and the glory of God than self is judged and abhorred.

Again, the examination of self by comparison with others can only bring the same imperfect results; for though on the one hand self in me, may in a degree be rebuked, and judged in some respects by the higher tone and character of life in another, yet on the other hand I see failure in them, and then there is the tendency to say in the heart, "I am not so bad after all. Though he exceeds me in this, I excel him in that, and our trials and temptations are not the same"; and so self, whether in me or my brother, is excused and justified. Paul sums them all up in 2 Cor. 10:12, saying of those who "measure themselves by themselves," and "compare themselves among themselves," that they "are not wise." This, however, is the tendency of the natural heart, and of a human religion. Human rather than divine excellence is set up as the standard, and so in Romanism, "Saints," so called, are the examples set before the soul as in them may be found a righteousness attainable by human nature, and infirmities offering an excuse for the failures of the flesh.

But how different and how perfect is the work of self-judgment when produced by a divine and unchanging standard, that is, by the conscience of man, a sinner, being brought into the presence of God, the Holy God. Gen. 3, Ex. 20, Isa. 6, Luke 5, are well-known instances of what is wrought when God is seen in His holiness, and self is judged in its sinfulness before Him. "I was afraid"; "Let not God speak with us"; "Woe is me"; "Depart from me," are the varied utterances, telling the same tale, that conscience had been brought into the presence of a righteousness which it had not before apprehended. And in the case of a sinner unreconciled to God, or of *unjudged flesh* in any, whether sinner or

saint, the sense of this righteousness is insupportable, and the conscience seeks to escape from its presence. And this work still goes on when the souls and consciences of men are brought into contact with the righteousness of God revealed in the gospel of Christ (Rom. 1:17). A sinner is proved to be a sinner by this very gospel, gracious and blessed as the message is (2 Cor. 5:14; 1 Tim. 1:15): and if on the one hand the grace of God, when learned in the cross of Christ, brings peace and salvation to the broken and convicted heart, on the other hand it is the unwavering righteousness of God's judgment of sin in the person of His Son, which breaks and convicts the heart, and shuts it up to this *one*, this *only*, way of salvation.

But it is self-judgment in the believer that we rather desire to speak of and to press upon the consciences of our readers. We have said that it is an inseparable condition from a walk in communion with God, and this is the question which is so important for the soul of every Christian.

God has brought His people to HIMSELF. It is not merely salvation from death and judgment which they obtain by the Lord Jesus Christ, but they are brought "TO GOD" (1 Pet. 3:18). This has ever been God's purpose in redemption, that man might so have fellowship with Him, and walk with Him. He brought Israel to Himself (Ex. 19:4); but they refused Him. In that nation it was tried, and proved that unregenerate man, however favored, could not have fellowship with God. The mighty signs and wonders by which His presence with them and favor towards them were evidenced, never touched their hearts, nor gained their affections. No mere exhibition of the grace or of the power of God can alter man, or give him power *in himself*. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh." Man, to have fellowship and communion with God, "must be born again" (John 3); and, "through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus," God has shown how His purpose is now fulfilled. In the death of Christ we learn how the believer's sin and sins are judged, forgiven, and put away (Rom. 8:3; 1 Pet. 2:24; Eph. 1:7; Heb. 9:26); the "old man crucified with Him" (Rom. 6:6). In His resurrection is declared the way in which He becomes the quickening Spirit and thus imparts to the believer a new life, a divine nature, in the power of which he can and does have fellowship with God the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ, the Lord (see John 5:26; 1 Cor. 15:45; Eph. 1:19, 20, and 2:5, 6; 1 John 1:3).

Now it is this new standing, this nearness to God, which gives the believer power for self-judgment. The believer now knows God, is no longer in ignorance of Him or of His will. Not only by outward revelation through the word, but by the inward witness of the spirit has He

shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ 2 Cor. 4:6).

We have the mind of Christ (1 Cor. 2:16).

In Christ, the believer is *always* in the presence and power of divine righteousness, for “we are made the righteousness of God in Him” (2 Cor. 5:21).

For self-judgment the believer has therefore a perfect rule and measure, *and the ability to use it*. He has only to ask himself,

How has God judged, how has He examined, by what has He tested my nature, my thoughts, my words, my deeds?

Do I know peace with God, and have I tasted that the Lord is gracious, even He who bore my sins in His own body on the tree? If so, do I desire to know communion with Him?

Then let me ever in honesty and sincerity bring myself, and all that is within me, to the light of His presence, and by the word of His grace test it, and judge it, even as He has done already. God knows me through and through, and He has given me ability to know myself through and through. Deceitful and desperately wicked as my heart is, yet He has searched it, and I can search it too, and may and should detect every motive and thought, and sift them and judge in their true character in His sight. What will bear His eye, and the judgment of His word, I may allow; and whatever will not, let me condemn it that I may be of one mind with Him out of whose presence the soul can have no true rest -- the heart no joy.

True self-judgment then is the judgments of myself as God has judged and still judges me: Christ as the revelation of God, in His love -- His righteousness and His glory, is the rule and touch-stone for my conscience; the word and the Spirit the means and power for applying Him thus.

