

# DISPENSATIONALISM

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## Part I

### 1. *The Promises of God.*

The general policy which we have steadily sought to follow during the past eleven years has been that of seeking (by Divine aid) the spiritual edification of our Christian readers. For this we have endeavored to set forth a well-balanced constructive ministry. Poisons do not nourish, nor does the refutation of error build up the soul. Very occasionally have we departed from our rule, and only then against our spiritual inclinations, for we know full well it is difficult to handle pitch without being defiled. But once or twice we have felt forced to lift up our voice and sound an alarm. We feel constrained to do so again. While Paul was at Athens and saw the city wholly given up to idolatry “his spirit was stirred in him,” and as we behold the reckless and irreverent handling of the Word of God by many who style themselves the teachers of “dispensational truth,” and witness the pernicious effects it has produced in the minds and lives of many, we are moved by what is, we trust, a holy indignation.

It is not our present purpose to take up seriatim the various postulates of this modern school of prophetic interpretation, nor to examine in detail the wild conclusions which have been drawn from flimsy premises. Nor have we any expectation of converting from the error of their way any of the present-day leaders of this system which is growing in popularity. No, we would not waste valuable time on them, for it is our firm conviction that God has given them over to the spirit of delusion. If the Lord permits, we expect to deal with some other features of this “false doctrine” in later issues, but for the moment we confine our attention to one fearful evil which has been engendered by it, namely, the robbing of God’s children of many “exceeding great and precious promises.”

We are not unmindful of the subtle distinctions which have been drawn by the above-mentioned teachers between the interpretation and the application of Scripture, nor of their oft-repeated slogan that “All Scripture is *for* us, but it is not all *to* us, or *about* us.” Whatever may be thought of such a statement this is clear and cannot be gainsaid, that there are now tens of thousands in Great Britain and the U.S.A. who say of large portions of God’s Word, “This is not for me; this belongs to the Jews; this relates not to the present dispensation, that concerns those who will be on earth during the great tribulation or the millennium.” And thus their souls are deprived of the *present* value of much which God Himself plainly declares *is* “profitable” for *us* (2 Tim. 3:16).

It may surprise some of our readers when we say that this limiting of so much of God’s Word to the Jews is an *ancient* lie of the Devil’s dressed up in a new garb. Yet such it is. Nor should any be surprised at this news, for Scripture declares that “There is *no new thing* under the sun” (Eccl. 1:9). Two hundred and fifty years ago, in his work on “The Doctrine of the Saints’ Perseverance explained and confirmed,” J. Owen wrote, “Some labor much to *rob believers* of the consolation intended for them in the evangelical promises of the Old Testament, though made in the general to the Church on this account, (affirming) that they were made to the Jews, and being to them peculiar, our concernment lies not now in them.” Over three hundred years ago, when the Thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England (the “Episcopal Church”) were drawn up, the 7th read as follows: “The Old Testament is not contradictory to the New; for both in the Old and New Testament *everlasting* life is offered to mankind by Christ, who is the only Mediator between God and men, being both God and Man. Wherefore they are not to be heard, which feign that the old fathers (OLD TESTAMENT saints) did look *only for transitory promises.*”

Almost four hundred years ago Calvin, in his “Institutes” began his chapter on “The Similarity of the Old and New Testaments” by saying: “From the preceding observations it may now be evidenced, that all those persons, from the beginning of the world, whom God has adopted into the society of His people, have been federally connected with Him by the same law and the same doctrine which are in force among us: but because it is of no small importance that this point be established, I shall show, by way of

appendix, since the fathers were partakers with us of the same inheritance, and hoped for the same salvation through the grace of our common Mediator, how far their condition in this connection was different from ours. For though the testimonies we have collected from the law and the prophets in proof of this, render it sufficiently evident that the people of God have never had any other rule of religion and piety, yet because some writers have raised many disputes concerning the difference of the Old and New Testaments, which may occasion doubts in the mind of an undiscerning reader, we shall assign a particular chapter for the better and more accurate discussion of this subject. Moreover, what would otherwise have been very useful, has now been rendered necessary for us by Servetus and some madmen of the sect of the Anabaptists, who entertain no other ideas of the Israelitish nation than of a herd of swine, whom they pretend to have been pampered by the Lord, in this world without the least hope of future immortality in heaven.”

One plain statement of Holy Writ is of infinitely more value than all the empty reasonings of carnal men. Such a statement we have concerning the promises of God in 2 Corinthians 1:20, “For all the promises of God in Him are yea, and in Him amen, unto the glory of God by us.” The line of thought in the context is easily followed. First, the Apostle had intended to pay the Corinthians a second visit (vv. 15, 16), but he had been providentially hindered (vv. 8-10). Second, knowing that his enemies were likely to use his delay as a taunt that he was ignorant of the Lord’s mind and fickle in the keeping of his word, the Apostle anticipates this charge (vv. 17, 18) — there were Divine reasons why Paul had delayed his promised journey to them. Third, whether that satisfied the Corinthians or no, this could not be gainsaid, that, there was no uncertainty about his preaching: he had proclaimed Jesus Christ among them in a plain and positive way (v. 19).

Having reminded the Corinthians that the message he had delivered in their hearing on his first visit was invariable and constant (2 Cor. 1:19), the Apostle now gave proof of his assertion: *Christ* was the sum and substance of his preaching: he had known nothing among them save Jesus Christ and Him crucified (see 1 Cor. 2:2), and since Christ Himself is always “yea” or unchanging, then his message was always “yea” or the same. The manner in which he now supplied proof of this was by affirming, “For all the promises of God in Him (viz. Christ) are yea, and in Him (Christ), amen”: therefore Christ cannot be “yea *and* nay.” The plain meaning of 2 Corinthians 1:20 is, The promises which God has given His people are absolutely reliable, for they were made to them *in Christ*; they are absolutely certain of fulfillment, for they are accomplished *in Him*.

1. Since the Fall alienated the creature from the Creator there could be no intercourse between God and man but by some promise on His part. None can challenge anything from the Majesty on High without a warrant from Himself, nor could the conscience be satisfied unless it had a Divine promise for any good that we hope for from God.
2. God will have His people ruled by promises in all ages so as to exercise faith, hope, prayer, dependence upon Himself. God gives us promises to test whether or not we trust Him.
3. The ground of the promises is the God-man Mediator, Jesus Christ, for all intercourse between God and us can only be in and through the appointed Daysman. Christ must receive all good for us, and we must have it at second hand from Him. Hence “all the promises of God *in Him* (Christ) are yea and amen.”
4. Let the Christian be ever on his guard never to contemplate any promise of God *apart from Christ*: whether the thing promised, the blessing desired, be temporal or spiritual, we cannot rightly or truly enjoy it except in and by Christ. Therefore did Paul remind the Galatians, “Now to Abraham and his seed was the promise made: he says not to seeds, as of many, but as of one, And to your seed, which is Christ” (3:16): about which (D.V.) we shall have more to say later. All the

promises of good to us are made *to Christ*, the Surety of the everlasting covenant, and are conveyed from Christ to us — both the promises, and the things promised. “This is *the* (all-inclusive) promise that He has promised us, even eternal life” (1 John 2:25), and as 1 John 5:11 tells us “this life is in His Son” — and so of “grace,” and whatsoever is in Him. “If I read any of the promises I found that all and every one contained Christ in their bosom, He Himself being the one great Promise of the Bible. *To Him* they were all first given; *from Him* they derive all their efficacy, sweetness, value, and importance; *by Him* they are brought home to the heart; and *in Him* they are all yea and amen” (Robert Hawker, 1810).

5. All the promises of God are made in Christ, none of them can be of any good to those who are out of Christ, for a man out of Christ is out of the favor of God. God cannot look on such a man but as an object of His wrath, as fuel for His vengeance; there is no hope for any man till he be in Christ. But it may be asked, Does not God do many good things to them that are out of Christ, sending His rain on the just as well as the unjust, and filling the bellies of the wicked with good things (Psa. 17:14)? Yes, He does indeed, But are those temporal mercies *blessings*? Indeed they are not: as God says in Malachi 2:2 “I will curse your blessings: yea, I have cursed them already, because you do not lay it to heart” — cf. Deuteronomy 28:15-20. Unto the wicked, the temporal mercies of God are like the food given to bullocks — they do but “prepare them for the day of slaughter” (Jer. 12:3 and cf. James 5:5).

Having presented above a brief outline of the subject of the Divine promises, let us now carefully observe the fact that 2 Corinthians 1:20 plainly affirms “For *all* the promises of God in Him are yea, and in Him amen.” How inexpressibly blessed is this to the humble-minded children of God — yet a mystery hidden from those who are wise in their own conceits. “He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us *all* things” (Rom. 8:32). The promises of God are many, relating both to this life and also to that which is to come; concerning our temporal well being as well as our spiritual; covering the needs of the body as well as the soul; but, whatever be their character, not one of them could be made good unto us except in and through and by Him who died for us.

“Having these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit” (2 Cor. 7:1). *What* promises? Why, those mentioned in the closing verses of the preceding chapter, of course. There we read, “And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? for you are the temple of the living God; *as God has said*, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people” (2 Cor. 6:16). And *where* had God said this? Why, away back in Leviticus 26:12, “And I will walk among you, and will be your God, and you shall be My people.” That was a promise made to Israel in the days of Moses! Again, in 2 Corinthians 6:17, 18 we read, “Wherefore come out from among them, and be you separate, says the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you; And will be a Father unto you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty,” which words are a manifest reference unto Jeremiah 31:9 and Hosea 1:9, 10.

Now observe very particularly what the Holy Spirit says about *these* “promises” unto the New Testament saints. He makes no mention of His “applying” them; He says nothing about our “appropriating” them; instead, He assures us “*Having* these promises.” Yes, “these” *Old* Testament “promises” are *ours*: ours to enjoy, ours to feed upon, ours to delight in, ours to give praise for. Since *Christ* is ours, *all* things are ours (1 Cor. 3:22, 23). O my reader, allow no man, under the pretense of “rightly dividing” the Word of Truth, to cut you off from any of the “exceeding great and precious” promises of your Father. If *he* is determined to confine himself to a few Epistles in the New Testament, let him do so — that is his loss; but suffer him not to confine *you* to so narrow a place.

One other passage shall engage our attention and we will close this article. Writing to the New Testament saints the Apostle Paul was moved by the Holy Spirit to say, “Let your conversation be without covetousness, be content with such things as you have: *for He has said*, I will never leave you, nor forsake you” (Heb. 13:5). And *to whom* do you suppose this blessed “promise” was first given? Why, to Joshua — see Joshua 1:5. Well did John Owen (following his reference to the religious thieves of his day, who sought to rob believers of the consolation intended for them in the evangelical promises of the Old Testament) say: — “If this plea might be admitted, I know not any one promise that would more evidently fall under the power of it, than this we have now in consideration. It was made to a peculiar person, and that upon a peculiar occasion; made to a general or captain of armies, with respect to the great wars he had to undertake, upon the special command of God. May not a poor hungry believer say, What is this to me? I am not a general of an army, have no wars to make upon God’s command, the virtue of this promise doubtless expired with the conquest of Canaan, and died with him to whom it was made. To manifest *the sameness* of love, that is in *all* the promises, with their establishment in one Mediator, and the general concernment of believers in every one of them, however, and on what occasion soever given to any, this promise to Joshua is here applied to the condition of the weakest, meanest, and poorest of the saints of God; to all, and every one of them, be their state and condition what it will. And doubtless, believers are not a little wanting in themselves, and their own consolation, that they do no more particularly close with those words of truth, grace, and faithfulness, which upon sundry occasions, and at divers times, have been given out unto the saints of old, even Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, David, and the residue of them, who walked with God in their generations: these things in an especial manner are recorded for *our* consolation, that we ‘through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope’ (Rom. 15:4).

“Now the Holy Spirit, knowing the weakness of our faith, and how apt we are to be beaten from closing with the promises, and from mixing them with faith, upon the least discouragement that may arise (as indeed this is none of the least — the promise is not made to us, it was made to others, and they may reap the sweetness of it; God may be faithful in it, though we never enjoy the mercy intended in it; I say), in the next words He leads believers by the hand, to make the same conclusion with boldness and with confidence from this, and the like promises, as David did of old, upon the many gracious assurances that he had received of the presence of God with him: ‘So that (says He, upon the account of that promise) we may say boldly (without staggering at it by unbelief) the Lord is *my* Helper.’ This is a conclusion of faith: because God said to Joshua, a believer, ‘I will never leave you nor forsake you’ — though upon a particular occasion, and in reference to a particular employment — *every* believer may say with boldness, ‘He is *my* Helper’.”

## 2. *The Promises of God (Concluded).*

In view of the confusion which now exists in so many minds a second article upon this aspect of our subject seems called for. One leading branch of Satan's evil work is to torment the children of God, and as far as he can, destroy their peace. Full well he knows that he cannot prevent them entering their eternal rest (which is evident by his admission in Job 1:10), therefore does he bend his efforts toward undermining their present spiritual comforts. And to a large extent his end is gained in this if he succeeds in weakening or removing our confidence in the precious promises of God, which form a considerable part of the source and substance of the saints' consolation. Knowing that he is unable to shake the faith of the regenerate in the Divine inspiration and veracity of the promises recorded in Holy Writ, he has employed the subtler attack (which is equally effective if yielded to) of seeking to persuade us that the great majority of God's promises do not belong unto Christians at all, for, seeing they are recorded in the Old Testament they are the property of the Jews only.

Cleverly indeed has the Devil pushed this campaign of enervating the importance and value of the larger half of God's Word. The agents whom he has employed in this evil work have not been open atheists and avowed infidels, but instead, men who posed as the champions of orthodoxy, acknowledging their faith in the full inspiration of the Scriptures. Thereby the confidence of the unwary was gained. Though at first the radical and revolutionary postulates of the teachers of "dispensational truth" may have awakened a measure of uneasiness in simple-minded souls, only too often they quenched their fears by reassuring themselves that such teachers — so faithful to the "fundamentals," so loyal to Christ, so well-versed in the Scriptures — "must be right." Moreover, the claims made by these men that God had given them much more "light" on His Word than all who had preceded them, made an attractive appeal to the pride of their hearers — for who wants to be "behind the times"?

In Jeremiah 36:23 we are told that when Jehoiakim, king of Judah, heard the Prophet read a message from God, that "he cut it with the penknife." This incident has often been referred to by teachers of "dispensational truth," who have applied or accommodated it to the pernicious methods employed by the "higher critics." This too has served to quieten any fears that might exist in the hearer, for supposing that his teachers "stood for the whole Word of God," and impressed by their fervent denunciations of "modernism" and "evolutionism," he thinks that they are to be safely followed in all their assertions. How wily the Devil is! Nevertheless, the fact remains that *in the effects produced* the labors of the "dispensationalists" have been as subversive of faith as those of the "higher critics": the latter affirming much of the Old Testament to be spurious, the former insisting that it belongs not unto us. In either case, the greater part of God's Word is reduced to a dead letter, so far as faith's receiving of its present validity and virtue is concerned.

But are there not many promises which God gave unto Israel which have no direct application unto the Church? Are there not many promises recorded in the Old Testament which Christians of today could by no means appropriate to themselves and rightly expect their fulfillment? Of course not! Were *that* the case, then Romans 15:4 would not be true: "For *whatsoever* things were written afore time were written for *our* learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope." What "comfort" can I draw from Scriptures which "do not belong to me"? What "hope" can possibly be inspired in the Christian today by promises which pertain to none but the Jews? Christ came here not to cancel, but "to *confirm* the promises made unto the fathers, *and* that the *Gentiles* might glorify God for His mercy" (Rom. 15:8, 9).

Now with regard to all the Divine promises which respect temporal or material blessings, the following rules must be steadily borne in mind when pleading for their fulfillment. First, there must be the heart's entire *submission to the absolute sovereignty of God*. Such general promises as "And all things,

whatsoever you shall ask in prayer, believing, you shall receive them” (Matt. 21:22), must always be understood in the light of “If we ask any thing according to His will, He hears us” (1 John 5:14). The fulfillment of His promises must necessarily be subordinated unto God’s own good pleasure. By this we do not mean that God ever fails to make good any word that He has given, but rather that He has so worded His promises, or so modified them by other declarations, that He is free to exercise His high sovereignty *in* the fulfilling of them, *without* in the slightest degree sully His veracity.

To be more specific: God exercises His sovereignty in the fulfillment of His promises in a threefold way: as unto whom He makes them good, as to how, and as to when He does so. Let us illustrate this by Psalm 34:7, “The angel of the Lord encamps round about them that fear Him, and *delivers* them.” First, as *to whom* He makes this good unto. Note the *indefiniteness* of the promise: it does *not* say “all that fear Him.” The three Hebrews were “delivered” from Babylon’s furnace: but others “were stoned” and sawn asunder” (Heb. 11:36, 37). Second, as to *how*: Daniel was delivered from the lions’ den; Stephen, at his death, was “delivered” from a world of sin and sorrow and removed to Heaven! Third, as to *when*: godly Josiah was “delivered” from this scene of wickedness and woe before he reached the age of forty, whereas Noah was suffered to remain on earth till he was nine hundred and fifty!

Second, the heart’s genuine desire for *the glory of God*. In all true prayer the petitions are framed with this specific end in view. Thus has the Lord Jesus Himself plainly taught in the pattern prayer He has graciously given us: “Hallowed be your name” is the first petition, and therefore the standard which measures all that follows. Hereby we are instructed to make this our paramount concern, as well as plea, when we supplicate the Throne of Grace. Abraham was “strong in faith, giving glory to God” (Rom. 4:20): this is the chief object which faith sets before it, not only asking for that which will glorify God, but that which shall be *most* for His glory. And this, of course, *He for yourself?* seek them not” (Jer. 45:5), but seek rather that *God* may be honored and magnified — whether He give or whether He withholds that which your heart so much longs for.

Third, *complete submission to the unerring wisdom of God*. Our loving Father has reserved to Himself the liberty of deciding *what* is best for us and what is not. “And therefore will the Lord wait, that He may be gracious unto you, and therefore will He be exalted, that He may have mercy upon you: for the Lord is a God of judgment: blessed are all they that wait for Him” (Isa. 30:18). His delays are not arbitrary and capricious, but are regulated by both love and omniscience. He tarries not only for the fittest season wherein to manifest His mercy unto us, but decides which are the most suitable gifts to bestow upon us. He has in mind our highest spiritual good as well as our temporal well-being, but it must be left to *Him* to decide what will most promote these.