Faith in, and the practical application of, the word of God to the soul is what we need. The word which tells us of the infinite grace of our God, tells us also of His holiness, And the same revelation which gives the believer to know his completeness, his standing in Christ, beseeches him to walk worthy of his calling.

Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereunto according to thy word (Psa. 119:9):

clean through the word (John 15:3):

the washing of water by the word (Eph. 5:20):

also Heb. 4:12, 13, and 2 Tim. 3:16, 17, show us the fulness and value of the word of God as a lamp unto our feet, a light unto our path, and the searcher of our hearts.

Now we must again repeat that without self-judgment there can be *no* communion with God. Faith may have believed the gospel, and a soul may know forgiveness of sins and peace with God through the precious blood of Christ; but his fellowship and communion with God depend upon his judgment of self, and confession of sin. It is one thing to be a believer and a child of God; it is another

thing to walk in the light of His presence, in the *sense* of relationship, and of unhindered communion. We may often hear Christians, when spoken to in admonition about some inconsistency in their course, reply that they are “happy in the Lord,” thus implying that the thing rebuked does not hinder communion. But what such really mean is, that they know their sins are forgiven, and do not doubt that they are saved. This, however, is not communion -- this is not the happiness, the joy in God which He desires for His saints. It is the common portion of God’s children to know forgiveness of sins, indeed no one can call God, Father, who knows it not; but communion, fellowship, confidence, gladness, joy in His presence, are something more, and these cannot be attained or enjoyed apart from self-judgment.

Can two walk together, except they be agreed? (Amos 3:3).

Can parent and child go on happily together if there be controversy between them? The nearer the relationship and the greater the love which exists between *two*, the more sensitive will their hearts be to any difference of judgment or mind. And how infinitely true is this of us in our dealings with God our Father.

His divine power *hath* given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness (2 Pet. 1:3);

and His desire is that we “may stand perfect and complete in *all* His will” (Col. 4:12); and it is in His presence, in Whom is no “darkness at all,” that it is our privilege, as it is also in our power, to judge and bring into light the secret and dark corners of our hearts. And what growth would there be in our souls, what power and what testimony in our lives, if as the light of God shone in we opened up more willingly these dark hidden things. *He* knows that they are there, and we know many of them ourselves, but alas! we often close our hearts, desiring to keep within us, or around us, things which will not bear His judgment.

Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth (Rom. 14:22).

Happy indeed; and one may add, that none other is truly happy.

It is blessed to realize that, for Christians, self-judgment is not a *legal* exercise, but an evidence of that liberty which belongs to them as children of God. There should be no sense of bondage for the quickened soul, in having to detect and subdue things which make against its apprehension and enjoyment of the love and presence of its Savior and God; and on the other hand how Wonderful is the grace of God who has thus given to His people the power of meeting and overcoming by self-judgment all the infirmities, temptations, and conflicts of nature and flesh, which unjudged must separate their souls from Him, but when judged prove the intense reality of the things so freely given to them of God, and the abounding grace and power of Him with whom they have to do. For we can truly say that our very weakness, and the infirmities of our nature

when dealt with in self-judgment, so far from hindering communion, cause the grace of God to be more precious to the soul, and the things which seem to be most against us, prove to be for us, giving us, as they do, experiences of God which we should otherwise be ignorant of; for weakness, infirmity, and temptation in themselves are not sin in the believer, though they be evidence of sin in the flesh. It is only as they are allowed, excused, or justified that they defile the soul, and destroy communion.

1 Cor. 11:28 teaches us how inseparably self-judgment and communion are linked in connection with the table of the Lord. It is there the communion of saints in Christ is openly witnessed, and so each one is to approach in the spirit of self-judgment, lest by the presence of one with a defiled conscience he eats judgment to himself, and hinders communion in the assembly.

Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat.

For our God is a holy God, and the Lord shall judge his people.

Sin must be dealt with, if not by ourselves then by Him; but He has said,

If we would judge ourselves, we should *not* be judged,

and this is the way He has chosen for us, and that we should choose for ourselves.

It may be said that all have not equal discernment even of their own hearts, and that if so we must not judge one another in this matter. This is quite true, but it is not about judging one another, but about judging ourselves that we have been speaking. Every quickened soul can and must judge itself in some measure: what, however, all must own is that the measure is usually low and insufficient. In divine exercises, as in all other things, "practice makes perfect." It is "*by reason of use*," that our consciences become "exercised to discern both good and evil" (Heb. 5:14). That "all seek their own" (Phil. 2:21) is too true of Christians now-a-days, but the perfect Exemplar remains the same, unchanged and unchangeable, for the soul that desires to know the secret of communion with God. Christ, who "pleased not Himself" (Rom. 15:3), could say,

I do always those things that please Him (John 8:29).

With Him, self -- precious and perfect as He was -- was always denied, and His own will disallowed, and thus "his judgment was just."

The Remembrancer, vol. 12.

What is, and How Did Man Acquire Conscience?

Conscience is a great difficulty with infidels. It is practically the weak point in their armor. Protect themselves with reasonings as they may, yet they cannot shield their conscience.

It would be, doubtless, a convenient thing for modern infidelity, if it could show that conscience -- instead of being a witness to evil present, and good lost -- is a part of the system of human development; but the history of the conscience, from an evolutionist point of view, remains yet to be written, and we may safely assert, that the evolutionist will find such "history" difficult writing.