“To pray for outward and worldly blessings is not contrary to the will of God, for He has promised to bestow them. But then, as His promise is conditional, if it is consistent with our good: so truly, must our prayers be conditional, that God would give them to us, if it is consistent with His will and with our good. Whatsoever we thus ask, we do it according to the will of God; and we are sure of speeding in our request, either by obtaining our desires, or by being blessed with a denial. For, alas! we are blind and ignorant creatures, and cannot look into the designs and drift of Providence, and see how God has laid in order good and evil in His own purpose: oftentimes we must mistake evil for good, because of the present appearance of good that it has: yea, so shortsighted are we, that we can look no farther than outward and present appearance. But God, who sees through the whole series and connection of His own counsels, knows, many times, that those things, which we account and desire as good, are really evil: and therefore it is our wisdom to resign all our desires to His disposal, and to say, ‘Lord, though such temporal enjoyments may seem good and desirable to me at present, yet you are infinitely wise, and you knowest what the consequence and issue of them will be: I beg them, if they may stand with your will; and if you seest they will be as really good for me, as I suppose them now to be. If they be not so, I beg the favor of a denial.’ This is the right frame in which a Christian’s heart should be when

he comes to beg temporal mercies of God; and, whilst he thus asks any worldly comforts, he cannot ask amiss” (Ezekiel Hopkins, 1633-1689).

Fourth, in keeping with the covenant under which they were given, many of the promises made to the patriarchs and their descendants were *typical* in character. Earthly blessings adumbrated heavenly ones. This is not an arbitrary assertion of ours, for he who knows any thing at all about the things of God, is aware that every thing during the Abrahamic and Mosaic economies had a figurative meaning. While it be true that every Old Testament promise received a literal fulfillment unto some of God’s children, yet not unto all, for even then the promises which concern temporal blessings necessarily had this proviso: If they promote spiritual and eternal happiness — otherwise they would not have been promises but threats, and the fulfillment or bestowment a snare and a curse rather than a blessing.

Yet let it not be concluded from what has just been said that, the *literal* purport of those Old Testament promises which relate to material blessings, concern not the Christian today. The greater includes the lesser. We who are his spiritual children and so “blessed with faithful Abraham” (Gal. 3:9), may rightly make the promises to his natural seed the ground of *our* faith. We are still upon earth in the body, and our physical needs are the same today as were those of the Jews of old, and according unto our faith and obedience so will it be unto us. The Lord Jesus plainly declared, “But seek you first the kingdom of God and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you” (Matt. 6:33), and the “these things” refer to food and clothing. 1 Timothy 4:8 expressly affirms “Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of *the life that now is*, and of that which is to come.”

As an illustration and example of what has been pointed out, take the Lord’s promise to Abraham in Genesis 13:15, “All the land which you seest, to you will I give it, and to your seed for ever.” Now the fulfillment of this promise is to be understood in a twofold way. First, mystically or sacramentally. The land of Canaan is to be regarded not only as a country in Asia, fertile and fruitful, but also as a figure and type of that heavenly Canaan where every blessing is found in its fullness. It is for this reason that Christ denominated Heaven “Abraham’s bosom” (Luke 16:22), rather than call it after any of the other patriarchs: not “Abel’s bosom,” not Enoch’s, not Moses’, not David’s, but *Abraham’s bosom*.” From hence we learn that in fulfilling His promises God often gives not the particular thing promised, but either something proportional to it or something better. Thus, in promising long life (Eph. 6:3) He takes some away early unto *eternal life*. Second, Abraham inherited Canaan (four hundred and thirty years after) in his posterity: they being in him when God made the promise.

“Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He says not And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to your Seed, which is Christ” (Gal. 3:16). Upon this we cannot now do better than quote from James Haldane (1848): “The original promise was that God would bless Abraham, and make him a great nation; and that in him all the families of the earth should be blessed (Gen. 12:1-3). After many years had elapsed, God condescended to enter into a solemn covenant or engagement with Abraham, which contained three distinct promises: first, that he who had been so long childless should be the father of many nations; second, that He would be a God to him and to his seed; third, that He would give to him and to his seed the land of Canaan for an everlasting possession (Gen. 17:4-8).

“Each of these promises received a literal and spiritual fulfillment. The literal fulfillment of the first was, the multitude that sprung from Abraham, the many thousands of Israel (Num. 10:36). But this promise had also a spiritual fulfillment, of which the literal was but a type or figure, and to this the Apostle refers, ‘Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all, (As it is written, I have made you a father of many nations), before Him whom he believed, even God who quickens the dead, and calls those things which be not as though they were’ (Rom. 4:16, 17). In this sense Abraham was the father of all believers, whether Jews or Gentiles, and of



them only. Hence the Jews, when cast off for their rejection of Christ, are represented as complaining that Abraham does not acknowledge them (Isa. 63:16).

“The second promise was, that God would be a God to him and to his seed after him. This had its fulfillment in the riches and prosperity of Abraham, and in Israel after the flesh, being brought into covenant with God; whereby He became their God, and acknowledged them as His peculiar people. Its spiritual fulfillment was, God becoming the God of the true Israel — Abraham’s children by faith — by a better covenant, established upon better promises.

“The third promise was, the possession of the land of Canaan, literally fulfilled in its conquest and occupation, and spiritually in the possession of the Better Country which those who are of the faith of Abraham shall for ever inherit. One great means by which Satan has succeeded in corrupting the Gospel, has been the blending of the literal and spiritual fulfillment of these promises, — thus confounding the old and new covenants. The former was a type of the latter, and to this the Apostle refers, in speaking of the revelation of the mystery ‘which was kept secret since the world began, but now is made manifest, and by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith’ (Rom. 16:25, 26). The mystery here spoken of is, *the hidden meaning* of God’s dealings with the posterity of Abraham, to which, in his epistles, Paul frequently refers.”

Yes, a hundred years ago Satan sought to corrupt the Truth of God by confounding the literal and spiritual meaning and fulfillment of the Abrahamic promises. During the last two generations his efforts have been directed toward denying that they have *any* spiritual meaning, value, and application at all. How true it is that “the natural man (no matter how well-versed he be in the letter of Scripture) receives not the things of the Spirit of God,” he cannot know them “for they are spiritually discerned,” and not being a spiritual or regenerate man, he has no “spiritual discernment.” But we shall, D. V., have more to say on this in future articles.

## Part II

### 3. *The Purpose of God.*

“Study to shew yourself approved unto God, a workman that needs not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Tim. 2:15). An elaborate system of error has been built upon an erroneous exegesis of this verse. It has been assumed that the servants of God are there bidden to sectionize the Scriptures, marking out the boundaries of that which pertained each dispensation, and allocating to different companies various parts of the Word of God. It has been supposed that the ability of a man to open up the Living Oracles is to be determined mainly by his skill to erect arbitrary hedges and shut out the sheep of Christ from the larger portion of the green pastures which God has given them to feed in. Some have carried this pernicious method farther than others, but it is generally agreed that practically all of the Old Testament and the four Gospels are “not for us,” pertaining only to those who lived in previous dispensations.

Now if *the context* of 2 Timothy 2:15 be examined, it will be found that that verse has no more to do with the drawing of lines between the “dispensations” than it has with distinguishing between stars of varying magnitude. There is absolutely nothing in the entire context which, to the slightest degree, favors the strange meaning which has been given to that verse. The plain significance of 2 Timothy 2:15 is interpreted for us by Luke 12:42, 43, “Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his Lord shall make ruler over His household, to give them their portion of meat in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his Lord when He comes shall find so doing.” We cannot do better than quote here from one of the Puritans — a company of God’s servants who were endowed with far more spirituality, wisdom, and ability to feed Christ’s sheep, than are we in this decadent age: — “Ministers are stewards in the house of God and dispensers of the mysteries thereof. And, therefore, it is required of them, that they give unto all the servants that are in the house, or do belong unto it, *a meet portion*, according unto their wants, occasions, and services, suitable unto the will and wisdom of their Lord and Master. This giving of provision, and a portion of meat unto the household of Christ, consists principally in the right dividing and distribution of the Word of Truth. It is the taking out from those great stores of it in the Scripture, and as it were *cutting off a portion* suitable unto the various conditions of those in the family. Herein consists the principal skill of a servant furnished for the kingdom of Christ, with the wisdom before described. And without this, a common course of dispensing or preaching the Word, without differencing of persons, and truths, however it may be guilded over with a flow of words and oratory, is shameful work in the house of God.

“Now unto this skill, sundry things are required. (1.) A sound judgment in general concerning the state and condition of those unto whom any one is so dispensing the Word: it is the duty of a shepherd to know the state of his flock. (2.) An acquaintance with the ways and methods of the work of God’s grace on the minds and hearts of men, that he may pursue and comply with its design in the ministry of the Word. (3.) An acquaintance with the nature of temptation, with the especial hindrances of faith and obedience which may befall those unto whom the Word is dispensed. (4.) A right understanding of the nature of spiritual diseases, distempers and sicknesses, with their proper cures and remedies belonging thereunto. For the want hereof the hearts of the wicked are oftentimes made glad in the preaching of the Word, and those of the righteous filled with sorrow; the hands of sinners are strengthened, and those who are looking towards God are discouraged or turned out of the way.” (John Owen).

To our dear Brethren in the ministry, especially the younger ones, we would respectfully urge the prayerful pondering of the above quotation. It is in the attending to such vital considerations that the preacher may best be guided in the selection of his themes and the material for his sermons. If he is to “speak a word in season to him that is weary” (Isa. 50:4) — weary of the incessant conflict between the flesh and the Spirit, weary of resisting the continual assaults of Satan, weary of so often confessing to

God his repeated failures and falls (tempted to give up in despair); it is to these spiritual problems he had best direct his attention. Ah, my Brethren, you will bring more joy to the heart of the great Shepherd and be of far more real help unto His people, by seeking from Him messages suited to their hearts, than by taxing your ingenuity to allot one part of Matthew's Gospel to the people of Christ's day, another to the "Jewish remnant" in the Tribulation period, and still another to "the millennium."

It is true that the making of a *practical* application of *all* parts of God's Word to the varied cases of different souls is not the whole work to which the minister of the Gospel is called, nevertheless if that be neglected, he is most certainly a "physician of no value" (Job 13:4). It is also true that the *interpretation* of Holy Writ forms an essential part of a minister's labor, and that for this an intelligent grasp of God's purpose and plan is of prime importance; yet here too there is a great danger of erring. Many *have* erred, and erred grievously, for *their starting point is wrong!* No man can obtain a correct view of God's "program" by taking his stand in the Garden of Eden: to *start* with "the Adamic dispensation" can lead to nothing but confusion. It is an ominous fact that the great majority of "Dispensationalists," the men who boast of their ability to "rightly divide the Word of Truth," take the creation of man as the commencement of their scheme or system: this at once betrays a woeful ignorance and brands them as incompetent guides.

The key to all of God's works and ways is *the Everlasting Covenant*. Long before Adam was made, yea before Heaven and earth were created, the Triune God formed His great "purpose" and "plan." The Center of all the Divine counsels is Christ, the God-man Mediator, He is "the Brightness (or Effulgence) of God's glory" (Heb. 1:3). A revenue of infinite honor and praise was to accrue unto God by the wondrous work which the Redeemer would undertake. In eternity past a people was given to Him, predestinated to be conformed to His image (Rom. 8:29), and in eternity to come He will "shew the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness" toward them "through Christ Jesus" (Eph. 2:7). This is the "eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Eph. 3:11), and the stupendous part which Christ was to play in the bringing of this to pass, was all determined and fixed in that "everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure" (2 Sam. 23:5).

Now *all* of God's works have this one end in view, namely, the glory of Christ in the redemption of His chosen people: not only in the actual purchasing of redemption, but in all that was preparatory to that purchase, as also in securing the success of it. So too all that Christ does in the discharge of His Mediatorship, in His threefold office of Prophet, Priest, and King, either before He became incarnate, during the days of His flesh, or since; and also all that the Father or the Holy Spirit has done before or since the Cross, unite in this grand design: every act of God in creation, providence, or grace, has been wrought in view of the ultimate execution of the Eternal Covenant of Redemption. The various works or dispensations belonging to it, are but parts of one grand whole. It is a single design that was formed, to which all the offices of Christ do directly tend, and in which all the Persons of the Trinity do cooperate.

The Persons of the Trinity confederated in the great design of redemption. A covenant was entered into between Them. In that covenant the Father appointed the Son, the Son undertaking to work, all things in that work being stipulated and agreed upon; the Holy Spirit pledging Himself for the effectual application of the same unto its predestined beneficiaries. This it is which supplies the key to or throws light upon and explains all the consequent Divine actions. The world itself was created in order thereto, for the world was to be the platform or theater on which the great work of redemption was to be wrought out (1 Cor. 4:9). The work of creation was in order to the work of providence, as the building of a house or the making of a machine is for the *use* that is to be made of it; and the center of all God's providential workings is the glorification of the Mediator in the eternal redemption of that people which was given to Him before the foundation of the world.

*The creation of Heaven* was in order to the work of redemption, for it was to be the habitation of the redeemed: “Come you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world” (Matt. 25:34). The angels too were created to be employed in this work, and therefore are we told that they are “all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation” (Heb. 1:14). Moreover, it is by means of the wondrous work of redemption that the heavenly hierarchies are being taught the wondrous ways of God: “To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God” (Eph. 3:10).

*The entrance of sin* was in order to the work of redemption. As the darkness of night is required in order to display the shining stars of the firmament, so sin was needed as a black background to bring out into plainer relief the surpassing love of God unto His own people. As weakness is a foil for strength, ignorance for wisdom, so the Fall of the creature has demonstrated that man’s extremity is God’s opportunity. The more desperate the case of the patient, the better occasion has the competent physician to exhibit his skill. The more wretched and unworthy be the object, the more is the favor shown to him enhanced. How can mercy be exercised where there is no transgression? Is not power most clearly seen when formidable obstacles have to be overcome? It was the Divine permission of sin to enter the world which provided opportunity for God to more grandly reveal His wondrous attributes.

*The government of this world* has in view the great work of redemption. God is making all things “work together for good to them that love Him, who are the called according to His purpose.” Take the building of a large house: what a number of workmen are employed, what a variety of materials are used. If we view their actions singly and separately, there seems to be no relation between their labors: one group is engaged in the forest felling trees, another in the kiln making bricks, another in the shop making glass, another in the laboratory mixing paint, another in the plant manufacturing telephone wires, etc., etc. But each is needed, each makes his own essential contribution: all combine to produce the finished house.

Let us give another illustration. Take the publishing of this little magazine. Its design is to provide spiritual food for some of Christ’s scattered sheep. Consider then a few of the wondrous workings and providences of God which make this possible. Trees grew for years that they might be cut down, reduced to pulp, and made into paper. Steel was manufactured and then turned into machines to print, to cut, to fold. Ink too is needed. Railway trains (with all the complicated systems which are necessary to maintain them) must run in a hundred directions to carry these magazines to the varied points of distribution; yea, many ships must cross thousands of miles of ocean to transfer them to the forty foreign countries to which we send them. Little do the captain and crew of that ship, journeying to a remote island, think that *God* is employing them to carry His messages to one or two of His elect stationed there! Yet so it is!

In all the providential dealings of God there is “as it were a wheel in the middle of a wheel” (Eze. 1:16). As we have said above, the great Center of all God’s counsels and workings is the glorification of Christ, and that in the saving of His people. In the execution of His purpose many subsidiary acts are performed, and many subservient ends are accomplished; but all move forward to the same grand goal. To make this yet clearer to the reader, consider the Lord’s delivering of the Children of Israel from Egypt. The magnifying of His own great Name in the redemption of His people was the chief design before Him. But observe the various factors which entered into the same. Jacob and his family must emigrate from the land of Canaan and become sojourners in Egypt — and that was brought about by a mighty famine. There they must be oppressed and enslaved. To that end God raised up Pharaoh to be the merciless persecutor of them.

We must carefully distinguish between the various features of redemption itself and the parts of that work by which the redemption is wrought out. There is an obvious difference between the benefits procured and bestowed, and the operations of God by which those benefits are procured and bestowed.

Thus in the case last cited: the difference was marked between the benefit which Israel received and the parts of God's work by which it was wrought. The benefit which Israel received consisted of their deliverance from Egyptian bondage and misery, and their being brought into a more happy state as the servants of God and heirs of Canaan. But in order to that there was the calling of Moses, his mission to Pharaoh, the king's obstinacy, the signs and wonders which were wrought before him, with all of God's terrible judgments on his land and people.

Let us now mention some of the principal things which the Triune God designed to be accomplished by the Mediator's work of redemption. First, it was to subdue all God's enemies, for He has decreed that the triumph of His goodness over evil shall finally appear: "For this purpose was the Son of God manifested, that He might destroy the works of the Devil" (1 John 3:8), and "He must reign, till He has put all enemies under His feet" (1 Cor. 15:25). Second, to restore all the effects of the Fall so far as concerned the elect part of mankind. Originally, man was created in the likeness of God, but the Fall ruined his soul, corrupted his nature, and sank him into spiritual death. Now when the work of redemption is completed the people of God shall be perfectly conformed unto the image of His Son in spirit, and soul and body. Third, to gather together in one all of God's elect angels and men: Ephesians 1:10.

During the interval of time between the Fall and the incarnation of Christ, the works of God were so many forerunners and earnest of the Mediator's advent, and preparatory to the work of redemption. There were many great changes and revolutions in the world, yet were they all the turnings of the wheels of Providence in order to the coming of Christ into the world. The saints who were saved during those early ages were so many pledges of the future harvest. God wrought many lesser deliverances for them, and these were so many types and foreshadowings of the great salvation which the Redeemer was to work out. God was pleased to reveal Himself to one and another, from time to time, and communicate revelations of light to them; yet that light was more like that of the moon and stars at nighttime, in comparison with the rising of the Sun of righteousness (Mal. 4:2).

#### 4. *The purpose of God (continued)*

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in the heavenly places in Christ: According as He has chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love” (Eph. 1:3, 4). As we stated in the first section of this article (March issue) it is a great mistake to approach the study of God’s purpose and plan (His program for this world) by making the creation of Adam our starting point: that is to commence at the middle instead of the beginning. No, rather must we take as the foundation of all God’s dealings with the earth what is affirmed in Ephesians 1:3, 4. Nor must the terms of those verses be restricted unto the New Testament saints: instead, they speak of the entire Election of Grace, the sum of that people which God gave unto Christ to be redeemed by Him.

Probably it will at once be objected to what has just been said that, the Old Testament saints were *not* “Blessed with all *spiritual* blessings in the *heavenlies* in Christ,” but rather that they were blessed with *temporal* blessings *on earth* in Abraham. So it may appear from much of the letter of the Old Testament Scriptures, but if we allow the New Testament to open the mystery contained in them, we are forced to come to an entirely different conclusion. As this is a vital point of interpretation, and one which is now so little understood, we feel obliged to labour it at some length. Of course carnal men can only perceive the external meaning of God’s Word, but inasmuch as some of God’s own children have been “carried away” by their fleshly reasonings, we trust that our efforts may be used of the Lord in dispelling the mists of error from the minds of some of His own people.

The Apostle Paul, in the 3rd chapter of Galatians, when treating of the blessings of Abraham (that is, the things God promised to Abraham, and in him to all nations, vv. 8, 9) does in the 14th verse clearly explain that “blessing” to be a *spiritual* one, affirming “that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.” The words “that we might receive the promise of the Spirit” are a manifest exegesis of “that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles.” Now the promise and gift of the Spirit is the substance and sum of all spiritual blessings, for He is the root and fountain of them: to say we have the Spirit given unto us, is all one has to declare that we have all spiritual blessings conveyed. This is clear from a comparison of Luke 11:13 with Matthew 7:11: what Christ in the former calls the Father giving “the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him,” in the latter He terms “give good things to them that ask Him”; that is, the things which are truly “good” which the Spirit brings with Him.

As Calvin long ago pointed out in his commentary on that Epistle, the above interpretation is established and fixed by two expressions in that verse. First, the Apostle did not say, “The Spirit of promise,” which would have thrown the emphasis upon the Person of the Blessor, but “the promise of the Spirit,” which is a Hebraism for spiritual blessings, in opposition to things outward and material. Second, the confirming words “by faith”: that is, those blessings of which *faith* is sensible and appropriate, receiving and taking in *spiritual* things, being a Divinely implanted principle suited to the reception of just such things. Thus it is one and the same “blessing” which comes on the Gentiles (who had not the promise of a literal Canaan) and upon God’s elect among the Jews — which is the Apostle’s theme and scope in Galatians 3. The things promised to Abraham consisted in things *spiritual*, and therefore the Gentiles as well as the Jews were capable of them.

In further proof of this we would appeal to an incident which has greatly puzzled those of our moderns who have given any serious thought to it. We refer to Jacob being blessed by Isaac, wherein both in God’s intention and Isaac’s apprehension such a vast and great difference was put between Jacob’s portion and Esau’s. Yet if the whole of Genesis 27 be carefully read, no such difference is perceivable, for the whole legacy of blessings bequeathed to Jacob was but outward and earthly in the letter of it:

“Therefore God give you of the dew of heaven, and the fatness of the earth, and plenty of corn and wine: Let people serve you, and nations bow down to you: be lord over your brethren, and let your mother’s sons bow down to you: cursed be everyone that curses you, and blessed be he that blesses you” (vv. 28, 29).

Now compare with this the blessing estated upon Esau: “Behold, your dwelling shall be the fatness of the earth, and of the dew of heaven from above; And by your sword shalt you live, and shalt serve your brother; and it shall come to pass when you shalt have the dominion, that you shalt break his yoke from off your neck” (Gen. 27:39, 40). From the point of earthly blessings, was not that well-nigh as full a portion as that which was promised Jacob? Why, then, should Isaac be so sorrowful (v. 33) that Jacob rather than his favourite son Esau was the recipient of such immeasurably greater blessing, if there was no deeper and grander content in the promises made to him than the outward letter of them denoted? And why should Esau’s hatred be so stirred up against Jacob (v. 41), unless his own portion was greatly inferior to his brother’s? — which it could not have been had Jacob’s consisted merely of “corn and wine” (v. 37)!

But the difficulty which so many have felt in connection with the above, disappears at once when we discern the mystery contained in the language of that Divine blessing which Isaac pronounced upon Jacob. Once it is clearly recognized that (oftentimes) in the Old Testament heavenly things were referred to in earthly terms, that spiritual blessings were set forth under the figure of material things, then many a passage at once becomes luminous. That there is no forced or arbitrary interpretation of ours is seen from Hebrews 12:17, where the Holy Spirit Himself has forever settled the meaning of the terms used in Genesis 27: unless the *spiritual* blessings promised to God’s elect in Christ had been typically signified and mystically intended under those earthly things unto Jacob, the Apostle had never been moved to say that Jacob inherited “*the* blessing” and Esau was “rejected,” for all such earthly blessings Esau *did* inherit in common with Jacob.

Is it not plain, then, dear reader, that there was *another* sort of “blessings,” which were latent and hid, even a substantial though invisible and spiritual kind of blessings for evermore, whereof the “corn and wine” promised Jacob, were but the shadows, and that it was *this* which made the tremendous and vital difference between the temporal things granted unto Esau? That is why Jacob’s portion is called “*the* blessing” (Heb. 12:17). Observe too the emphasis made by Isaac in Genesis 27:33, “I have blessed him, yea, and he shall be blessed,” which imports that the same spiritual blessing God promised to Abraham was now made over by him to Jacob, for Jehovah had employed the same language when blessing the father of all believers, saying, “In blessing I will bless you” (Gen. 22:17). Still further evidence of the identity of Abraham’s and Jacob’s portion is seen in the last words of Isaac concerning him: “Cursed be every one that curses you, and blessed be he that blesses you” (Gen. 27:29) — omitted in what he said to Esau — being part of the very words God originally used to Abraham: *see* Genesis 12:2, 3.

How low and mean are the thoughts which are now entertained by so many of the portion which God gave unto His people in the earlier ages of the world. What gross ignorance is betrayed by those who suppose that being blessed “in basket and in store” was the best that the *spiritual* in Israel received from God. Even the Old Testament itself contains much which condemns so gross a conception. Take the Psalms. There we read again and again of the “Blessed” man. Who is he? one possessing much land and great flocks and herds? No indeed. If you will read David’s description of him says Paul, here it is: “Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin” (Rom. 4:7, 8).

In the New Testament dispensation the mystery hidden beneath the letter of the Old Testament — which was always known to the spiritual, but which was hidden from the natural man — is plainly expounded. Examples of this fact have been given above, and they might easily be multiplied; but we will

add one more. At the beginning of this dispensation, Peter, addressing his brethren after the flesh from the porch of the temple, said, “you are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in your seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be *blessed*” (Acts 3:25). To Peter’s hearers those words signified little or nothing more than they do unto the literalists of our day, understanding by them simply a reference to Canaan and temporal things. Therefore does Peter expound and say, “Unto you first God, having raised up (by incarnation) His Son Jesus, sent Him to *bless* you, *in* turning away every one of you from his iniquities” (Acts 3:26).

In their gross carnality the Jews, whose eyes were veiled by the outward letter of promises earthly, looked for a Messiah who was to usher in an earthly kingdom, vested with material pomp and glory. But Peter announces something infinitely more blessed than if God should make all of His hearers mundane kings and emperors, namely deliverance from the penalty and power of sin. He mentions that one blessing for all the rest, to show what sort they are all of; and also because the one he specifies is the first and forerunner of all the others. In this the Apostle was but following in the steps of his Master, for almost at the beginning of His ministry Christ had announced, that the “blessed” were not the holders of high earthly offices, or the possessors of much silver and gold, but the “poor in spirit,” the “meek,” the “pure in heart,” etc. (Matt. 5).

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in the heavenly places in Christ.” The “in heavenly places” or “in the heavenlies” in addition to “all spiritual blessings” calls for close attention. That this is not a synonymous addition as expressing God’s blessings by two words that signify one and the same thing is evident, because it is not said “spiritual” *and* “heavenly” nor “spiritual” *or* “heavenly”; all those blessings are spiritual, and all were in the heavenlies in Christ. What, then, is the further and separate thought included by “in the heavenly places”? The “Dispensationalists” say it is in contrast from the earthly blessings which pertained unto the nation of Israel. But that is a mistake. The key which opens the answer to our question is found in the final words: “in the heavenly places *in Christ*.” Now when “in Christ” is used contrastively, it is always antithetical to “in Adam,” and never to Israel or the earth.

All the race was seminally in Adam’s loins. Moreover, he was placed in Eden as the federal head and legal representative of his posterity. We were all created in Adam, and we were all blessed in Adam: “and God *blessed* them, and said,” etc. (Gen. 1:28). Adam being made in God’s image after his likeness (Gen. 1:26) was, in that respect, a spiritual man, for such is the image of God: see Colossians 3:10. Adam’s being in God’s image was the foundation of that charter of blessing to him and his posterity. His graces were all spiritual, and his life and communion with God was spiritual; and so of him it may be truly said that he was “blessed with spiritual blessings,” as well as things which were earthly (“have you dominion, etc.), yet, but as “flesh and blood” can in an earthly condition be capable of. And since we were then all of us “in Adam,” we too were all blessed with spiritual blessings.

Nevertheless, Adam in his unfallen condition was but “flesh and blood” and an earthly man, and could not enjoy God as He is to be seen and enjoyed in Heaven. Hence the distinction drawn in 1 Corinthians 15:47: “The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven.” And as that earthly man was, such should we that are of him have remained had he not fallen, never advancing higher: 1 Corinthians 15:48. But Christ being the Lord from Heaven, a heavenly Man, and we being “blessed” in Him and together with Him, are blessed in heavenly things, or with heavenly blessings, and are raised up to heavenly places with Him (Eph. 2:6): for as in the heavenly Man, Christ, such are (in status and state) those in Him. Heaven is Christ’s native country, He is the Lord of it, and we being united to Him by covenant relationship and joined to Him in one spirit, must share His inheritance. Therefore has He affirmed “that where I am, there you may be also” (John 14:3). Thus, God’s favoured people are blessed *in Christ* with all heavenly blessings, and not spiritual only, which Adam (and the race in him) in his primitive condition was.



Now the sum and substance of the spiritual and heavenly blessings with which the entire Election of Grace were blessed in Christ, are described in the verses which immediately follow. “According as He has chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love. Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will; To the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein he has made us accepted in the Beloved.” In verse 3 praise is rendered unto God for His eternal *act* of “blessing” His people. In verses 4-6 we are shown how all blessings depend upon God’s election in eternity past and likewise how all depends upon Jesus Christ. A parallel passage is found in 2 Timothy 1:9, “Who has saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began”: all the “blessings” of Ephesians 1:3 are here expressed in the single term “grace.”

How the blessings of Ephesians 1:3 are communicated to God’s elect in a time-state, or, in other words, how “the eternal purpose which God purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord (Eph. 3:11) is wrought out in human history, is revealed in Ephesians 1:7-14. As will be seen at a glance at those verses, everything else is wrapped up in the first thing there mentioned, namely “redemption” through the blood of Christ. The consideration of this must be held over (D. V.) for the closing section of this article. Meanwhile we would urge the interested reader to prayerfully read and re-read what has already been said, and to “Prove all things; hold fast that which is good” (1 Thess. 5:21).

## 5. The Purpose of God (Concluded).

Let us resume at the point where we closed the second section of this article. “In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace” (Eph. 1:7). The attentive reader will at once note a change in the tense of the verb from that employed in the previous verses, which at once marks the division in thought or subject. In verse 3 it was “who has blessed,” in verse 4 “has chosen us,” verse 5 “having predestinated us,” and in verse 6 “has made us accepted”; in each case the reference is to the decision or act of the Father in the everlasting covenant, before the foundations of the world were laid. But in verse 7 it is “in whom we *have* redemption,” etc. — another set of blessings is there introduced, blessings which become the saints’ portion in a time-state, and which are the means by which they reach the ultimate goal of eternal glory.

It would lead us too far afield to give here an exposition of Ephesians 1:7-9, so we must content ourselves with a bare outline. First, all the blessings which God’s elect enjoy now are based upon the “redemption” which they have in Christ. Second, three comprehensive blessings are named: “forgiveness of sins,” which is the negative side of justification. Then regeneration, or the Spirit’s work of quickening (v. 8): the greatness of this blessing is signified by the “wherein He has abounded toward us”; the nature of it — working in us “wisdom (cf. Psa. 19:7, Prov. 2:10, Eph. 1:17) and prudence”; the cause being “the good pleasure of His will” (v.9). Third, the making known of all that is said in verses 3-8, which is through the preaching of the Word. Now it is this last point which we must enlarge upon.

As the opening verse of the Epistle to the Hebrews declares, it was not only at “sundry times” (in broken fragments, as it were) but in “divers manners” that God, in bygone ages, communicated to men a knowledge of His eternal counsels. Yet, though the “manners” were diverse or varied, there was an unmistakable unity underlying them, as well as a noticeable progress in them. Central in all of them was the revelation of the Covenant of Grace, which, when understood in the most extensive sense, comprehends all the designs and transactions respecting the redemption of God’s elect by Jesus Christ. The Covenant of Grace is in sharp contrast from the Covenant (or “law”) of Works, under which man was first made. This Covenant of Grace (or Everlasting Covenant) is the foundation of all the favour which is shown unto the redeemed Church throughout time and eternity.

Now the Covenant of Grace is made known in the Gospel, which “Gospel,” as Galatians 3:8 tells us, was “preached to Abraham,” and which Hebrews 4:2 declares was “preached unto” the nation of Israel. When that Gospel is truly and cordially embraced there is a covenant transaction that takes place between God in Christ and every believer: this it is which is signified by “*laying hold of God’s covenant*” (Isa. 56:4, 6), and which was figured of old when men entered into a covenant with God. Then it is that God also enters into a covenant with us, for when the believing sinner heartily receives the Gospel, he has fulfilled the only condition required from him, and is at once entitled to all the promises of the covenant and salvation is made sure to him; for one of the promises of the covenant, as proposed to men by God is, that he who once truly believes and accepts of the offer made to him in the Gospel, shall never fall from it, so as to fail to receive the blessings of it. It is in this respect an everlasting covenant, as it ensures eternal life, can never fail or be broken by either party in covenant.

The terms of this covenant which God makes with His believing people are described in the following words, “And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put My fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from Me” (Jer. 32:40). This is the covenant of which David speaks, “He has made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure: for *this* is all my salvation, and *all* my desire” (2 Sam. 23:5). The tenor of this covenant of God is stated as follows, “I will put My laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to Me a people: And they shall not teach every man

his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know Me, from the least to the greatest. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more” (Heb. 8:10-12).

This Covenant of Grace is also called in Scripture a *new* or second covenant, in distinction from another and previous covenant. This is the Covenant between the Triune God and Christ the Mediator. The first or old covenant was between God and the first Adam as representing all mankind (Hosea 6:7 margin; Job 31:33), as the legal and public head. That between God and the last Adam, the Redeemer of the elect, their legal Representative and public Head, is a second and new one; and it is this which lays the foundation of the covenant between God and believers. Absolutely speaking, the covenant between God and Christ is *not* a “new” one, for it was entered into long before Adam was created; but relatively, it is spoken of as “new” *as it was made known to men*, more fully, in contrast from the Covenant of Works, under which all mankind were antecedent to redemption by Christ; which covenant of works was brought into view and kept most in sight under the Mosaic economy or dispensation.

“The covenant made with the children of Israel was in the form of a covenant of works. The law of works was exhibited first, and brought most clearly into sight, that it might be known to be what it really is; and the covenant of grace, or the Gospel, though revealed, and contained in that covenant (with Israel) was not set in open light, but covered and in a measure hid under the types and shadows of that covenant; and under the form of a covenant of works, as the nucleus or kernel is covered and hid with the husk or shell that surrounds it. So that they who were not spiritual, discerning and attentive, saw only the outside, and considered it as wholly a covenant of works; and hoped for justification by it, in that view. It is certain this was the case with the nation of the Jews in general, in the apostles’ days. They sought righteousness and justification, as it were, by the works of the law: they were ignorant of God’s righteousness, and attempted to establish their own righteousness, the righteousness of the law (Rom. 9:32, 10:3).

“This form of a covenant of works is represented by *the veil* which Moses put over his face, when speaking to the people: ‘So that the children of Israel could not steadfastly look to the end of that which is abolished: But their minds were blinded: for until this day remains the same veil untaken away in the reading of the old testament (or the old covenant); which veil is done away in Christ. But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the veil is upon their heart’ (2 Cor. 3:13-15). In *this* view of it, and considered as exhibiting the covenant of works, St. Paul calls the giving of the law from Mount Sinai, and that dispensation, ‘The ministration of death and condemnation, written and engraved on stones’ (2 Cor. 3:7). It is therefore said ‘the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ’ (John 1:17). The dispensation under Moses was a legal dispensation, exhibiting law in the form of a covenant of works: one particular, and perhaps the principal design of it, was to reveal the Divine law in strictness, extent and glory of it; as necessary to prepare for the clear and open manifestation of the covenant of grace; which was then in a great measure hid, and more obscurely revealed under types; so that the whole was but a *shadow* of the good things of the covenant of grace (Heb. 10:1).

“Therefore the revelation made by Moses is called the *law*; and the covenant into which the children of Israel entered, is represented as a legal covenant, a covenant of works, to which the covenant of grace is opposed, as another and a new covenant. One quotation from Scripture, out of many that might be mentioned, will ascertain this: namely Hebrews 8:6-9. Therefore the Gospel is called the ‘new testament,’ and the Mosaic dispensation is called the ‘old testament’: see 2 Corinthians 3:6, 14.

“The covenant of grace has been revealed to men, and has been administered in different forms, and by various methods ever since the first intimation of mercy to sinners, made soon after the first human apostasy; and by it all true believers have been saved from that time to this; and none have been saved in any other way; nor will any be saved in any other way but this, to the end of the world; and in

this respect it is an everlasting covenant. . . From Moses to the coming of Christ, the covenant of grace was made known and administered: and the Gospel was preached to the children of Israel, through all that time, and all the pious were saved by it, though it was covered under the form of a covenant of works, as has been observed and explained.