The beasts which perish possess consciousness of various kinds in common with man, but the beasts which perish possess not that which makes mortals quake. Man alone, of the creatures upon this earth, has a conscience. However, as some beasts possess a power through which they acquire the knowledge that some of their actions will receive the reward of their master's favor, and others punishment, from his hand, and because some beasts can be instructed in obedience by their masters, there are not wanting some men to assert that, consequently, a moral link exists between such consciousness in the beast and the conscience of a man!

By the aid of a stick a cow can be educated into refusing to pluck the green leaves over the fence which her tongue longs after. The memory of the beating she has more than once received for interfering with her master's wishes, teaches her to forego her inclinations. But memory is not conscience. A parrot soon learns to fear the word "stick," learns to associate the sound of the word with a beating, and so will leave off screaming when "stick" is said. The parrot is unquestionably wiser than the cow, but the intelligence of the creature is not conscience. Yet we are invited to accept this kind of consciousness as a link in the chain of evolution, the end of which in ourselves is conscience.

It is remarkable how infidelity degrades man as a creature, while puffing up his pride. Yet, while asserting that the human race is but the outcome of former shapes, things, and being -- that man is but a link in the long chain of unknowable beginning -- that man is but a brute developed, a creature evolved out of atoms and apes, the infidel pauses, and inquires, "How did man become possessed of a conscience?"

Conscience is; it cannot be shelved. I am, and my conscience exists in me. And to him who is conscious of his sinful being, it is a terrible reality. Besides doing daily battle within the breasts of men, against their very wills, conscience spoils the pleasures of sin, renders the prosperous wicked man miserable, scares the sceptic, ruins the fine theories of no future, and forces men, against their

judgment and their feelings, to confess their crimes, and to yield themselves to justice and to death.

We do not deny that man may harden himself, till, despite his conscience, he becomes like the beasts, and shuns evil only because of its consequences, or, worse, till his conscience, seared as with a hot iron, is so dulled to every righteous influence, that his fellow-men drive him from their midst as too brutish for their society.

How came man by this inward force, this mighty power within his breast, called conscience? or, first, what is conscience?

Clearly it is not the will, for conscience frequently pushes its way in opposition to the will. Neither is it reason, for while a man's reason will demonstrate to him that a given course of action will work him injury, yet his conscience will impel him forward to do the right thing, even to the wronging of himself. It is not a conclusion arrived at in the mind upon weighing over the right and wrong of a question. Conscience is the moral sense of right and wrong which is innate to man. It is as much a part of his present being as his reason or his will. We may describe conscience as the eye of man's moral being, or liken it to a voice within his breast commanding him concerning right and wrong.

Conscience is not a faculty in man, enabling him to know abstractedly what is right and wrong, but, given the law of right and wrong, conscience appeals to man according to the precepts of the law he knows. Conscience needs instructing; it does not instruct; and according as the conscience is faithfully instructed, so will its utterances be more or less just. In proportion as this eye is tutored will be the truthfulness of its perceptions.

Men say, we will act according to the dictates of our consciences. But conscience is no standard of right. The conscience of a heathen does not address him as that of a man knowing the letter of God's Word. The conscience of a Christian, instructed in the spirit of his Father's will, speaks very differently from that of him who knows merely the letter of the Scriptures. And among true Christians there is a vast difference in fineness and sensibility of conscience. Conscience is very like a window, which lets in much or little light, if clean or dirty. Some labor to keep the window clean, others are slovenly, and their whole body is not full of light. Some Christians exercise themselves to keep the window clean, others are exercised because it is dirty.

Now, as the measure of man's light increases, so does man's responsibility. Having heard what is right, we are bound to obey, and conscience will speak upon the question. The heathen have the book of nature before their eyes.

The invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead (Rom. 1:20).

For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves; which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing or else excusing one another (Rom. 2:14, 15).

The nominal Christian has heard of the character of God, he has heard of God's holiness and righteousness, his conscience bears witness, and condemns him. God has revealed a standard in His Word, and man's conscience tells him how utterly evil he is. Where the Word of God has been heard, we cannot dissociate God from conscience. Our moral instinct, our sense of right and wrong, bear witness to the unseen God; within us there is that which knows together with God.

How came man by this voice within him? Where all was right, the voice warning of wrong was silent. It could not testify to right if no wrong existed. If man were not a sinner, he would not fear the holy God. God made man upright, and set him in a scene of good, where evil was not, and in those days man had not learned it. Had, then, man before the fall a conscience?

We do not say that he had not a conscience in the sense that he was not perfect. Conscience in itself is a good thing, but it was got in a bad way. Before the fall, man's conscience was like the wings of the insect within the chrysalis, for man had not then broken out into that condition when he should be as gods. Innocence is not perfection, any more than ignorance is maturity. The lack of knowledge of evil is a lovely thing, and thus to us is childhood's simplicity so sweet; but vastly different is the state of innocence from that

new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness (Eph. 4:24).