“The law, as a covenant of works, was not exhibited in the revelation made to the children of Israel by Moses, as it has been now explained, under the notion that any man could obtain the favour of God, and be saved by this law or covenant; for this was impossible. But this law was thus revealed and *added*, that it might be known what the law was, and that men might be hereby convinced, that no man can be justified by the works of the law, as by his sins he is under the curse of it; and that under this conviction, and despairing of salvation by the covenant of works, they might be led to understand and embrace the covenant of grace, the way of salvation by faith in the Redeemer. This is the light in which this point is set by the apostle Paul: ‘Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law. But the Scripture has concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe’ (Gal. 3:21, 22).

“This was the end which the revelation of this law answered, to those who were saved under that dispensation; and it is suited and designed to answer this same end to those who shall be saved, to the end of the world: for by the law thus revealed is the knowledge of sin, and the curse of God, under which all men are, who do not believe in Christ. Thus St. Paul states the matter with regard to himself: ‘I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, you shalt not covet. For without the law sin was dead. For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died’ (Rom. 7:7-9). Though the Redeemer had not actually performed and gone through what He had undertaken to do and suffer; yet it being engaged and made certain, all believers who lived before His incarnation, were saved by virtue of His sufferings and obedience, which were certain to take place in due time.

“We trust the difference and opposition between the covenant of works and the new covenant, the covenant of grace, have been made clear above. The former requires perfect obedience as the condition of life, as the price to recommend to the favour of God, which is the righteousness of the law of works. The latter consists in a testimony and promise on God’s part, requiring nothing of man but that belief of this testimony and promise, which implies a cordial reception of the good things exhibited and offered in this covenant, without offering any thing as the price of them; but receiving them as a free gift to a sinner, infinitely guilty and wretched. The condition of the first is out of the reach of man: it is impossible he should obtain righteousness by it, because he is a sinner. The last is made effectual by the Spirit to all of God’s elect, saving every one that believeth.

“The apostle Paul states the difference and opposition between these two covenants from the writing of Moses, which proves that *both* these covenants *were revealed* in that dispensation. His words are these: ‘Moses describes the righteousness which is of the law, That the man which does those things shall live by them (See Lev. 18:5). But the righteousness *which is of faith* speaks on this wise, Say not in your heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above:) Or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead). But what says it? The word is nigh you, even in your mouth, and in your heart: (See *Deut.* 30:11-14) that is, the word of faith, which we preach; That if you shalt confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you shalt be saved’ (Rom. 10:5-9).

“In the preaching of the Gospel, the covenant of grace is proposed and the blessings it contains are offered to all to whom it comes, upon their believing and heartily approving the way of salvation therein proposed; for all who thus comply come up to the condition of the covenant on their part, and

consequently are interested in all the promises of it” (Samuel Hopkins). Christ and His benefits are offered to all who hear the Gospel: the Lord Jesus says, “He that rejects Me, and receives not My words, has One that judges him” (John 12:48), and none can *reject* Him to whom He is never “offered.”

The lengthy quotation which we have made above, from one who was contemporaneous with and an intimate friend of the celebrated Jonathan Edwards, contains one of the most lucid and illuminating treatments of that aspect of the theme we are dealing with which we have ever come across in all our readings. We earnestly commend it to the best attention of interested readers. It throws a flood of light upon the Mosaic economy. It shows how that under the dispensation of the Old Testament the Everlasting Covenant was being administered and its blessings bestowed. It calls attention to the fact that the (seemingly incompatible elements of) Law and the Gospel were being proclaimed at one and the same time, that the claims of God were being pressed and the grace of God manifested during the same period.

From what has been brought out above, it should be plain that preaching the Gospel implies and entails a declaration of the whole system of truth and duty contained in the Scripture. Though some truths are more essential and important than others, and though the Gospel may truly be preached while some are overlooked, yet it cannot be *fully* preached unless the whole of Divine revelation is brought into view, and therefore must be in a degree defective. Therefore, to preach the Gospel is to do as Paul did and “declare all the counsel of God” (Acts 20:27). Every doctrine revealed in the Word, and every duty prescribed, has a connection with the whole, and all make but one consistent system.

Finally, what has been said above should make it clear that the preaching of the Covenant of Grace (the Gospel) *does not* annul the Law of God, nor discharge men from duty and obedience; but requires and demands obedience of all to whom it is preached. The Law is not in the least abolished in the extent and strictness of its precepts by the Gospel. Christ’s deliverance of His people from the curse of the Law, no more lessens their obligations to obey the Law perfectly, than His healing of the impotent man rendered it needless for Him to say, “Sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto you” (John 5:14). No, the Law remains as much the measure and rule of duty to the Christian, as ever it was, and he is no further holy than he is conformed to the Law, loving God with all his heart, mind and strength and his neighbour as himself. Thus the preaching of the Gospel does not make void the Law, but establishes it (Rom. 3:31).

## 6. *The Purpose of God (Summarized).*

We are not unmindful of the fact that this magazine is read by two widely different classes of people. First, it is being sent unto a goodly number of preachers, and others who are fitted for the deeper things of God. Second, the greater number who receive it have not enjoyed the privileges of the former, and so are heavily handicapped when they take up such articles as in this present series on “Dispensationalism.” Thus the happy task before us of seeking to minister unto those whose needs are similar, yet whose capacities to receive and digest food is so varied, is not without its difficulties. On the one hand, we wish (by God’s grace) to maintain the level indicated by the title of our little paper, “*Studies in the Scriptures*,” yet on the other hand, we desire wisdom from above so that we may minister in such a way that (if they will but take prayerful pains) even the babes of Christ may be edified. It has therefore occurred to us that if we give a summary of the last three articles (really one in three parts) some may be helped.

First, we pointed out (in the March issue) that the favourite text of the “Dispensationalists” — “rightly dividing the Word of Truth” (2 Tim. 2:15) — makes no reference whatever to the sectioning of God’s Word, and limiting large portions of it to companies long since dead and gone. That instead, 2 Timothy 2:15 bids the servant of God see to it that he ministers the Word suitably unto the various conditions and circumstances of his congregation. The members of his spiritual family are in widely different states of soul; some are cold and sluggish and need rousing; some are sad and need comforting; some are ignorant and need instructing; some are feeble and need strengthening; some are flirting with the world and need admonishing. As a wise parent suits the diet unto the ages and health of his children, so will a well-instructed pastor.

Second, we pointed how that the great majority of the “Dispensationalists” begin at the wrong place; instead of starting with the “Adamic dispensation” they need to go back to the Everlasting Covenant, which God entered into with Christ on behalf of His elect before the foundation of the world; that instead of commencing with Genesis 1, we need to make Ephesians 1:3-6 the foundation of our study and thinking. It is there that we find the key which opens up to us God’s “Program for the ages.” It is there we discover the character and contents of God’s eternal purpose, which purpose is slowly but surely being accomplished during the course of human history. It is there we learn that the grand center of God’s counsels is the glorifying of Himself in and by Christ, through the redeeming of His favoured people.

In commenting upon the language of Ephesians 1:3 we sought to repudiate a double error which the “Dispensationalists” have made there: first, that the contents of that verse describe blessings which *only* the saints of this Christian dispensation receive; and second that its terms are in designed contrast from the material blessings which Israel enjoyed in Canaan. That verse 3 cannot be restricted unto Christians of this age is clear from what follows in verse 4-6 — the connective “according as” at the beginning of verse 4 shows they speak of one and the same company. Now *all* of God’s elect, from Abel onwards, were “chosen in Christ,” were “predestinated unto the adoption of children” and were “accepted in the Beloved.” This should be abundantly clear to every spiritual reader who will carefully ponder the terms of John 10:16, Ephesians 2:19-21, Hebrews 11:40.

In developing our refutation of the second error we called attention to the fact that the Old Testament saints, equally with the New Testament saints, were blessed with “*all spiritual* blessings in heavenly places in Christ.” First, we pointed out how that the language of Ephesians 1:3 points a designed contrast from the spiritual “blessings” which we received *in* unfallen Adam. In Ephesians 4:18 Christians are reminded that in their unregenerate state they were “*alienated from* the life of God”: now such language would be meaningless if the saints had *never* enjoyed the life of God. 1 Corinthians 15:22 tells us that “in Adam all die,” died spiritually; so all were once alive in Adam, alive spiritually. But Adam,

being a man of the earth (“of the earth, earthy”) though we were originally blessed with *spiritual* blessings in him, yet only as in an earthly man. In blessed antithesis from this, the entire Election of Grace have been blessed with all spiritual blessings in *heavenly places* in Christ, the heavenly Man. *That* is the contrast pointed by Ephesians 1:3.

Now these spiritual blessings *in heavenly places* were “inherited” in Christ by all of God’s elect from Abel onwards. That the “blessing of Abraham” (i.e. the blessing Abraham received from God), was of a *spiritual* and not of a material nature, is clear from Galatians 3:14; and that Abraham was aware that the ultimate reception of it awaited him in Heaven may be plainly seen by a reference to Hebrews 11:11-16. Then we sought to show that the “blessing” which Jacob received from Isaac was identical with the “blessing of Abraham,” though it was couched in the language of earthly things. That statement, once it is seen to be Scriptural, should revolutionize our understanding of much of the Old Testament Scriptures: spiritual blessings are there frequently referred to under material figures, heavenly favours under earthly shadows. Just as we are told in Revelation 11:8 that the city of Jerusalem is “*spiritually* called Sodom and Egypt,” so very many of the places, objects and things referred to in the Old Testament have a spiritual meaning.

In amplifying the above thought we appealed to the Psalms. If they be read impartially we cannot but see that the soul experiences of the spiritual in Israel was quite on a par with the attainment of the most eminent saints of the New Testament. The very first Psalm strikes the keynote, and describes at length the man who is truly “blessed.” That figures of speech abound in that Book is obvious at a glance, and any attempt to interpret literally only reduces them to an absurdity. Take the well-known language of the 23rd.: who is so senseless as to understand the “green pastures” and the “still waters” to signify only material food and drink? Then why should those who insist on carnalizing the Sacred Oracles ridicule those who give a *spiritual* interpretation to “Mount Zion,” the “cedars of Lebanon,” the “snows of Hermon,” etc., etc?

It is tragic beyond words to find those who are now looked up to as the champions of orthodoxy perpetuating the great error into which the Jews of old fell. *They* had great reverence for the Holy Scriptures, had implicit confidence in their Divine authorship, and yet in their gross carnality saw no deeper than the outward letter of the Word, literalizing everything and missing the spiritual meaning and application of it. Even the Apostles were considerably tainted by this poison. When their Lord warned them against the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees, they imagined He was rebuking them because they had “taken no bread” (Matt. 16:7). When He said to them, “I have meat to eat that you know not of,” they asked each other “Has any man brought Him ought to eat?” (John 4:33). With such solemn examples before us, are we not without excuse if we take not the warning to heart! Is it not obvious that spiritual things can only be “spiritually discerned,” and that for this we are dependent upon the teaching of the Holy Spirit!

“I the Lord do keep it; I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day” (Isa. 27:3). How blessed is such language as this when I discern here the promise of Christ to nourish and preserve His Church on earth! “you shalt not muzzle the ox when he treads out the corn” (Deut. 25:4). How blessed to learn that that was written “*altogether for our sakes*,” that God’s servants today might know that “he that plows should plow in hope; and he that threshes in hope should be partaker of his hope” (1 Cor. 9:10)! Here the Holy Spirit Himself has placed a sure key in our hands and shown us *how* to open the *spiritual* meaning of the Old Testament Scriptures: the “oxen” were but figures of Christian evangelists.

In the next place we sought to show that even during the Old Testament times God was administering the Everlasting Covenant, that under the legal economy of Moses *grace* was being exercised unto all those who had been chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world. This is

admittedly the most difficult aspect of our subject, and at a later date we hope, God willing, to devote a series of articles to a consideration and exposition of the covenants which God made with Noah, Abraham, Israel, and David, giving particular attention to the Siniatic. Yet we trust sufficient has been said in our last article, particularly in the lengthy quotation made from Samuel Hopkins, to throw some light thereon. The *Gospel* as well as the Law was preached unto Israel, preached largely (though not exclusively) through the whole ceremonial system and ritual which was established under Moses.

In the purpose of God the Lamb was “slain from the foundation of the world” (Rev. 13:8), and therefore each of His elect became (at their regeneration and conversion) interested in and sharers of the benefits which Christ’s atoning sacrifice was to procure for them, namely, the bestowment of the Holy Spirit, the gift of faith, the forgiveness of their sins, and the “exceeding great and precious promises of God.” These were made over to them in the Covenant of Grace, or, in other words, were revealed to them by the Gospel of God. The Covenant of Grace was administered by God from the days of Abel onwards, or none of Adam’s fallen race would ever have been taken into the favour of God. True that Covenant of Grace was administered in different forms and by varied methods, yet the substance of it was always the same. The deliverance of Noah and his family from the flood, of Lot from Sodom, of Israel from Egypt, of Daniel from the lion’s den, were all so many adumbrations of the redemptive deliverance which Christ has wrought for His people.

The giving of the moral law unto Israel served a number of different purposes, and needs to be considered from a number of various angles. First, it announced the unchanging requirements of God’s righteousness and holiness. Second, it revealed to fallen man his spiritual impotency, his utter inability to meet the claims of his Maker and Governor. Third, it revealed the need for substitutionary sacrifice and served as a constant foil unto the ceremonial law. Fourth, it also furnished a rule of conduct unto those who trusted in the sacrificial blood and desired to please Him who had made such gracious provision to meet their deep needs. Grace reigns through righteousness (Rom. 5:21) and not at the expense of it; and if all the details of the Siniatic covenant be carefully pondered, there will be found a blessed and wondrous mingling of justice and mercy, grace and righteousness, Gospel and Law. But as we expect to devote a separate article to the consideration of the Law in this present series, we will not here further anticipate the contents of the same.

Few passages in the New Testament afford more help when pondering the varied *character* of the Mosaic economy than Romans 10:5-9. There the Apostle quotes a Scripture from the Pentateuch, which seems to have been completely lost sight of by our modern “Dispensationalists.” In Deuteronomy 30:14 we find Jehovah saying through Moses “The word is very nigh unto you, in your mouth, and in your heart, that you mayest do it” — see the whole passage: verses 11-15. This, the Holy Spirit, by the pen of the Apostle, expressly declares to be “the righteousness of faith” (i.e. the Gospel) and then Paul adds, “that is, the Word of Faith which we preach.” Let the reader attentively weigh the language of Deuteronomy 30:11-14 and then ponder the Apostle’s inspired comment thereon: does not this one example furnish clear evidence that the language of the Old Testament can only be understood in the light of the New?

But there is something more there in that Deuteronomy passage which we particularly wish the reader to see clearly. The Apostle affirms in plain language that the Gospel he preached was proclaimed by Moses too, as he says again in Romans 3:21 “the righteousness of God” (that is, the perfect obedience of Christ which is imputed to all who believe in Him: Romans 3:24) which is now manifested more fully and openly under this new covenant or testament, was “witnessed by the law and the prophets.” Note it well that the Law and the Prophets not only “predicted” this righteousness of God, but definitely “witnessed” to the same. Further proof is furnished by the Apostle in Romans 4, where he cites the cases of Abraham and David, as being justified by faith without the deeds of the law.



How clear it is, then, that the Old and New Testaments possess a central unity; that God has had only one way of saving from the beginning; and that the Covenant of Grace has been administered by Him in every stage of human history. And how clear it is that modern “Dispensationalists” have an entirely erroneous conception of the Mosaic economy! The teaching of the “Scofield Bible,” and all who echo its misleading and mischievous novelties, is to be steadfastly resisted, no matter how unpopular such resistance may render one among “Fundamentalists.” When a man makes the studied statement that “As a dispensation, grace begins with the death and resurrection of Christ, the point of testing is *no longer legal obedience* as the *condition of salvation*, but accepting or rejecting of Christ” (as Mr. Scofield does in his notes on John 1:16), he at once exposes fundamental ignorance both of “the Law” and “the Gospel,” and therefore is no safe teacher for lovers of the Truth to follow.

In conclusion, may we suggest that those who have been able to follow this article, and have, under God, been helped by the same, turn back now and prayerfully *study* the three which precede it. We shall greatly value the prayers of God’s people that we may be definitely guided by the Holy Spirit in preparing the remaining articles of this series. The need for them is great. The difficulty of receiving them is great too, for all of us have much to *unlearn*, and only Divine grace can enable us to re-examine the whole subject impartially, be willing to relinquish errors which hitherto we thought were God’s Truth, and receive with meekness what God has for us.

## Part III

### 7. *The Church of God.*

One might reasonably conclude that the Greek word for “church” settles forever not only the meaning of the term itself, but also the scope of its membership. Ek-klesia, by common consent, signifies “out-called” or “called out.” It is a separated company. Thus the “Church of God” is synonymous with “God’s elect”: the Church of God is neither broader nor narrower in its range than the entire Election of Grace. To deny this is, either on the one hand to repudiate the unequivocal meaning of “Ek-klesia,” or to reject on the other hand the Scripture doctrine of election. It is both a significant and ominous fact that the vast majority of “dispensationalists,” who limit the “Church” to believers of the Christian era, are men who so far from holding fast the precious and basic truth of God’s sovereign and unconditional election, insist that God loves everybody, that Christ atoned for the sins of the whole human race, and that the Holy Spirit is trying to save all who hear the Gospel. This, by itself, is quite sufficient to discredit these men in the eyes of all who love sound doctrine.

That the “Church” and “the elect” are co-extensive in their personal, may be seen by a comparison of Colossians 1:24 with 2 Timothy 2:10. In the former we read, “Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for His body’s sake, which is the church.” The “afflictions of Christ” do not refer to the sufferings of Christ personally, for *those* were all finished when He was exalted to the Father’s right hand. No, the allusion is unto “Christ” *mystical*, that is, unto the members of His mystical body, who are united to Him by such a near and vital bond, and with whom He has such a fellow-feeling for their infirmities, that *they* are called by *His* name. Those “afflictions” the Apostle “filled up,” not vicariously, but ministerially, “for” the Church’s good.

Now in 2 Timothy 2:10 the same Apostle declared, “Therefore I endure all things for the elect’s sake.” The “elect” are the ones whom God chose from everlasting unto salvation: for them the Lord Jesus obeyed and died, for them the Gospel is preached, and for their sakes ministers are qualified and commissioned to teach and suffer what they do in the faithful prosecution of this mission. But what we would here call particular attention unto is, that in Colossians 1:24 Paul speaks of his “sufferings” for “Christ’s body’s sake, which is the Church,” while in 2 Timothy 2:10 he says he endured those sufferings for “the elect’s sake”; which proves that the “Church” and the “elect” are the *same persons*.

In Acts 20:28 we read of “the church of God, which He has purchased with His own blood.” Here is declaration free from all ambiguity, which leaves an honest heart in no doubt whatever as to *who* compose the members of the “Church”: it is *all* for whom the precious blood of Christ was shed, Old Testaments saints just as truly as the New. Inasmuch as in the eternal purpose of God, Christ was a Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, His blood had a promissory or prospective value, as well as a retrospective; that is to say, the work which He historically completed at Calvary, accomplished as much for the elect of God who lived hundreds of years before that work was performed, as for those of God’s elect who live centuries after it was finished.

“Christ also loved the Church, and gave Himself for it; That He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word, That he might present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish” (Eph 5:25-27). And *who are* they that were “loved” by Christ antecedently to His giving Himself for them? The New Testament saints only? No, He had a people in Old Testament times too, unto whom He said, “I have loved you with an everlasting love” (Jer. 31:3); yea, of whom He declared, “The saints that are in the earth, and to the excellent, in whom is all My delight” (Psa. 16:3); and those people have been washed, cleansed, and sanctified by Him.

The “Church of God,” then, is that chosen generation, that royal priesthood, that holy nation, that peculiar people, whom He has called out of darkness into His marvelous light to show forth His praises for all eternity (1 Peter 2:9). Its members comprise the whole of that favoured company whom God chose in Christ their Head before the foundation of the world, that they should be holy, and without blame before Him; whom He, in love, predestinated unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will (Eph. 1:3, 4). Its members are those to whom Christ referred when He said, “that of all which He (the Father) has given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day” (John 6:39); and concerning whom He declared, “all Mine are your, and your are Mine; and I am glorified in them” (John 17:10). Its entire membership comprises the mystical body of Christ.

But, it may be asked, where in the Old Testament do we have any reference *to* the mystical body of Christ? Answer, in many passages, so numerous that we can scarcely mention more than a few of them here. Yet, ere turning to them, let it be pointed out that only an anointed eye is capable of discerning them. This does not mean that the interpretation we give to them is so far-fetched that only the credulous will receive it, nor that the passages themselves are so ambiguous that they are hard to be understood. No, rather does it mean that spirituality of mind is required in order to perceive their beauty, and a comparison of the New Testament Scriptures with those of the Old is necessary so as to discover their hidden harmonies. As the principle we are now explaining is of such great importance in connection with our present study, let us point to a concrete example or illustration of it in the book of Acts.

“And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest you Me?” (Acts 9:4). Now an unspiritual reader would see in those words no reference whatever unto the mystical body (the Church) of Christ, nevertheless, it *is* unmistakably there. Saul of Tarsus thought he was righteously hounding a company of deluded fanatics and obstinate heretics, but he is now told that he was assaulting none other than the Lord of Glory. But how could that be? Thus, there is such an intimate union existing between the Redeemer and the redeemed, that what is done to the latter, is done to the former. Christ and His people are *one*, for it is written that they are “members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones” (Eph. 5:30); yea, “he that is *joined unto* the Lord is *one spirit*” (1 Cor. 6:17).

Now the same vital relationship existing between the members of the body of Christ and their Head, which is explicitly taught in the New Testament, is with equal clearness implicitly revealed in the Old Testament. This living oneness which exists between the Lord and His people, causing Him to so absolutely identify Himself with them, that He declares when *they* are being persecuted, *He* is being persecuted, is brought out in many places. For example, In Isaiah 63:9 we read, “In all their affliction He was afflicted” — the reference is to the afflictions of Israel in Egypt. Just as when one member of the body is injured “all the members suffer with it” (1 Cor. 12:26), so when the members of Jehovah’s body suffered in Egypt, their Head suffered too. We would beg the reader to give his prayerful and closest attention unto the passages which now follow.

“The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto Him shall the gathering of the people be” (Gen. 49:10). Here, we believe, was a prophecy that the Mediator should “gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad” (John 11:52). It expressed the same truth as is now made known in Ephesians 1:10, “That in the dispensation of the fullness of times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in Him.” The reference here is *not* to something which is yet to take place, but to that which *was* accomplished when God put all things under Christ’s feet, and gave Him “to be the Head over all things to the Church, Which is His body” (Eph. 1:22, 23).

“And Moses said, Thus says the LORD, About midnight will I go out into the midst of Egypt: And all the firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die, from the firstborn of Pharaoh that sits upon his throne, even unto the firstborn of the maidservant that is behind the mill; and all the firstborn of beasts. And there shall be a great cry throughout all the land of Egypt, such as there was none like it, nor shall be like it any more . . . and after that I will go out” (Exo. 11:4-8). Though there *may be* room for an argument as to the grammatical structure of this passage, and as to the antecedent of the personal pronoun, yet it is the writer’s studied conviction that it was Jehovah Himself who here said, “I will go out”: that is, Jehovah, as *one with His people* in their exodus; it was the Head absolutely identified with His body!

“The land shall not be sold for ever: for the land is Mine; for you are strangers and sojourners with *Me*” (Lev. 25:23). A remarkable word indeed is this, and one which has received far less notice than it deserves. How close is the parallel between it and such a verse as John 17:16, “They are not of the world, *even as I am not of the world*”! It reveals to us the infinite condescension of Jehovah, and shows Him *identified with His people*. Beautiful is it to see how that David, centuries later, laid hold of this word, and pleaded before God the *spiritual union* existing between them: “Hear my prayer, O LORD, and give ear unto my cry; hold not your peace at my tears: for I am *a stranger with you*, and a sojourner, as all my fathers were” (Psa. 39:12).

“All my bones shall say, LORD, who is like unto you, which deliverest the poor from him that is too strong for him, yea, the poor and the needy from him that spoils him?” (Psa. 35:10). Here is a verse which plainly gives the lie unto those who affirm that the “one Body” truth is quite unknown in the Old Testament. The Speaker in this verse is the Lord Jesus, as the next two verses unquestionably show. He speaks there as *the Head* of His body, which is the Church. He makes reference to His *mystical* “bones,” that is, to the *members* of His mystical Body: compare Ephesians 5:30.

The 40th is another Psalm where the Holy Spirit clearly records the *oneness* of Christ and His people. That this is a Messianic Psalm we know from the Spirit’s quotation of verses 6 and 7 in Hebrews 10. The first verse of it presents the suffering Saviour in Gethsemane. The second, shows us Christ delivered from the curse, and brought forth on to resurrection ground. The third, records His consequent praise, “He has put a new song in *My* mouth, even praise unto *our* God.” Notice, very carefully, dear reader, the remarkable variation in the number of the pronouns: how plainly does the change from the “My” to the “our” bring out the *spiritual union* of the Redeemer and the redeemed! The same precious truth comes out again in verse 5: “Many, O LORD My God, are your wonderful works which you have done, and your thoughts which are to *us-ward*.” Christ’s use there of the “us-ward” unequivocally reveals the Head and the members of His body as *one before God*.

“O God, you knowest *My foolishness*; and *My sins* are not hid from you” (Psa. 69:5). This, as is well known, is another of the Messianic Psalms, several of its verses being directly applied to Christ in the New Testament. It depicts many of the sufferings and sorrows He endured in the days of His flesh, while serving as the Sponsor and Surety of His people. It shows us the depths of humiliation and shame into which He descended, in order to bring His people nigh unto God. It reveals His *oneness with His people* in their place of guilt and condemnation: so absolute is the union (here) between the Head and the members of His mystical body, that He speaks of *their* folly and sins as *His!*

“His name shall endure for ever: His name shall be continued as long as the sun: and men shall be *blessed in Him*: all nations shall call Him blessed” (Psa. 72:17). Observe well that it is not (here) “blessed by Him, but “IN HIM”: it is exactly the same as what we find in Ephesians 1:3, “Blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places *in Christ*.” In Psalm 87:7 we find David again declaring, “All my springs are *in you*.” How greatly, then, do men err when they declare that “in Christ” truth is never found in the Old Testament.

“This he ordained in Joseph for a testimony, when he went out through the land of Egypt: where I heard a language that I understood not” (Psa. 81:5). What a remarkable statement is that! The speaker is none other than Jehovah, yet declares that the language of Egypt He “understood not.” There is only one way in which such a verse *can* be understood and that is by recognizing it was Christ speaking in the person of Israel — so *one with them* as to refer to their ignorance as His.

“O LORD God of hosts, hear my prayer: give ear, O God of Jacob. Selah. Behold, O God our shield, and *look upon the face of your Anointed*” (Psa. 84:8, 9). What was this but the Psalmist asking the Father to hear Him *for Christ’s sake!* So too Daniel prayed, “Now therefore, O our God, hear the prayer of your servant, and his supplications, and cause your face to shine upon your sanctuary that is desolate, *for the Lord’s sake*” (Dan 9:17)! How these verses expose the ignorance and folly of those who affirm that the privileges enjoyed by the Old Testament saints were far inferior to ours, that they occupied a much lower spiritual plane.

Psalm 89:32, 33. Those words occur in one of the great Messianic predictions. That Christ is here in view, is plain from verse 27. Then, in the verses that follow, the Father speaks of Christ’s “seed” or “children.” But what we wish to particularly note is, the remarkable change of pronouns in verses 32, 33, which can *only* be accounted for on the ground that God was here speaking of the members of Christ’s body, as *one with their Head*: He declares that though He will visit *their* transgressions with the rod, and *their* iniquity with stripes, nevertheless “My lovingkindness will I not utterly take from *Him*,” not “them” though He is speaking of them! And mark well how this wonderful passages closes: “The faithful witness *in the sky* (v. 37), and this in a book which is supposed to treat *only* of “an earthly people”!

“My substance was not hid from you, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. your eyes did see my substance, yet being imperfect; and in your book all My members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them” (Psa. 139: 15, 16). We will quote here from his “Treasury of David” a part of C.H. Spurgeon’s comments: “As the form of Eve grew spiritually in silence and secrecy under the fashioning hand of the Maker, so at this hour is the Bride being fashioned for the Lord Jesus; or to change the figure — a body is being prepared in which the life and glory of the indwelling Lord shall be displayed. The Lord knows them that are His; He has a specially familiar acquaintance with the members of the body of Christ; He sees their substance, imperfect though they be.”

“In His days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is His name whereby HE shall be called, *THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS*” (Jer. 23:6). “In those days shall Judah be saved, and Jerusalem shall dwell safely: and this is the name wherewith SHE shall be called, *The LORD our righteousness*” (Jer. 33:16)! Here we have the Bridegroom and the Bride given *the same name*. Nothing could possibly bring out more plainly the *oneness* of Christ and His people. Here we have in the Old Testament the mystical body, revealed as plainly as it is in the New Testament, where the Church is designated “Christ” (1 Cor. 12:12). We here publicly challenge any man on earth to refute this affirmation.

In view of the many plain Scriptures above, what shall be thought of such statements as these: “the assembly, and its union with Christ, and adoption individually known, are the only things I am aware of *not revealed in the Old Testament*” (Synopsis vol. 2, p. 185 by J.N. Darby, the father of the “Plymouth Brethren”). “The revelation of this mystery, which was foretold, but not explained by Christ (Matt. 16:18), was committed to Paul. In *his* writings *alone* we find the doctrine, position, walk, and duty of the Church” (Scofield Bible, under Eph. 3:6)?

## 8. *The Church of God (Concluded).*

In the last article we furnished proof that “the Church of God” (in such passages as Acts 20:28) and “God’s elect” (in such passages as Rom. 8:33), comprise identically the same persons; and inasmuch as Abraham (Isa. 51:2), Isaac and Jacob (Rom. 9:7, 13) were among God’s elect, *they* were most certainly members of the Church. Nor has this ever been denied throughout the long centuries of this Christian era (so far as we are aware), until the “dispensationalists” came on the scene and sought to confuse the simple. Both appellations view the saints in their relation *to God*, His chosen and called out people. When the same individuals are designated the Church which is Christ’s body, they are contemplated in relation *to Christ as their Head*, and He is a “Head” of dignity (supremacy), authority, and influence, as the physical head is in the human body.

The Church which is the body of Christ comprises all who are federally and vitally united to Him. As the last Adam, He was the federal Head of the entire Election of Grace, and as such He is a “quickening Spirit” unto them. In Ephesians 5:23 we are told that “Christ is the Head of the Church: and He is the Saviour of the Body,” which unmistakably proves that His Headship and Saviourhood are of equal extent, and that all who are saved by Him out of Adam’s fallen and ruined race, belong to and are members of His Church. If then, Abel, Enoch, and Noah were saved by God (their sins remitted, their persons justified, their souls regenerated and sanctified by the Spirit, and made joint-heirs with Christ — as they most certainly were) on the ground of the retrospective merits of Christ’s satisfaction, then *they* are just as truly members of the body of Christ, as Paul and the Philippian jailer, who were saved by God on the ground of the prospective value of Christ’s atonement.

Not only were the Old Testament saints gathered into and united unto the Church which is the body of Christ, but they themselves *knew* this as truly as do the saints of today. A clear proof of this is furnished in Hebrews 11:24-26. How could Moses “esteem the reproach *of Christ* greater riches than the treasures in Egypt,” if he had been in total ignorance of “Christ”? But what is meant here by “Christ”? or rather “the Christ” as it is in the Greek, and so rendered in Bagster’s International, and margin of the R.V.? We answer, precisely the same as in Galatians 3:16: “the Christ” personal *and* “the Christ” mystical. Moses esteemed the “reproach” which would follow both on account of his faith in the person of Christ, *and* his fellowship with His suffering members, greater riches than the transitory and perishing riches of Egypt, “for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward,” that is, the *eternal* reward or “inheritance.”

While allowing the *double* reference to “the Christ” in Hebrews 11:26 — for really the Head and the Body cannot be separated, though they may be viewed distinctly — yet *the principal* allusion is undoubtedly unto the *mystical* Christ, the Church which is His body. This is clear from a comparison of verses 25, 26, which are obviously parallel and explanatory of one another. In the former we are told that Moses “chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.” Thus, there is a threefold parallelism: the “reproach” of verse 26 agrees with and is interpreted by the “suffering affliction” of verse 25; the “Christ” of verse 26 corresponds with and is defined by “the people of God” in verse 25; and the “treasures in Egypt” balances with the “pleasures of sin”; while the “pleasures of sin *for a season*” (v. 25) is set over against the “recompense of the reward” (v. 26), which consists of those “pleasures” which are at God’s right hand “*forever more*” (Psa. 16:11).

From what has just been before us, no man can fairly deny that the “people of God” of Hebrews 11:25 are, by the Holy Spirit, expressly designated “the Christ” in verse 26, which is the very title given to the Church in 1 Corinthians 12:12! Nor can it be truly gainsaid that the Church or mystical body of Christ is synonymous with “the people of God.” Thus, it unequivocally follows that the true (in contrast from the nominal — just as we now distinguish between genuine and nominal “Christians”) “people of

God” in the entire Old Testament era belong to and were members of the mystical Christ. In perfect accord with this we find Stephen “a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 6:5), speaking of “THE CHURCH in the wilderness” (Acts 7:38). This is the more striking in view of the immediate context, where Stephen quoted from Deuteronomy 18:15, “A Prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you, or your brethren, like unto me, (Moses); Him shall you hear.” This is He that was IN *the church* in the wilderness.

What could be more plain and more certain than what has just been before us? In view of the same, what shall be thought of such a statement as that made by A. C. Gaebelien in his notes on Matthew 16:18 — “The Lord’s speaking of the church as *to be built* upon this rock, makes it clear that there was no church in existence up to that time. It is therefore all wrong to speak, as it is done so often, of the Old Testament Church. There was no such institution in Old Testament times.” Such men (and all who echo their anti-scriptural teaching) will yet have to answer to God for belying His Holy Word.

Another passage which clearly sets forth the relation of *Christ* unto the Old Testament saints is 1 Corinthians 10:1-4, “Moreover, brethren, I would not that you should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; And did all eat the same spiritual meat; And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ.” So definite and decisive is the testimony of those verses, we refrain from making any comment upon them, except to urge the reader to prayerfully heed the opening words thereof, and no longer “be ignorant” of that blessed fact.

As to how long *the knowledge of Christ’s* relation to them, and their relation to *Christ*, was retained by the Old Testament saints, we may not be able to fully show. False prophets abounded then as they do now; all sorts of novelties were introduced; and at various periods error was rampant. Thus it became necessary for God to raise up man after man, bidding His people inquire for “the *old paths*” (Jer. 6:16); just as it has now become necessary for such articles as these to be written, if the cloud of dust is to be cleared away which the “dispensationalists” have raised, and which has beclouded the vision of so many. But certain it is that the Old Testament *saints* were far from being the ignoramuses which so many of our conceited moderns declare they were. The path of the just has always been “as the shining light” (Prov. 4:18) — not as candle dimness! — though it is admittedly shone “more and more” as the “perfect Day” drew nearer.

We must not fail to notice the particular passages to which the “dispensationalists” appeal, supposing that they support their ridiculous contention that the mystical body of Christ never existed before the day of Pentecost. But before examining those verses, let it be pointed out that the Word of God does not contradict itself: it is impossible that Acts 7:38 should speak of “the Church in the wilderness,” and then one of the Epistles declare there *was* no Church in Old Testament times. Let it be further pointed out it is axiomatic that whenever a truth or fact has been definitely established, no objection can possibly overthrow it. For example, if it be demonstrated that there is a soul dwelling within the body, my inability to show how that which is immaterial can act upon and be counter-influenced by that which is material, does not disprove its existence. Hence, were we unable to satisfactorily explain the verses which are to come before us, this would by no means annul all that which has been so clearly and abundantly proven.