In the creation, as at first, man lacked the knowledge of evil, and his state was beautiful, and he was happy. At present man has lost that simplicity; he is mature. He knows evil; he is acquainted with the contrast between right and wrong; but he is a fallen creature, he loves the evil, and cannot do the good. When we say fallen, we mean fallen from God, and from that condition in which God set him. Man gained knowledge by his fall.

The LORD God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil (Gen. 3:22).

The knowledge is unquestionable, but, together with the knowledge, there is a nature contrary to God, which loves iniquity. What kind of development shall this be called?

To the Christian it is said,

That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of

your mind; and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.

Not innocence regained, nor a return to the first state, but righteousness and true holiness. For man has acquired the knowledge of good and evil, never to lose that knowledge, but in Christ he is no longer under the power of evil {Rom. 6}. And in the future the believer will possess the knowledge of good and evil, yet without a desire after the evil, and rejoicing in the good. That will be perfection. Even in this scene of sin, and having the flesh in him, the man in Christ is shown the path of perfect bliss below.

How came man by his conscience? By disobedience. He stole his knowledge, and thus his eyes were opened. Disobedience was the key wherewith the door into the world was unlocked. Paradise was not the world, but the garden of earth; but when man's eyes were opened to the fatal knowledge of evil, he feared and fled from God; and so the world began, and so it develops. Man's knowledge condemned him, and condemns him still. The one step over the boundary-line set him where the darkness reigns.

Adam, made upright by God, and never having an idea of evil till he disobeyed, not acquainted as are we with sin from childhood, must have had a conscience of exceeding sensitiveness. Man now is used to evil, is well versed in sin, he learns it alas! from his childhood. It comes naturally to him without education, for he is born in sin, and shapen in iniquity. It is as he is instructed in right, and taught of God, that he becomes sensitive to wrong. There is a vast moral difference between those first hours in the world, when conscience awoke in man, and these last days, when it is a subject for infidel analysis.

But there is one thing respecting the sensitive and refined conscience which is self-evident -- conscience is not strength. If it be a light within, showing to man the right path, it is a light to feet which are paralyzed -- "How to perform . . . I find not." Conscience makes men "cowards," and miserable. To be sure, a man may pride himself upon a clear conscience, and we do not deny that many men not "in Christ" possess consciences so high-class and refined, that they put many Christians to shame. They would not do willfully an evil thing for any consideration. ¹ But this must not be mistaken for new life in Christ.

Surely, if Adam, as he was just after his fall, could see the world as it now is, he would be astonished at its low order of conscience; and it is astonishing that even infidels can really believe the doctrine of the evolution of conscience, and credit the theory that man's conscience is today nearer perfection than it was six thousand years ago.

Now when the Spirit of God works within a man, He begins with the

1. {Unbelief of God's Word, when presented, is wilful disbelief}.

conscience. True, some are apparently moved through their emotions, others through their minds; but man is gained for God through the conscience. ² In little children the affections do usually seem to be first reached, but in them the knowledge of good and evil is comparatively slight, and it is invariably the case with the child, that with the growth in grace there is increased sensitiveness as to the evil of sin. If a man's emotions or mind only be reached, there is no solid foundation within him. The deeper the conscience-work, the firmer will the building stand. Man's departure from God was by disobedience, his first hidings from God were because of the fears of his conscience; and God begins with man where man left Him. Man's way of return to God is by obeying the gospel, ³ and his first laying bare of himself is the cry wrought in him by the pangs of his conscience -- "I have sinned."

It is a horrible deceit of infidelity, which bids us believe that the cry, "I have sinned," is my development as a creature! It is the responsible creature now coming to his senses, awaking to the sense of what he has done in the sight of God. Quite true, I ought to be good, and to love God and to hate sin, but alas! I have sinned.

Now that kind of gospel preaching which lets the conscience alone, or only deals softly with it, will produce only unreal or weakly converts. There is no going on for an hour with God unless the conscience be right with Him. And this is very true of the Christian, as of the unconverted. The latter may become a nominal Christian, and be apparently all that is required, but until the Spirit of God applies the living and powerful word to the conscience, and lays all bare, a man is no nearer to God than Adam was when he was hiding from God. And with the Christian; unless his conscience be right before God, he cannot have communion with God. He has life in Christ, but so long as his conscience is not right with God, he is like a man asleep, or a ship a-shore.

Conscience is the sense of right and wrong, and for those who have heard of God, this sense in relation to God. Christian consciousness is the sensibility to right and wrong. As the sense of the thing itself increases within us, so does our sensibility to it grow. Some heathens do not possess any consciousness that it is wrong to steal -- they try not to be found out, but a monkey will learn to hide what he purloins. Now hiding the treasure lest it should be taken away, or lest punishment should ensue, is totally different from the moral consciousness that to steal is an evil thing. The Lord Jesus tells us that to look and long is like doing the very sin itself, and it is written of the effect produced by the law upon the quickened soul:

2. {This is demonstrated in the case of the Lord's dealing with the woman at the well (John 4).}

3. {God *enjoins* men to repent (Acts 17:30, 31); and the gospel is to be *obeyed* (2 Thess. 1:8).}

I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet.