“Upon this rock I will build My Church” (Matt. 16:18). From Christ’s use of the future tense here, it has been inferred that He had no “Church” up to that time. But the difficulty (if “difficulty” it be) is at once removed when the remainder of the sentence be read: “*And* the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. *And* I will give unto you the keys of the kingdom of heaven: *and* whatsoever you shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: *and* whatsoever you shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.” Two things are there evident. First, that our Lord was *not* here speaking of His “Church” in its highest character (that is, viewed as His body and bride), but in its economical state here on earth — the Church

“militant”: for it would be superfluous to speak about the “gates of hell” not prevailing against the Church “triumphant.”

Second, Christ had before Him the *new constitution* of the membership of His Church upon earth, which the abolishing of Judaism and the institution of Christianity necessarily entailed. “God had a church in the world from the beginning, and it was built upon the promised Seed (Gen. 3:15); but now that promised Seed was come, it was requisite the Church should have a *new charter*, as Christian, and standing in relation to a Christ already come. Now here we have that Charter” (Matthew Henry on Matt. 16:18). That no *new Church* was instituted by the Lord Jesus is very plain from Hebrews 2:12, where the Holy Spirit quotes the Saviour’s words from Psalm 22:22, and designated the “Congregation of the Lord” the “Church”! To this it should be added that, when Christ said, “on this Rock I will *build My Church*,” it is evident He was referring to the Assembly under the figure of the “House” (Heb. 3:6) and “Temple” (2 Cor. 6:16), rather than the “Body” — the “rock” foundation suiting the former, but not the latter. Now the “House” of God was not some new thing begun at Pentecost, as may be seen from such scriptures as Psalm 127:1, Proverbs 9:1, Song of Solomon 2:4, Matthew 10:25.

Further proof that the Church to which the New Testament saints belonged is *not* peculiar to this Christian dispensation, is found in Hebrews 12:22, 23. We cannot now give a detailed examination of the passage, but must defer this until we reach it (D.V.) in the course of our exposition of that Epistle. Suffice it now to point out, in that chapter the Holy Spirit draws a series of contrasts between that which characterized Judaism as such (vv. 18-21), and that which pertained to Christianity (vv. 22-24). The Apostle was assuring the Hebrew saints (3:1) that in refusing to return unto an apostate system which God had now abandoned, and by remaining loyal to Christ, they lost nothing, but gained everything; for under the new covenant they had the substance of all that was shadowed out under the old covenant. By virtue of their union to Christ, they had “come unto Mount Zion, and unto the City of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem” — three names for Christ’s mystical body, viewed in different relations; and were connected with the whole body of the faithful: they had “come to . . . the General Assembly and Church of the Firstborn, which are written in Heaven” — the “General Assembly” obviously denoting the entire Election of Grace, which is confirmed by “which are written in Heaven”: compare Exodus 32:32, Isaiah 4:3, Daniel 12:1, Luke 10:20, Philippians 4:3.

The next passage which is appealed to by those who teach that the “Church” was born on the day of Pentecost is 1 Corinthians 12:13, “For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.” There is nothing whatever in this which favors, to the slightest degree, the absurd notion of the “Dispensationalists.” In that verse the Apostle is simply advancing *proof* of what he had affirmed in verse 12, where he had said, “For as the body is one, and has many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ.” In that 12th verse he illustrates the truth taught in the context: every organism is characterized by diversity and unity; that is, the uniting of different parts so as to form one body.

In the church at Corinth there was a great variety of gifts, such variety as is to be found in the different members of the human body; nevertheless, despite the diversity of its members, the physical body is a unit, an organic whole. Moreover, such diversity is essential unto its unity, for unless the physical organism *has* many members, it would not be a *body*. So also is the “Christ,” the Church: it has many members, among which are marked varieties and gifts but just as one soul animates the entire physical body, so does one Spirit the Church. “*For by one Spirit* are we (“were we”) all baptized into one body”; observe it is *not* said, “all baptized *at the same time*” *no* “Gentiles” were baptized by the Spirit! The reference is to a common operation of the Spirit upon *all* of God’s elect, from Abel onwards: the “baptized” signifies *regenerated*, by which each saint becomes *manifestatively* a member of the body of Christ; the “drinking into one Spirit” refers to His sanctifying influences and gifts — faith, hope, love.



The third passage which is appealed to by those who deny Christ had any Church before Pentecost, is Ephesians 1:19-23. From these verses it is pointed out that God gave Christ to be “head over all things to the Church which is His body” *after* His ascension. It might just as well be argued that none had their sins remitted before Christ made atonement at the Cross, or that none were regenerated until He was made a “quickenning Spirit” consequent upon His resurrection. Or, with as good effect might it be said, that Christ could not make intercession nor act as the Advocate of His people before he sat down at God’s right hand: which is plainly refuted by Zechariah 1:12, 13 and 3:1, 2! In the purpose of the Triune Jehovah, the God-man Mediator was “set up (or “anointed”) from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was” (Prov. 8:23). In their jumbled ideas upon Ephesians 1:19-23 these “rightly dividers” *fail* to “divide” or distinguish between Christ as the *virtual* Head of His people from the beginning, because “the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world,” and Christ as the *actual* Head after He became *historically* incarnate.

But the favorite passage of these heretics which we are now refuting is Ephesians 3:3-9, with which may be linked Romans 16:25 and Colossians 1:26. A very few words may suffice to point out the perfect consistency between these verses and all that has been said above. The “mystery” in all of them has reference to the counsels of Divine grace in the Everlasting Covenant concerning the whole company of the elect. Those counsels of grace *were* “revealed” in the Old Testament, but largely so under types and shadows, by means of hints and obscure prophecies, and not so clearly and fully “*as it is now* revealed by the Spirit” (Eph. 3:5) through the Gospel. Moreover, the earliest and partial revelation found in the Old Testament Scriptures was confined unto one nation, and “not made known unto *the sons of men*” (Eph. 3:5), whereas the New Testament revelation is “made known until *all* nations” (Rom. 16:26), so that “*all*” may see it (Eph. 3:9).

We have now noticed all the passages (so far as we are aware) appealed to by those who deny that the mystical Body, or Church of Christ, existed in Old Testament times; but none of them give the slightest countenance to any such contention. The margin of Daniel 7:18 expressly refers to “the saints of *the high places*,” which is parallel with Ephesians 1:3, and Hebrews 3:1. Ephesians 2:11-13 and 19-22 plainly declare that God’s elect from the Gentiles, so far from constituting a *new* Body, are now made “fellow-citizens with the saints,” which can *only* mean the Old Testament saints; being “built upon the foundation of the apostles *and prophets*. Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom *all the building* (Old and New Testament saints) fitly framed *together* grows into a holy temple in the Lord.” We therefore affirm that, in their fantastical efforts to “rightly divide” the Word of God, Dispensationalists have wrongly divided the family of God; and that so far from maintaining the “unity of the Spirit,” have represented Him as being the Author of confusion. The “new Jerusalem” not only has the names of the twelve Apostles in its foundations (Rev. 21:14), but it also has on its gates the names “of the twelve tribes of Israel” (Rev. 21:12)!!

## Part IV

### 9. *The Israel of God.*

We have now reached an aspect of our subject which the greatest confusion prevails today in many quarters. So one-sided is the teaching which has been given out about the “Jews” and “Israel,” so dogmatic have been the assertions made by “dispensationalists,” and so firmly have many grasped them as the very Truth of God, that the minds of thousands are strongly prejudiced against anything which challenges the “new light” which it is claimed God gave unto certain men two or three generations ago, the use of which “light” has made the Bible “a new book” unto those who have received this novel method of interpreting and applying the Sacred Scriptures. When we say “novel,” we mean that which differs radically from the principles of exegesis employed by the servants of God in all previous ages. While it is a fact that all the Truth was not recovered at the Reformation, and that the godly Puritan teachers are not to be regarded as infallible, yet prudence requires us to make doubly sure of our ground, ere we take up a position which opposes much of the teaching of God’s servants during that most highly favored period.

God has plainly bidden us, “believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God” (1 John 4:1): “try” them by His unerring Word. Nor is this something which can be accomplished in a few moments, not even by those well versed in Holy Writ, still less by those having only a mere smattering of its contents. No, we need to emulate the Bereans, who “searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so” (Acts 17:11). Nor is this all that is required, it is written, “The *meek* will He guide in judgment: and the meek will He teach His way” (Psa. 25:9): there must be a willingness to unlearn, if we have unconsciously imbibed error, there must be the realization that none of us know anything yet as we ought to know (1 Cor. 8:2); and therefore there must be an humbling of ourselves before God, an acknowledgment of our great ignorance, and a prayerful waiting upon Him for the guidance and help of His Spirit. Only thus shall we be enabled to “prove all things; hold fast that which is good” (1 Thess. 5:21).

While it be true that the Word of God is inexhaustible, and that the Holy Spirit is constantly granting further openings up of its contents to the saints, so that fresh beams are ever shining forth from the Sun of Truth, nevertheless, the Spirit never contradicts Himself. Though what He vouchsafes unto one may augment that which He gave unto other teachers of the Word, yet these varied revelations *never oppose* each other. In view of this fact the children of God are supplied with a sure rule by which they may measure the teachings of all who claim to be the servants of Christ. There is an “Analogy of Faith” (see Greek of Rom. 12:6, last clause), to which all sound teaching must necessarily conform, and anything which conflicts with its basic principles, is at once proven to be erroneous. So too there are “the footsteps of the flock” (Song 1:8), the imprints of those who have gone before; and thereby we may know that any guide today who seeks to direct us along another and contrary path, will only lead us *away from* the highway of Truth.

In his earlier years, the writer of these articles was considerably influenced by men who loudly insisted that in the Scriptures “Jew” meant “Jew” and not a Christian, that “Israel” meant “Israel” and not the Church. These more recent “dispensationalists” were only carrying out unto their logical conclusions the principles which regulated the earlier Plymouth Brethren in their “prophetic” writings. For instance, Mr. J.N. Darby declares again and again in his “Synopsis” that, “We must ever bear in mind that Israel was an earthly people.” But in later years, made increasingly suspicious by the source from which these strange teachings emanated (for it is today our settled conviction that the Plymouth Brethren are radically unsound and unscriptural on many fundamental doctrines), we have prayerfully endeavoured to *test* these assertions, and as we laid them in the balances of the Sanctuary, we discovered that they were “found

wanting.” We do not ask the reader to accept *our* verdict, but to carefully weigh what follows and form a judgment of his own.

First of all let us examine this supposedly illuminating declaration that “Israel was an earthly people.” To say the least, it is a very silly and senseless statement. Of course they were an “earthly people,” for no one supposed they were a “lunar” people, inhabiting the moon, nor a “marine” people, living in the sea. The Egyptians, the Babylonians, and every other nation, was equally an “earthly” people; even the writer and all Christian readers are also an “earthly” people, for neither our bodies nor our souls have yet been removed to Heaven! Probably it will be replied that which Mr. Darby and others meant was, Israel’s *inheritance* was an “earthly” one. Very well, but even *that* statement is almost as unsatisfactory and misleading, unless it be explained and amplified. Was the inheritance of the Patriarchs an “earthly” one? Hebrews 11:14-16 plainly shows otherwise. Was Moses’ inheritance an “earthly” one? Hebrews 11:26 clearly answers, No. Was David’s? If so how could he speak of himself as “a *stranger* in the earth” (Psa. 39:12; 119:19)?

Second, we now charge the “dispensationalists” with gross carelessness in failing to distinguish between things that differ. The remarkable fact is that the very men who boast so loudly of their skill to “rightly divide the word of the truth” have failed wretchedly to differentiate between one who is a Jew outwardly and one who is a Jew inwardly, between the carnal Israel and the spiritual Israel. Some of the originators of the weird and erroneous scheme we are now rebutting, who were better read than their modern disciples, *were* acquainted with the distinction we have just named, (a distinction which was observed by all godly teachers from the days of the Apostles until the early part of the nineteenth century), but apparently had an insatiable lust for originality, and wishing to be looked up to as men who had taken a tremendous step forward in the understanding of God’s Word, they disdained the “old paths” (Jer. 6:16), and hewed out a new one for themselves and their credulous admirers.

In substantiation of the simple but important distinction named above, let us now direct the careful attention of the reader to the Scriptures. “Truly God is good to Israel, even to such as are of a clean heart” (Psa. 73:1). Who are the ones referred to under the name “Israel” in this verse? The nation of Israel? all the fleshly descendants of David who were alive when Asaph penned that Psalm? Obviously no, for it most certainly could not be said of the far greater part *of them* that they had “clean hearts”; see Psalm 12:1! A “clean heart” is not natural to men, either Jews or Gentiles, for by descent from Adam all are born into this world with hearts which are foul and desperately wicked. A “clean heart” is one which has been cleansed by the sanctifying operations of Divine grace (Titus 3:5), through the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus on the conscience (Heb. 10:22), and by a God-communicated faith (Acts 15:9). Thus, the second clause of Psalm 73:1 *obliges* us to understand the “Israel” of the first clause as the *spiritual* Israel — God’s chosen, redeemed, and regenerated people — and as obviously excludes carnal Israelites.

Again, when the Lord Jesus exclaimed concerning Nathanael, “Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!” (John 1:47), exactly what did He mean? Was nothing more signified than, “Behold a fleshly descendant of Jacob?” Assuredly it was not: Christ’s language here was discriminating, as discriminating as when He said, “If you continue in My word, then are you My disciples *indeed*” (John 8:31). When the Saviour said that they were “disciples indeed,” He intimated they were such not only in name, but in fact; not only by profession, but in reality. And in like manner, when He affirmed that Nathanael was “an Israelite indeed,” He meant that he was a genuine son of Israel, a man of faith and prayer, honest and upright. The added description “in whom is no guile” supplies still further confirmation that a saved and spiritual character is there in view: compare “Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputes not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile” (Psa. 32:2).

“Behold Israel after the flesh” (1 Cor. 10:18). Here again discriminating language is used: why speak of “Israel after *the flesh*” unless it be for the express purpose of distinguishing them from Israel

after the Spirit, that is, the regenerated and spiritual Israel? Israel “after the flesh,” were the natural descendants of Abraham, but *spiritual* “Israel,” whether from Jews or Gentiles, are those who are born again and who worship God in spirit and in truth. Surely it must now be plain to every unbiased reader that the term “Israel” is used in the Scriptures in more senses than one, and that it is only by noting the qualifying terms which are added, that we are able to identify *which* “Israel” is in view in any given passage. Equally clear should it now be that to talk of Israel being an “earthly people,” is very loose and misleading language, and badly needs modifying and defining.

Nothing but confusion can prevail if we fail to observe that many words and phrases are employed in Holy Writ with varying significations; yea, false doctrine will be taught by those who insist that each term used by the Holy Spirit has but one and uniform meaning. Many, many examples could be furnished in illustration of this. How many have erred through making the word “flesh” always refer to the physical body. What dishonouring views of the Atonement have been fostered by those who interpret “the world” of John 3:16 and 1 John 2:2 to mean the whole human race. What shallow views are encouraged by those who see no difference between the “repentance” of Judas (Matt. 27:3) and that repentance which is “unto salvation” (2 Cor. 7:10). How much of the terrible superficiality of modern “evangelism” is due to failure in distinguishing between the intellectual “believing” of John 12:42, 43 and Acts 8:13, and the heart “believing” of Romans 10:10. In the same way, untold damage has been wrought by those ignoring (or denying) the scriptural distinction between carnal “Israel” and spiritual “Israel,” between the natural seed of Abraham and his mystical children.

“Know you therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham” (Gal. 3:7). The “children of Abraham” are of *two kinds*, physical and spiritual, those who are his by nature, and those who are connected with him by grace. “To be the children of a person in a figurative sense, is equivalent ‘to resemble him, and to be involved in his fate, good or bad.’ The idea is of similarity both in character and circumstances. To be ‘the children of God,’ is to be like God; and also, as the apostle states it to be, ‘heirs of God.’ To be ‘the children of Abraham’ is to resemble Abraham, to imitate his conduct, and to share his blessedness” (John Brown). To which we may add, to be “the children of the Wicked” (Matt. 13:38), is to be conformed to his vile image, both in character and conduct (John 8:44), and to share his dreadful portion (Matt. 25:41).

The carnal Jews of Christ’s day boasted “Abraham is our father,” to which He made answer “If you were Abraham’s children, you would do the works of Abraham” (John 8:39). Ah, the *spiritual* children of Abraham “*walk in the steps of that faith*” which he had (Rom. 4:12). Those who are his spiritual children are “*blessed with faithful Abraham*” (Gal. 3:9). The Apostle was there combating the error which the Judaizers were seeking to foist upon the Gentiles, namely, that none but Jews, or Gentiles proselytized by circumcision, were the “children of Abraham,” and that none but those could be partakers of his blessing. But so far from that being the case, all unbelieving Jews shut Heaven against themselves, while all who believed from the heart, being united to Christ — who is “*the Son of Abraham*” (Matt. 1:1) — enter into all the blessings which God covenanted unto Abraham.

The *double* significance pertaining to the expression “children” or “seed” of Abraham was very plainly intimated at the beginning, when Jehovah said unto the Patriarch, “In blessing I will bless you, and in multiplying I will multiply your seed *as the stars* of the heaven, and *as the sand* which is upon the sea shore” (Gen. 22:17). What anointed eye can fail to see in the likening of Abraham’s seed unto the “stars of heaven” a reference to his *spiritual* children, who are partakers of the heavenly calling (Heb. 3:1); and in the likening of his seed unto the “sand which is upon the seashore” a reference to his *natural* descendants, who occupied the land of Palestine! The same principle may be seen receiving exemplification again in the person of Abraham’s grandson, who was the immediate progenitor of the heads of the twelve tribes. He had a *dual* name, being first designated “Jacob,” which was his name according to nature, and then “Israel” (Gen. 32:28) which was his name according to grace. How very

striking to find that the *first* time the name “Israel” occurs in Scripture it was given to a man who now had a *double* name!

“Not as though the word of God has taken none effect. For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel” (Rom. 9:6). In this verse the Apostle begins his discussion of the rejection of the Jews and the calling of the Gentiles, and shows that God had predetermined to cast off the Nation as such, and extend the Gospel call to all men indiscriminately. He does this by showing God was free to act thus (vv. 6-24), that He had announced through His prophets He would do so (vv. 25-33). This was a particularly sore point with the Jew, who erroneously imagined that the promises which God had made to Abraham and his seed included all his natural descendants, that those promises were sealed unto all such by the rite of circumcision, and that those inherited all the patriarchal blessings: hence their claim, “We have Abraham to our father” (Matt. 3:9). It was to refute this error, common among the Jews (and now revived by the “dispensationalists”) that the Apostle here writes.

First, he affirms that God’s Word was not being nullified by his teaching (v. 6, first clause), no indeed; his doctrine did not contravene the Divine promises, for they had never been given to men in the flesh, but rather to men in the spirit-regenerate. Second, he insisted upon an important distinction (v. 6, second clause), which we are now seeking to explain and press upon our readers. He points out there are *two* kinds of “Israelites”: those who are such only by carnal descent from Jacob, and others who are so spiritually, these latter being alone the “children of the promise” (v. 8) — cf. Galatians 4:23, where “born after the flesh” is opposed to born “by promise”! God’s promises were made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, AS BELIEVERS, and they are the spiritual food and property of *none but believers*: Romans 4:13, 16. Until this fact be clearly grasped, we shall be all at sea in understanding scores of the Old Testament promises.

When the Apostle here affirms that “they are not all *Israel*, which are *of Israel*” (Rom. 9:6), he means that, not all the lineal descendants of Jacob belonged unto “the *Israel of God*” (Gal. 6:16), those who were God’s people in the *highest* sense. So far from that being the case, many of the Jews were not God’s children at all (see John 8:42, 44), while many who were Gentiles by nature, have (by grace) been made “fellow citizens with the (Old Testament) saints” (Eph. 2:19) and “*blessed with faithful Abraham*” (Gal. 3:9). Thus the Apostle’s language in the second clause of Romans 9:6 has the force of, Not all who are members of the (ancient) visible Church are members of the true Church. The same thought is repeated in Romans 9:7, “Neither, because they are the (natural) seed of Abraham, are they all children” — that is the “children (or inheritors) of the promise,” as verse 7 explains — “but, In Isaac (the line of God’s election and sovereign grace) shall your (true and spiritual) seed be called.” God’s promises were made unto the *spiritual* seed of Abraham, and not to his natural descendants as such.

## 10. *The Israel of God (Concluded).*

(We feel that an apology is almost due some of our readers for continuing this present series at such length, and of discussing each aspect of the subject in such detail; but we are constrained so to do, for the sake of another class who sorely need them. Please pray that it may please God to use these particular articles in dispersing the mists of error from many minds.)

We resume at the point where we left off in our last article. In Romans 9:6, 7, the Apostle enunciates a principle which it is highly important for us to heed: failure to do so must only lead to a misunderstanding of the greater part of the Old Testament. That principle simply stated is, that God had an election *within* an election: that while the nation of Israel as such were His peculiar people, separated from all other nations, and favoured with great privileges, yet only a predestinated remnant of them had been chosen unto salvation and ordained to spend eternity in Heaven. Each member of that chosen remnant was, in God's appointed time, regenerated and sanctified by the operations of the Holy Spirit, was endowed with a "new nature" and spiritual faith. These, and these alone, were the real "children of promise," and these were adumbrated by Isaac — born after Ishmael was set aside by God, born according to His promise, born by His miracle-working power.

This great fact was quite unknown unto the carnal Jews, and hence we find them, at the beginning of the New Testament, hotly opposing the Gospel message. *They* were not "lost" sinners, "dead in trespasses," needing to be born again. Why no (in their estimation), they were already the children of God, had Abraham to their father, and were "just persons, which need no repentance" (Luke 15:7). *Theirs* were the covenants, *theirs* were the promises, *theirs* was the Messiah. Consequently, when the Messiah did come, and called upon them to "repent" (Matt. 4:17), and presented Himself as the One who had come to "seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10), they despised and rejected Him, and ultimately crucified Him as a blaspheming impostor. It was *this* spirit which Paul had to contend with, most of all when the Judaisers sought to corrupt his converts. Much in his Epistles can only be rightly understood in the light of this fact.

In our last article we pointed out how that when the Apostle said, "For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel" (Rom. 9:6), he meant, The entire posterity of Jacob are not commensurate with the real and spiritual "Israel." Then he added, "Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, In Isaac shall your seed be called" (v. 7). The great error of the carnal Jews was that they thought they were the children of God by virtue of their being the descendants of Abraham. But the grand promise given to Abraham was not made to all his progeny in general, but to himself and a particular "seed." As the descendants of Abraham, they were all indeed in one sense the children of God, for He said to Pharaoh, with reference to them, "Let My *son* go" (Exo. 4:23): "but the *natural* sonship was only a figure of the *spiritual* sonship of all believers of every nation" (Robert Haldane).

The principle affirmed here by the Apostle was no invention of his for the purpose of silencing his opponents, but was one which had been illustrated from the beginning of God's dispensations in reference to the Abrahamic family: the principle of restricting promises, couched in general terms, to a particular class of those to whom they might seem to refer. In proof thereof the Apostle quotes from the plain words of Jehovah to Abraham (recorded in Genesis 21:12), "In Isaac shall your seed be called" — Ishmael was passed by, as were all the sons which he had later by Keturah. And it is very evident from Galatians 4:28 that Isaac, the child "of promise," was a type of all the elect, redeemed, and regenerated people of God.

In these verses of Romans 9 the Apostle was but amplifying and proving what he had declared earlier in the Epistle: "For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is

outward in the flesh: But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God” (Rom. 2:28, 29). He who was a “Jew” *outwardly*, was one that was such merely by name, nature, and nationality; but he who was a “Jew” *inwardly*, was one that had been a subject of an internal work of grace; the one had the law of God in his hand, the other in his heart. The true and spiritual “Jew” — in contrast from those which are “Jews *by nature*” (Gal. 2:15) — is one whose excellency is inward, seen and acknowledged by God alone.

A parallel passage to the one last before us is found in Philippians 3:3, “For *we* are *the* *circumcision*, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus.” What could possibly be plainer than this? and in the light of it who dares to deny that there *are* two kinds of “Israelites,” two kinds of “Jews,” two kinds of “circumcision,” a natural and a spiritual, and that in the New Testament the Holy Spirit Himself has appropriated and applied unto Christians the same names under which the saints were known by in Old Testament times. In the previous verse the Apostle had warned the Philippian saints against the Judaizers, “Beware of the concision,” a term which signifies “cutters off”; but Christians he designates, “the circumcision,” not because they were the lineal descendants of the Patriarchs, but because by faith they enjoyed all the spiritual privileges of God’s ancient people.

Circumcision was the seal of the covenant of God. It was a mark of identification and the sign of separation. The spiritual import of circumcision was plainly taught in the Old Testament: “Circumcise therefore the foreskin of *your heart*, and be no more stiffnecked” (Deut. 10:16); “And the LORD your God will circumcise your heart, and the heart of your seed, to love the LORD your God” (Deut. 30:6); “Circumcise yourselves to the LORD, and take away the foreskins of your heart” (Jer. 4:4). By circumcision the Jew professed to cut off from his heart every carnal thought and affection, in order that henceforth he might serve God in spirit and in truth, devoting himself to Him alone, putting all his trust in Him. The same is true of the real Christian: see Galatians 5:24, Colossians 2:11.

The circumcising of the Jewish babe on the eighth day foreshadowed the dedicating of himself to God of the babe in Christ. It also signified the removal of our natural hardness of heart, the iniquity of it (by the Spirit’s conviction) being laid open to our view, which is accompanied by pain or contrition for sin and shame because of it. Thus, when the Apostle affirms of Christians, “we are the circumcision” he means *we* have the spiritual substance and reality of which the fleshly Israel had only the name and sign; just as when the Lord Jesus said, “Whosoever shall do the will of My Father which is in heaven, the same is My brother, and sister, and mother” (Matt. 12:50). He signified that He holds them in that relationship, He loves them and feels for them.

“One shall say, I am the Lord’s; and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob; and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the LORD, and surname himself by the name of Israel” (Isa. 44:5). Here is a remarkable prophecy which announced centuries beforehand the very thing for which we are contending in this article, namely that the New Testament saints should be known by *the same names* as were the Old Testament believers. Since it is highly probable that the attention of very few of our readers has ever been seriously directed unto this passage, let us take a closer, though brief, look at the same.

The above prophecy begins at verse 1 of Isaiah 44, and is addressed unto that remnant from among the Jews which is “according to the election of grace,” to a spiritual “Israel” among the nation of Israel. To that favoured remnant the Lord promises an effusion or outpouring of His Spirit, see verse 3: note very carefully that the figurative expressions which are found in the first half of that verse are definitely explained in the second half — this supplies a most valuable key to the understanding of many passages in the Prophets, wherein God promises to give “water” etc., but which the gross materialists of our day carnalize, instead of viewing spiritually. Then in verse 4 we are shown the blessed effects of this outpouring of the Spirit which occurred on the day of Pentecost. Verse 5 gives us the success of the

Apostolic ministry among the Gentiles, who were not called by the name Israel, but who would now reckon themselves of the posterity of Jacob in a *spiritual* sense and Israelites “indeed”!

“Doubtless it looks farther yet, to the conversion of the Gentiles, and the multitudes of them which, upon the effusion of the Spirit after Christ’s ascension, should be joined to the Lord, and added to the Church. These converts are ‘one and another’: very many, of different ranks and nations, and all welcome to God: Colossians 3:11. When one doth it, another shall, by his example, be invited to do it, and then another. First, they shall resign themselves to God. Not one in the name of the rest, but every one for himself shall say, ‘I am the Lord’s’: He has an incontestable right to rule me, and I submit to Him, to all His commands, to all His disposals; I am and will be His only, His wholly, His forever. Second, they shall incorporate themselves with the people of God, ‘call themselves by the name of Jacob,’ forgetting their own people and their father’s house, and desirous to wear the character and the livery of God’s family. They shall love all God’s people, shall associate with them, give them the right hand of fellowship, etc. Third, they shall do this very solemnly, they ‘shall subscribe with their hand unto the Lord,’ as for the confirming of a bargain a man sets his hand to it, and delivers it as his act and deed” (Matthew Henry).

Another Old Testament prophecy which announced the same blessed truth is found in Jeremiah 31:31, “Behold, the days come, says the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah.” The “days come” refer to the Christian dispensation, as is unequivocally established by the Apostle’s application of this passage in Hebrews 8:8-12. The “new covenant” (cf. Luke 22:20, 2 Cor. 3:6) is in contrast from the Mosaic covenant. The houses of Israel and Judah are to be understood mystically, as including all who are “fellow citizens with the saints, and of the Household of God” (Eph. 2:19), the middle wall of partition being broken down. “Who the persons are with whom this covenant is made: ‘the house of Israel and Judah,’ that is, *with the Gospel church*, the Israel of God, on which peace shall rest (Gal. 6:16); with the spiritual seed of believing Abraham, and praying Jacob. Judah and Israel had been two separate kingdoms, but were united after their return, in the joint favours God bestowed upon them; so Jews and Gentiles are one in the Gospel church and covenant” (Matthew Henry).

Still another Old Testament prophecy announcing the same thing is found in Hosea 1:10, “Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured nor numbered; and it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, you are not my people, there it shall be said unto them, you are the sons of the living God.” How many have been taught (the writer included) that this has reference to God’s future dealings with carnal Israel; but the New Testament makes it unmistakably plain that it is God’s elect *among the Gentiles*, those belonging to the spiritual “Israel,” who are here in view. In Romans 9:24 Paul says, “Even us, whom He has called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles,” which he proves with “As He says also in Osee, [Hosea] I will call them My people, which were not My people; and her beloved, which was not beloved. And it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, you are not My people; there shall they be called the children of the living God” (Rom 9:25, 26). “It is certain that this promise (Hosea 1:10) had its accomplishment in the setting up of the kingdom of Christ, by the preaching of the Gospel, and the bringing in both of Jews and Gentiles to it; for to this these words are applied by Paul and Peter (1 Peter 2:10). ‘Israel’ here is *the Gospel church*, the spiritual Israel” (Matthew Henry).

“But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that you should show forth the praises of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light: Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy” (1 Peter 2:9, 10). It is of great importance that we should recognize that the Old Testament abounds in *typical* promises and prophecies. The various appellations which are here given to Christians, are borrowed from the descriptive names used of the nation of Israel under a former dispensation, and belong to the people of God under a new economy, in a far higher sense and with a



much deeper meaning than they had of old. The New Testament Church is the *antitype* of Israel at Sinai. The language of 1 Peter 2:10 was another reference to Hosea 1:10. Carnal Israel having proved unfaithful, all its spiritual privileges have been transferred to the New Testament church: *see* Matthew 21:43!

“In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, and close up the breaches thereof; and I will raise up his ruins, and I will build it as in the days of old: That they may possess the remnant of Edom, and of all the heathen, which are called by My name, says the LORD that does this” (Amos 9:11, 12). We are not left to guess at the meaning of this prophecy, for its terms are infallibly explained to us in the New Testament. After Peter had related to the church at Jerusalem how that the Holy Spirit had been poured out upon the household of Cornelius, James affirmed, “Simeon has declared how God at the first did visit *the Gentiles*, to take out of them a people for His name. *And to this agree* the words of the prophets; as it is written, After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up: That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom My name is called, says the Lord, who does all these things” (Acts 15:14-17).

“David’s tabernacle was to be rebuilt, and his kingdom restored by the Messiah, but in a *spiritual* way, for the ‘tabernacle of David’ designs the spiritual kingdom or church of Christ. . . . ‘And I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up,’ which has been done by breaking down the middle wall of partition between Jew and Gentile, and letting in the latter into the Gospel church with the former. . . .’That the residue of men might seek after the Lord,’ the Builder and Proprietor of this tabernacle, and who dwells in it; that is, attend His worship, pray unto Him, and seek unto Him for life and salvation. In Amos those are called ‘the remnant of Edom,’ and design the remnant according to the election of grace among the Gentiles — the Jews generally call all other nations, and especially the Roman empire, Edom” (John Gill).

We trust sufficient has now been said to convince every candid reader that the name “Israel” is often used in the Old Testament in a *mystical* sense, as well as a literal; and that there are *spiritual* “Jews” as well as carnal ones. When the Lord said to the woman *of Canaan* (testing her faith), “I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (Matt. 15:24), He certainly did not mean that He had been sent only unto the fleshly descendants of Jacob, for unto some *of them* He said, “But you believe not, because you are *not of My sheep*” (John 10:26). No, it was unto the lost sheep of the mystical or spiritual “house of Israel” that He was sent. The *spiritual* “Israel” is also in view in such passages as John 1:31; Acts 5:31; 13:23; 28:20, namely that “Israel” whom the Father elected, the Son redeemed, and the Spirit regenerates. O what praise is due unto His sovereign grace, if writer and reader belong to “the Israel of God” (Gal. 6:16).

## Part V

### 11. The Zion of God.

“I have been brought up, since my conversion, under dispensational teaching — pre-millennial. Now just where does the kingdom, as they teach it, come in? Does the Word of God teach a literal kingdom? It seems to, at least in the Prophets and the Revelation. I realize that there is too much sensational preaching, and not enough practical godliness being taught or lived.” Our main purpose in giving this extract from a letter recently to hand, is because it supplies an illustration of a mistake which is commonly made today. There is a certain class of preachers whose boast it is that they understand and interpret the Bible *literally*, and their hearers are made to believe that this is one of the principal tests of orthodoxy. It is greatly to be feared that such men unwittingly condemn themselves, for in their ignorance they use a term concerning which few of them seem to know its meaning.

The best dictionaries tell us the word “literal” signifies, “according to the letter.” Now in the New Testament there are a number of verses which present some pungent contrasts between the “letter” and the “spirit.” In Romans 2:27 the Holy Spirit asks, “Shall not uncircumcision which is by nature, if it fulfill the law, judge you, who by the letter and circumcision dost transgress the law?” The Jews supposed that a *literal* compliance with the law of circumcision fully met God’s requirement, overlooking Deuteronomy 10:16; 30:6. Hence, he is told, “But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter” (Rom. 2:29): “that of the heart, in the spirit” signifies that which penetrates to the roots of the soul, that which is inwardly efficacious; “not in the letter” means, not that which was merely outward, according to the *literal* commandment.

Again, in 2 Corinthians 3:6 Paul said of Christ’s servants, “Who also has made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit gives life.” “These words therefore express concisely the characteristic difference between the Law and the Gospel. The one was external, the other spiritual; the one was an outward precept, the other an inward power. In the one case the law was written on stone, in the other on the heart. The one therefore was *letter*, the other *spirit*” (Charles Hodge). The Pharisees of Christ’s day were “literalists,” and quite incapable of perceiving the *mystery* (like a kernel inside the shell) contained beneath the letter. Alas that so much of modern “Christianity” is little better than a revival of the principles of Judaism; alas that “dispensationalists” are as blind to the *spiritual* purport of Scripture as the Pharisees were when Christ said “Whither I go, you cannot come,” and they answered, “Will he kill himself? because He says, Whither I go, you cannot come” (John 8:21, 22)!

Infidels have often alleged the Bible is full of contradictions: a charge which the well-meaning friends of the Bible have promptly denied. It is true there are not, and cannot be, any *real* contradictions in *God’s* Word, yet it is also a fact that there are numbers of *verbal* contradictions. For example, we are told in 1 Samuel 28:6 “Saul inquired of the LORD,” whereas in 1 Chronicles 10:13, 14, we read that Saul died because he “inquired not of the Lord.” Again, in Proverbs 15:29 we are told “The LORD is far from the wicked,” whereas in Acts 17:27 we read that the Lord is “*not far* from every one of us.” Again, in Romans 10:13 we are told “For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved,” whereas in Proverbs 1:28 we read, “Then shall they call upon Me, but I will not answer; they shall seek Me early, but they shall not find Me.” Again, in Matthew 5:8 we read “Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God,” whereas in 1 Timothy 6:16 it is said of God, “whom no man has seen, nor can see.” Our purpose in citing these passages is not to stumble the faith of the weak, but to stain the pride of those who are wise in their own conceits.