As the believer grows in grace, and in the knowledge of the Lord, he becomes more acute in his consciousness. He mourns over the sins of the soul. It is not punishment that he fears, but he grieves That he has done wrong against his God. It was this acute consciousness which made the Apostle exercise himself day and night in keeping a clear conscience before God and man. With too many there is such sloth of spirit -- resulting from so little communion -- that there is remarkably little exercise in keeping the conscience clear. The blood of Christ has purged our consciences. We know good and evil, but do not fear God, for we know that the blood of His Son has satisfied the righteousness of God. We do not ever fear a man who has nothing against us, and we do not fear God since He is entirely for us. He gave His Son for us, who shed His blood for us. Our consciences, instructed by the Spirit of God concerning the death of Christ, know together with God, that God has not one thing whatever against us.

Such clearness of conscience in the presence of our holy and gracious God surely leads to increased consciousness of every kind of evil thing. The window of the Christian's soul is unshuttered: he wishes the light to shine in, and his earnest desire is to keep every speck and spot from off the glass of that window; therein doth he exercise himself.

H. F. W.

Extracts from "Heterodoxy Ancient and Modern on the Personality of the Lord Jesus Christ," by J. Hennessy, James Carter: London, 1910

As did others, J. Hennessy denounced the teaching that Christ had no human personality as *heterodoxy*. That indicates fundamentally evil teaching. The denial of human personality in the man Christ Jesus means that there was no consciousness of "I" in His soul -- which, in reality, entails that there was no human soul in Christ. There are persons who (inconsistently, and evilly) affirm that the man Christ Jesus had a human will, while denying consciousness of "I" in His soul. Recall from a previous issue of *Thy Precepts* a comment by W. Kelly:

Consciousness of "I" is in the soul, and on its real existence hangs personal identity . . . ¹

The denial that the Lord Jesus had consciousness of "I," as man, in His soul,

1. *The Bible Treasury* 19:18.

is a denial of His personal identity as a man. That is a **fundamentally evil teaching**. It is a denial that He was (*is*, actually) a divine Person and a human person -- not two separate persons (Nestorianism) but a divine-human person, the God-man. Following is a number of extracts from J. Hennessy's paper.

The evidence of a perfect human personality was present in His Person, day and night, asleep and awake, during their {the disciples'} association with Him (p. 3).

Human personality was essential to a human life in Him (p. 7).

There could not be the *union* of God and man in Christ, unless He was a human person as well as a divine person. The denial of the union is the denial of human personality in Christ (p. 9).

If Christ be not a human *Person* His death was not that of our *substitute*, for we require a personal substitute to bear the judgment for us. "Condition" is not a person . . . (p. 11).

{The denial that Christ was a human person means} that Christ's prayers to God were not those of a *human person*, if He only had an impersonal condition of humanity; even His strong crying and tears in Gethsemane were not a human person's -- But was it not a human person who said, "Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit"? Was it not . . . a human person who anticipated death, when He kneeled down and prayed saying, "O My Father, if it be possible," if Thou be willing, "remove this cup from me, nevertheless, not My will, but Thine be done"? When there appeared an angel strengthening Him, was it a human person or was it only a divine person that the angel was strengthening? (p. 12).

Of "Christ" two things are testified to -- He is son of David, a man, a human person; He is David's Lord, God, a divine Person, but it is of *one* Christ, who stood before the Pharisees, that both are affirmed (p. 13).

He is truly the God-man . . . (p. 16).

His human personality and personal identity are both asserted (p. 17).

Who tasted death? Was it a human person? . . . {they} say no: it was a condition of humanity. "I will put my trust in Him." Was it a human person that put his trust in Jehovah, or a divine person, speaking *as if* a human person? . . . Does not the Holy Ghost plainly teach that it is a human *person* that suffered, that was tempted, that is able to succor? (p. 20).

An impersonal humanity in Christ deprives us of a *personal* substitute; of One bearing our deserved judgment (p. 21)

It has been truly stated, "The moment you deny personality in the Man Christ Jesus you run into a thousand difficulties and errors" (p. 23).

Let the reader note the presentation of the Lord's divine person on earth, assuming to be what He was not, according to these teachers, who deny to Him a human "I." T.H.R. {T. H. Reynolds} wrote (Letter of December

3rd, 1895, circulated in Dublin):

The blessed Lord could say “I” as God -- before Abraham was “I” am. He could say “I” as Man -- “I will put My trust in Him (God),” but when we ask who was the conscious “I” the answer is, the Son of God speaking as Man on earth.

Thus the blessed Lord is represented as personating a human “I”!! The late Canon Liddon, a Ritualist (Bampton Lectures, on our Lord’s Divinity), had recourse to this expedient to meet the objections of a Rationalist, who judged the union of God and man in the Person of Christ “an unintelligible wonder.” The Canon expresses F.E.R.’s and T.H.R.’s idea of His humanity thus:

A vesture which He folds round His person; in it He represents, He pleads. His human life is not a distinct self, but a living robe which, as it was created, was wrapped round His eternal personality.

Where is the Man Christ Jesus in this “I”? This is F.E.R. and T.H.R.’s Christ! **The doctrine involves the denial of Jesus Christ come in the flesh**² (2 John 7), for it denies Him to be a perfect human person (pp. 23, 24).

The teaching that the Lord Jesus has no consciousness of “I,” as man, in His soul, is indeed **the denial of Jesus Christ come in flesh**. It is a denial that He is actually man. You can see in the above quotation from Canon Liddon how the human mind is at work in defining the union of the divine and human. It is like the men of Bethshemesh prying into the Ark. It shows that the union is being scrutinized by the mind which decides that *this* cannot be because that would mean there were two persons. But it is the incarnation by the overshadowing power of the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:35) that has caused the union of God and man in one Person. Faith accepts it -- fully God and fully man! -- not, fully God and incomplete man.

The men of Bethshemesh took it on themselves to look into the Ark. It is not those who hold that Christ has the consciousness of “I,” as man, in His soul, that are looking into the Ark; rather, it is those that subject Him to mental analysis. It is not those who, as J. Hennessy did above, quote the Scriptures that show Christ *as man* saying “I” who are prying into the Ark; it is those whose view is that as expressed by T.H.R.: “when we ask who was the conscious ‘I’ the answer is, the Son of God speaking as Man on earth.” *That is deadly evil, denying the complete manhood of Christ.*

Because of the union of the human and divine in Christ’s Person, all that He said and did as man had a divine spring in it. That is true also when He spoke

2. {Emphasis added.}

in the consciousness of “I” as a man. There was a divine spring in it. It is so because of the union of the divine and human in Him. Thus, for example, His sufferings, death, and blood-shedding on the cross have the value and glory of His Person as God and man as *their* value and glory. This is typified in the cloud of incense (speaking of the glory of His person as God and man) accompanying the blood, presented before the cloud on the mercy-seat, indicating the presence of the glory of Jehovah (Lev. 16). As J. T. Armet wrote: righteousness meets the claims of righteousness but it requires a cloud to meet a cloud!

Let everyone who names the name of the Lord withdraw from iniquity (2 Tim. 2:20).

And why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things that I say? (Luke 6:46).

Ed.

NOTES ON FASTING

Fasting involves not eating, of course. But the word “fasting” can have more than one significance. For example, when the apostle Peter was at Joppa, “he became hungry and desired to eat” (Acts 10:10). Was he fasting? In one sense, yes, he was fasting because he had become hungry, not having eaten recently. People on diets, people in famines, people who have not eaten in a few hours by reason of inconvenient circumstances, all these are said to fast. On the other hand, the meaning of the word “fasting” sometimes includes reference to a religious exercise.

Now, Peter’s fasting was only circumstantial because he “desired to eat”: persons engaged in fasting as a spiritual exercise desire not to eat (as long as their fast continues). For example, Cornelius feared God, “giving much alms to the people, and supplicating God continually” (Acts 10:2) and he “had been [fasting]” (Acts 10:30) when he received instruction to send for Peter. Because the Lord Jesus joined alms, prayer, and fasting together in Matt. 6:1-18, it is not hard to see that the fasting of Cornelius was a spiritual exercise, not just a circumstance like Peter’s hunger. The question, of course, is: What other thing must be connected with abstinence from food in order to transform fasting into a Christian, spiritual exercise?

HOW SHOULD FASTING BE DONE?

The short answer is: not with gloomy faces! But here are some remarks by W. Kelly:

I believe there is a real value in fasting that few of us know much about. If, on particular occasions which call for special individual prayer, one were to unite fasting with it, I have no doubt the blessing of it would be felt. Here {Matt. 6:17-18} there is humbling of spirit expressed. There are prayers which are most suitably accompanied by standing, others by kneeling. Fasting is one of those things in which the body shows its sympathy with what the spirit is passing through; it is a means of expressing our desire to be low before God, and in the attitude of humiliation. But lest the flesh should take advantage of even what is for the mortifying of the body, the Lord enjoins that there should be means taken rather not to appear unto men to fast than to permit any display, for although a true Christian would shrink from putting on false appearances, the devil would cheat him into doing it unless he is very jealous in self-watchfulness before God. (W. Kelly, *Lectures on the Gospel of Matthew*, 1868, p. 166.)

In other words, to look like one is fasting is to put on a false appearance even if one is truly abstaining from food! How can that be? Fasting as a spiritual exercise is always connected with some other thing and that other thing (if according to God) never behaves as the hypocrites do! Again, W. Kelly wrote:

It remains for us to weigh our Lord's words on fasting, as the third part of His teaching on "righteousness" (not "alms") in the first verse of the chapter [Matt. 6]. Prayer holds the intermediate place between alms and fasting, the pious and holy basis to guard the other two, binding them up with faith against formality.

"And when ye fast, be not gloomy-faced as the hypocrites; for they disguise their faces, so that they may appear to men fasting. Verily, I say to you, They have their reward. But thou while fasting anoint thy head, and wash thy face, so that thou mayest not appear to men fasting, but to thy Father that [is] in secret; and thy Father that seeth in secret will recompense thee."

The Lord does not so much enjoin fasting as bring it like prayer under the Christian principle of having to do with our Father in secret. It falls under the individual life of faith. Yet He undoubtedly sanctions and approves of it when so practiced; and this independently of the more open and united aim, such as we find in Acts. 13:2,3, 14:23. He also intimates its value for spiritual power. Pious men have ever felt and must feel its appropriateness in chastening the soul before God, where public or private need called for humiliation . . . (W. Kelly, *The Bible Treasury*, 1904, N5:70-71.)

WHEN IS THE TIME FOR FASTING?

Is fasting appropriate at all times? Ought fasting to be continuous? Consider Mark 2:18-22. John's disciples were fasting. They had repented; and was not fasting a fruit worthy of repentance? John himself fasted, and should not the disciples be as their master? So also the Pharisees fasted even though they had not repented. Why, then, did not the disciples of Jesus fast?

The answer to this question rests in the Person of the Bridegroom Himself. To fast in the presence of any bridegroom is inappropriate, because his heart is full of joy at his marriage. How much more so when Jesus presented Himself as Bridegroom to Israel, His people! John the Baptist himself had explained that "He that hath the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice; this my joy therefore is fulfilled. He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:29-30). Evidently these fasting disciples of John had not responded to John's teaching about the Lord Jesus, otherwise they would have been disciples of Jesus by this time and would have been feasting with the sinners at table with Jesus and His disciples. There is therefore a time to FEAST as well as a time to FAST. (See W. J. Hocking, "Studies in the Gospel of Mark," *The Bible Treasury*, 1910, N8:179f).

FASTING AND DENIAL OF THE WORK OF CHRIST

Because fasting lends itself so easily to connections with other things, special care should be taken lest it be connected with doctrinal evil. J.N. Darby wrote:

In England you can hardly go into a cathedral without finding the monument of a bishop who lived forty days without eating anything: I have seen them when I used to go into such places. Now one may fast very profitably if one has occasion to do it. As such I recognize it: but to set about making a virtue of it in the way usually done is wrong because it went upon the principle that matter was an evil thing, and denied the atonement entirely, for they said that Christ could not have a body. This is the reason the apostle John insists He is come in flesh, and that His disciples had handled Him {see 1 John 1}. It was denied that He was really a man in that way, because they thought all matter was a bad thing; and therefore the great thing to be done was to get the Spirit, which was good in everybody away from matter. Therefore they fasted to keep the matter down. This was a torment to the church. Though some of them were very strict, a great many were grossly immoral. It spread everywhere and affected even the orthodox. The Gnostics died out, but they left their taint in the church, and the whole system of celibacy and monasticism

continued. I used once to fast in that way myself. On Wednesdays, and Fridays, and Saturdays I did not eat anything at all, but on the other days I did eat a little bread. I said, If I fast three days I can fast four, and if four, five, and if five, better six, and if six, better seven; and what then? I had better die. Thus there was something that made it impossible to go through with the thing. I went on with it, but God delivered me. (J. N. Darby, *Collected Writings*, 27:91-92.)

There is another way in which fasting is sometimes connected with a denial of the work of Christ. When persons have known redemption and forgiveness for themselves, and rest in Christ, they do not want fasting as a means to procure favor from God. They have found a sure resting-place for themselves in the work and Person of the Lord Jesus Christ. They can cry, “Abba, Father” (Gal. 4:6). They have known and believed the love that God has for them. Others, however, are still slaving to gain God’s favor, and by fasting (or other means, perhaps) they try to earn their own salvation, as if God wanted to torment them by making them hungry. And in the end, they can never be sure if they have fasted enough to satisfy God about their sins. So they never have real peace. Of course, some are satisfied with themselves, but self-satisfaction is a shoddy sort of thing anyway, especially when compared with the work of Christ. The bottom line is that they do not know what it is to believe that God has said “their sins and iniquities will I remember no more,” because of Christ’s precious offering of Himself, by which He has perfected for ever them that are sanctified (see Hebrews 10). It is written, “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life”; and again, “By him, all that believe are justified from all things.” Therefore, the use of fasting as a substitute for the atoning work of Christ on the cross is a terrible blunder, a spiritual disaster. (See J. N. Darby, “Familiar Conversations on Romanism,” *Collected Writings*, 29:1 ff.)

EXAMPLES OF CHRISTIANS FASTING TOGETHER

Fasting can be proposed as a possible religious exercise on ever so many occasions. But it may be helpful to notice the only occasions in the New Testament in which Christians joined together in fasting and in which the reason for the fasting is clearly evident by the context. At the city of Antioch there was an assembly of believers on the Lord Jesus Christ. And certain prophets and teachers were there, including two named Barnabas and Saul. Then a significant event occurred:

As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them (Acts 13:2).

This use of the word “fasted” is like several other New Testament passages. The fasting of this verse may have been connected with their ministry to the Lord, but then again it may have been for some other reason. The passage and its context do not clearly and plainly indicate the reason for this fasting (although I myself am confident that ministry to the Lord is furthered by denial of self, prayer and humility, here displayed in fasting, see Matt. 6:17-18). In the very next verse, however, the word “fasting” is used again:

And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid *their* hands on them, they sent *them* away (Acts 13:3).

Here then is, I suppose, a plain case of common fasting among Christians in the New Testament. They fasted on the occasion of letting go two servants of Christ to the work to which the Holy Spirit had called them. This was not fasting on an occasion of deep sorrow. This was not fasting on an occasion of outrage or emotional excess or on being persecuted. It was not fasting for general spiritual uplifting and spiritual profit. It was fasting in connection with letting go workers into the service of the Lord.

A similar example is found in the next chapter:

And when they . . . had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed (Acts 14:23).

Here also, fasting appears in connection with commending persons into the special care of the Lord Jesus. But this time, it was those who went away who fasted in connection with commending to the Lord those who stayed behind.

So, do we see that if we ourselves stay and others go, we have an example of our fasting? And do we see that if we go and others stay, we have an example of our fasting? So whether we stay or go, we have an example of our fasting. In commending others to the Lord’s care and blessing, the denial of self in putting the welfare of others first is consistent with our fasting.

Then why should I fast if the others are the ones who need special care and blessing? Why me? Because we are united together in one body, of course.

Note that Cornelius, not yet a Christian, fasted but Peter was merely hungry (Acts 10). The better Greek manuscripts omit fasting in 1 Cor. 7:5. And Paul’s two references to fasting do not specify the reasons or occasions for the fastings (2 Cor. 6:5, 11:27). And these are all the examples to be found beyond those mentioned in the four Gospels. Thus, the examples of fasting in the NT are fasting without spiritual significance, the fasting of hypocrites, fasting by individuals careful to keep their fasting hidden from others, and common fasting by Christians when commending one another into the special care of the Lord Jesus.

Would it not be wiser to adjust our practices to agree with the examples in the

Bible than to adjust our understandings of what the Bible says to agree with traditions of men? J. N. Darby once wrote,

. . . fasting and prayer have often and often been the resource and comfort of our souls before God in any various circumstances, and sometimes merely to seek more of His presence and blessing. I dare say we have not done it sufficiently, nor as we ought. (J. N. Darby, *Collected Writings*, 14:228.)

COMMON FASTING AMONG CHRISTIANS

Proposals for common fasting among Christians bear with them questions that relate to separation from evil unto the Lord. The following letter addresses this matter.

Beloved Brethren, -- I have learned by a providential circumstance that it is the purpose of our dear brother -- to propose a common day of fasting and humiliation as to the state of the saints. I feel deeply, indeed, I have in my little manner acted on it when I could, that the very thing that is called for, and urgently called for, is fasting and humiliation, and deep, deep humiliation before God, as I know the beloved saints have already done so in several places. Hence on the mere point of so fasting I say nothing, believing that it must be left to the Holy Ghost to guide the saints, as He sees good, to such a service. But what I feel bound to lay before them is this. When a common fast is proposed, it supposes of course a common object. All I think the saints would be wise to learn before undertaking to *join* in such a thing, is, what the common thing they join in is. Further, when we join in a common thing, we more or less identify ourselves with those with whom we join. In the present state of things, I would only suggest to the brethren not to commit themselves to anything they are unacquainted with . . . I only suggest to them that, if a *common* fast is proposed, they should at least learn what the common thing is. I have no doubt what is done truly before the Lord, even in ignorance, will be blessed to those who do it in the end; but we act with power when we act with the knowledge of His mind. (J. N. Darby, *Letters* 1:283-4.)

WHAT IS THE TRUE MEANING OF FASTING?

Therefore, not the fasting itself but the other thing that is joined spiritually with the fasting is the more important matter. The other thing might be, and usually is, humiliation. Then, the humiliation is much more important than the

abstaining from food. And thus all sorts of questions vanish: is eating light good enough for a fast? How much drinking of water is allowable? Is abstaining from one kind of food a kind of a fast? -- what matters is the humiliation! And of course, humiliation is only one example of something that can be joined with the abstinence from food.

In John 4, another and more perfect example is found. There the Lord Jesus went through Samaria and sat on the well while His disciples went to get food. According to the simplest definition of "fasting," Jesus was fasting when the thirsty woman came to the well. She found in Him the living water of life and abandoned her water pot, as is well known. But what of Him and His fasting?

Well, the disciples returned with food (John 4:27) and they supposed that it was time to stop a circumstantial fasting that had no larger or more profound connection. "The disciples asked him saying, Rabbi, eat" (John 4:31). The Lord's answer reveals that His fasting from food was connected with something else that mattered more to Him than food.

But he said to them, I have food to eat which ye do not know (John 4:32).

That is it! That is the secret of fasting as a spiritual exercise! Fasting is when there is food to eat for spirit and soul in such abundance that the person abstains from normal food for the body. In the case of the Lord Jesus, His food was to "do the will of him that has sent me, and that I should finish his work" (John 4:34). So His fasting was not a deprivation, not a punishing of the body, but a devotedness so profound that His body showed its sympathy with His spirit in His devotion to the Father's will.

It is a well known fact that human beings derive religious satisfaction from the simple act of depriving their bodies of food and from punishing their bodies in other ways. This may be seen in asceticism in many religions (Phariseism, Islam, Hinduism, etc., as well as in parts of Christendom). If any reader thinks that they have benefitted from such fasting, I suggest that there is not evidence in the NT to say that such practices (without connection to some other thing as prayer, humiliation, devotedness, etc.) are identical to what the Scriptures describe when fasting as a spiritual exercise is mentioned.

May God give us all a deeper appreciation for the importance of doing the will of the Father with all humbleness of mind.

D. Ryan, 2005