The passages referred to above ought to make it plain unto every candid mind that something more than a slavish adherence to the letter of the Scriptures is required if we are to understand them

aright. Those who confine themselves to the principle of literalism will find it a hopeless task to reconcile such verses; but they who are not misled by the mere sound of words and their apparent surface meaning, should have no difficulty with them. Saul's inquiry of the Lord was a hypocritical one, and therefore not regarded by Him as a real inquiry at all. The wicked are far from God in a moral and spiritual sense, though as the Preserver of their beings His hand daily holds their souls in life (Psa. 66:9). It is only the calling upon the Lord from a penitent and contrite heart which brings salvation. The glorified will "see" or apprehend God to a far greater degree than they do now, but the finite creature will never be able to fully comprehend the Infinite.

In view of all that has been said above, it is scarcely surprising that the "literalists" of our day, the carnal "dispensationalists," are completely at sea upon what the Scriptures have to say about "Zion," for they see in it nothing more than a mountain located in Palestine. And thus one of the most blessed subjects treated of in the pages of Holy Writ is virtually reduced to an absurdity by these gross materialists. Nor has the writer any hope that *he* can convert them from their errors: it requires just as truly a miracle of grace to deliver one who has been caught fast in *this* snare, as it does to deliver a victim of Romanism, for the former is just as certain that he is "rightly dividing the Word of truth," as the latter is sure he belongs to "the only real church of Christ on earth." But we do trust it will please God to use these articles to purge out of some of His own people the poison they have unconsciously imbibed from present-day leaders.

"But chose the tribe of Judah, the mount Zion which He loved" (Psa. 78:68). "And of Zion it shall be said, This and that man was born in her: and the Highest Himself shall establish her" (Psa. 87:5). "you shalt arise, and have mercy upon Zion: for the time to favour her, yea, the set time, is come" (Psa. 102:13). Now is it not apparent to any spiritual mind that to insist that "Zion" in these verses refers to some material mountain in Palestine is to reduce the Word of God unto a meaningless absurdity? How pitiable such a gross and carnal concept is may further be seen by this passage: "For the LORD has chosen Zion; He has desired it for His habitation. This is My rest for ever: here will I dwell; for I have desired it" (Psa. 132:13, 14).

Now there are a number of plain passages in the Old Testament which show that "Zion" is another name for the people of God. For example, "Remember your congregation, which you have purchased of old; the rod of your inheritance, which you have redeemed; this mount Zion, wherein you have dwelt" (Psa. 74:2). "Zion heard, and was glad; and the daughters of Judah rejoiced because of your judgments, O LORD" (Psa. 97:8). "O Zion, that bringest good tidings, get you up into the high mountain; O Jerusalem, that bringest good tidings, lift up your voice with strength; lift it up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God!" (Isa. 40:9). "And I have put My words in your mouth, and I have covered you in the shadow of Mine hand, that I may plant the heavens, and lay the foundations of the earth, and say unto Zion, you *art My people*" (Isa. 51:16).

The key to our present subject, though, is found in the New Testament, namely, Hebrews 12:22-23, "But you are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, To the general assembly *and church of the Firstborn.*" Let us look closely at this. First of all, let us note attentively the particular Epistle in which this blessed declaration is made. It is found in the Epistle to the Hebrews, being addressed unto "holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling" (3:1). The great theme of that Epistle is, The immeasurable superiority of Christianity over Judaism. That theme is unfolded in several chapters: it comes out prominently in the 12th: let the interested reader turn to ponder carefully Hebrews 12:18-24, where Sinai is the *symbol* of Judaism, and Sion is the *symbol* of Christianity.

It will be observed that the above passage abounds in striking and solemn contrasts: other antitheses not there specified are equally noteworthy. Everything is in sharp opposition between them:

Sinai is located in one of the driest and dreariest places on earth: in a “howling desert,” fitly representing the Law which can afford neither succour nor refreshment. Mount Zion was situated in the midst of that land which “flowed with milk and honey,” meet emblem of the Gospel. Sinai means “cliff,” an object which is forbidding, barren, desolate. Zion signifies “sunny or shone upon,” as facing the south, ever basking in the warm rays of the sun. God came down on Sinai for only a brief season; He dwells in Zion forever. On the one He appeared in terrible majesty; in the other He is manifested in grace and blessing. At Sinai the typical mediator trembled, saying, “I exceedingly fear and quake”; on Zion Christ is crowned with glory and honour. The former we are “*not* come unto” (Heb. 12:18); the latter we *are* “come unto” (Heb. 12:22).

It may be pointed out that the material mount Zion, figure of the spiritual Zion, was one of the mountains belonging to the range of Hermon (Deut. 4:48) — the interested reader will find it profitable to look up the references to “Hermon” and ponder their *spiritual* significance. It lay to the southwest of Jerusalem, being the oldest and highest part of that ancient city. It was outside the city itself and separate from it, though frequently identified with it. Mount Zion had two heads or peaks; Moriah, on which the temple was built, the seat of the *worship* of God; and the other, whereon the palace of David was built, the *royal* residence of the kings of Judah — a striking figure of the priestly and kingly offices of Christ, owned by the Church! Thus, Zion was situated in the best part of the world — Canaan, the land which flowed with milk and honey; in the best part of that land — in Judah’s portion; in the best part of his heritage — Jerusalem; and in the best part of the metropolis — the city of David: 2 Samuel 6:12.

It is deeply interesting and instructive to trace the *history* of mount Zion. Originally it was the habitation of the Jebusites, a company of the idolatrous and cursed Canaanites: “the Jebusites the inhabitants of Jerusalem” (Josh. 15:63). How that reminds us of “Remember, that you being in time past Gentiles in the flesh . . . without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise” (Eph. 2:11, 12). David was the one who wrested it from them: “And the king and his men went to Jerusalem unto the Jebusites . . . Nevertheless David took the strong hold of Zion: the same is the city of David” (2 Sam. 5:6, 7); so Christ secured His elect by His victory over Satan. David fortified Zion for his own use: 1 Chronicles 11:7-9. Thus we see how suited it was to be the figure of the Church of God. Many other Scriptures bear this out.

1. Zion was the object of God’s choice: “For the LORD has chosen Zion” (Psa. 132:13).
2. It was the place of His habitation: “Sing praises to the LORD, which dwells in Zion” (Psa. 9:11): compare 1 Timothy 3:15; 2 Corinthians 6:16.
3. It was a mighty fortress: “They that trust in the LORD shall be as mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abides for ever” (Psa. 125:1): compare “the gates of hell shall not prevail against it” (Matt. 16:18).
4. It was the most excellent of all cities: “Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is Mount Zion, on the sides of the north, the city of the great King” (Psa. 48:2), “Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God has shined” (Psa. 50:2).
5. It was the special object of God’s love: “The LORD loves the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob” (Psa. 87:2): compare Ephesians 5:25.
6. It was the place where God’s elect are born: “And of Zion it shall be said, This and that man was born in her” (Psa. 87:5).

7. It was the place of salvation: “Oh that the salvation of Israel were come *out of Zion!* when the LORD brings back the captivity of his people,” that is, when He grants them a revival (Psa. 14:7).

8. It was the place of Divine blessing; “The LORD shall bless you out of Zion” (Psa. 128:5); yea, it was the place of eternal life: “As the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for *there* the LORD commanded the blessing, even life for evermore” (Psa. 133:3).

9. It was the object of Divine promises: “Zion shall be redeemed with judgment, and her converts with righteousness” (Isa. 1:27); “The Redeemer shall come to Zion” (Isa. 59:20); “To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that He might be glorified” (Isa. 61:3).

10. It was the place of His throne: “The LORD shall reign over them in mount Zion from henceforth, even for ever” (Micah 4:7).

Thus, “Zion” was very frequently a name given by God to His true Church in Old Testament times, and therefore was it also a blessed *type* of His Church in New Testament times. As Hebrews 12:22 declares *we* “are come unto mount Sion” which means that Christians are interested in (have a title to) all the privileges which God made to her. Now it is obvious that we have *not* come unto any earthly or material “Zion,” but we *have* unto those *spiritual* realities and blessings of which she was the emblem. How unspeakably solemn that *this* is the very thing which the “dispensationalists” so emphatically deny, yea, hold up to ridicule. They, in their blindness, see nothing more in all those Old Testament passages than something which is *Jewish*: 1 Peter 2:5, 6 plainly bursts their empty bubble: “you also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, *I lay in Sion* a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believes on Him shall not be confounded.”

Before passing from Hebrews 12:22, 23, let it be pointed out that “Mount Sion,” the “city of the living God” and “the heavenly Jerusalem,” are three names for the same thing. In Psalm 46:4 we read, “There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High,” and Psalm 48:1, 2 identifies “the city of God” with “Zion”: “Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised in the city of our God, in the mountain of His holiness. Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is mount Zion”; so also does Psalm 87:2, 3, “The LORD loves the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob. Glorious things are spoken of you, *O city of God.*” This figure of the “city” is also contrastive from Israel at Sinai, *in the wilderness*, where they had neither rest nor refuge. In a city there is order, defense, safety.

The Church is called the “City of God,” first, because He is its Builder. Second, because He indwells it. Third, because it is under His sovereign rule: it is there He disposes of His children into a spiritual society. Carefully note how this same figure is used in Ephesians 2:19, “Now therefore you are no more strangers and foreigners, but *fellow citizens* with the saints.” The Church is called the “Heavenly Jerusalem,” first, because its concerns are not of this world. Second, because most of its inhabitants are already there. Third, because our citizenship (Phil. 3:20) and inheritance is there. Let the reader grasp firmly this fact that, whatever is spoken of the “city of God” or of “Jerusalem” in the Old Testament *that is spiritual*, that contains in it the love and free favour of God, is *all* made OURS, and is for faith to appropriate and enjoy.

## Part VI

### 12. *The Grace of God.*

“The character of God, and the great principles of His moral government, the revelation of which has been one great object of His dealings with men, have of course, been at all times the same in themselves, though the knowledge of them has been communicated to men at sundry times and in divers manners. The way in which fallen men were to be saved has been at all times the same, as it was necessarily and unchangeably determined in its substance, or fundamental provisions and arrangements, by the attributes of God, and the principles of His moral government. Of course God’s great designs with respect to the fallen race of man has been at all times the same, conducted upon the same principles and directed to the same object. The chief differences observable in God’s successive dispensations toward the human race, are to be found in the *fullness* and *completeness* of the revelation which, at different times He gave of His character and plans, and especially of the method of salvation, and in the more temporary objects which at different periods He combined with His one grand terminating purpose” (William Cunningham, 1870).

Since the Fall, God’s dealings with men have been under three distinct economies: the Patriarchal, the Mosaic, and the Christian. In each of them “the God of all grace” (1 Peter 5:10) has both exercised and manifested His sovereign benignity. It is a serious mistake to suppose that Divine grace is peculiar to this Christian era; it is a fundamental error to affirm that in Old Testament times God’s people were saved on some other principle than grace. Yet, through a wrong understanding of John 1:17 and Ephesians 3:2 it has been widely held that the Mosaic economy was one of *unrelieved* law, and that not until after the day of Pentecost was the grace of God made known to poor sinners. In the note appended to Matthew 28:19 the Scofield Bible says, “With the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ begins the dispensation of the grace of God (Eph. 3:2), which is defined as ‘His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus’; and ‘the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast’ (Eph. 2:7-9). Under grace (which Mr. S. contrasts from “under law,” the Mosaic economy) God freely gives to the believing sinner eternal life (Rom. 6:23); accounts to him a perfect righteousness (Rom. 3:21, 22; 4:4, 5), and accords to him a perfect position.” But God gave precisely *the same* blessings unto penitent and believing sinners from Abel onwards!

“But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD” (Gen. 6:8). To appreciate the force of this, attention must be paid to the verses which precede and follow. The wickedness of man was great in the earth, so that it repented the Lord He had made man. The earth was filled with violence for “all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth” (Gen. 6:12). Nevertheless, even in those terrible times (far, far worse than now!), there was “a remnant according to the election of grace” (Rom. 11:5). God had reserved unto Himself one family from being swallowed up in the general apostasy. The sovereign grace of God had singled out Noah, wrought in him a saving faith, which was evidenced by works of obedience and righteousness. It was not for anything in him, for God permitted it to appear that he was a man of like passions with us (Gen. 9:21), but due alone to the free favour and will of God that Noah was delivered from the flood.

That the patriarchs were saved *by grace* is made abundantly clear from the 4th Chapter of Romans. There we are told, “For if Abraham were justified by works, he has whereof to glory; but not before God. For what says the Scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for (unto) righteousness” (vv. 2, 3). Then in verse 16 we read, “Therefore it is of faith, that it might be *by grace*; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of *us* all.” Nor was this blessed truth withheld from them, and only made known in New Testament times. In Genesis 19:19 we read that Lot said, “Behold now, your servant has found grace in your sight, and you have magnified your mercy, which you have

showed unto me in saving my life”: how clear was his apprehension of the unmerited favour of God. In Genesis 43:29 we find Joseph saying to Benjamin, “God be *gracious* unto you”: clear proof is this that he was Divinely taught this precious truth.

How gloriously did God demonstrate His *grace* in delivering the descendants of Abraham from “the iron furnace.” Nowhere is His sovereign favour more blessedly displayed than in the difference He put between the Hebrews and the Egyptians, and the wonderful way in which He emancipated them from the house of bondage. No clearer type of redemption is to be met with in all the Scriptures. The sending of Moses unto an oppressed and groaning people, the protection they were afforded from the Angel of Death under the blood of the paschal lamb, and their deliverance at the Red Sea, unmistakably and plainly shadowed forth the Christian’s deliverance from the servitude of sin and Satan, and his security from the wrath to come; which deliverance and security he owes entirely to the grace of God manifested in the redemption which is in Christ Jesus. So too it was grace, *wondrous grace*, which provided the murmuring Israelites with manna from on high and with water out of the smitten rock.

What has been said in the last paragraph is generally acknowledged, but it is now supposed that all is changed when we reach Exodus 19 and 20. To use an expression which is commonly employed in some circles, “At Sinai Israel placed themselves under law” — as though they were not “under Law” previously: see Exodus 16:27, 28! Then it was “the Dispensation of Law” began, a dispensation which it is insisted was, in its fundamental essentials, radically different from this Christian era. As a sample of what we now have reference to, we transcribe a few sentences from I. M. Haldeman’s “How to Study the Bible.” There the writer affirms, “The distinctive value of dispensational truth may be seen by contrasting the dispensation of the Holy Ghost with the Mosaic dispensation.” Among the points of difference, Mr. H. gives the following, “In the Mosaic dispensation, God dealt according to man’s work. In the Holy Ghost’s dispensation He deals according to Christ’s work. In the Mosaic dispensation, God dealt on the basis of Law. In the Holy Ghost dispensation, He deals on the basis of Grace. In the Mosaic dispensation, God said, ‘Do, and live.’ In the Holy Ghost dispensation, He says: ‘Live and do’.”

Now we have no hesitation in saying that such brief and bald statements as these are most misleading and mischievous. The first of the above contrasts ignores the fact that the redemptive work of Christ was retroactive in its efficacy and value, and that from Abel onwards God has *always* dealt with His spiritual elect on the ground of Christ’s atonement: Romans 3:24, 25 and 1 Peter 1:19, 20. The second contrast drawn needs considerable amplification: God is dealing with all who are out of Christ “on the basis of Law” as much today as He did with Israel in the time of Moses — as they shall yet discover to their eternal undoing: Romans 3:19; and, as will be shown in the paragraphs which follow, God acted in grace with Israel during the Mosaic economy as truly as He is acting in grace now. If by the term “life” in the third contrast, Mr. Haldeman means *spiritual* and *eternal* life (as the second member of it seems to clearly denote), then his statement is positively horrible, false doctrine of the worst kind.

In considering the constitution which God gave to Israel at Sinai most of our moderns appear to fix their whole attention on the moral law, and utterly ignore *the ceremonial*: the two ought to be regarded together, for they formed one complete whole. They presented the two sides of God’s character and nature, as “light” (1 John 1:5) and “love” (1 John 4:8). The moral law exhibited the righteousness and holiness of God; the ceremonial law reflected His love and grace. The one was given to reveal and convict of sin; the other was given to point to the blessed provision which the free favour of God has made for the blotting out of sin. The one was to show man his ruin; the other made known the remedy for that ruin. The ceremonial law, with its sin-offerings, its priesthood, its blessed provisions, proclaimed in no uncertain terms the *grace* of God; and it is ignorance of the worst kind to refer to the Mosaic economy as a stern regime of unrelieved justice, unmodified by the gracious provisions for failure which were found in the Levitical institutions.

That God dealt in *grace* with the nation of Israel after they received the Law from His mouth at Sinai is so plain that only the blind can fail to see it, yet as this is now so little perceived, we feel that we must labour the point. A most noteworthy proof thereof is found in the very next incident which occurred after Jehovah first announced the Ten Words. When Moses returned to the mount, Aaron made a golden calf, and the nation worshipped the same. A more flagrant violation of their covenant with the Lord could scarcely be imagined: though God chastened them for their offense, yet as Jeremiah 31:2 declares, “The people which were left of the sword *found grace* in the wilderness.” Blessed is it to behold the typical mediator pleading on the behalf of his erring brethren, and averting from them the Divine Wrath.

When Moses returned again to the mount, carrying with him the two hewn tables for God to write the Ten Commandments upon, we are told that, “The LORD descended in the cloud, and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the LORD. And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, The LORD, The LORD God, *merciful and gracious*, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty” (Exo. 34:5-7). What a blessed mingling was this of grace and law, of sovereign benignity and righteousness, of compassion and holiness! Let those who so loudly insist that “law and grace will no more mingle than will oil and water,” seriously ponder the above passage and revise their foolish and one-sided conception of things. It is blessed to see how Hezekiah (2 Chron. 30:9), Nehemiah (9:17) and Jonah (4:2), each rested upon *this* precious word in Exodus 34:6.

“And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto Aaron and unto his sons, saying, On this wise you shall *bless* the children of Israel, saying unto them, The LORD bless you, and keep you: The LORD make his face shine upon you, and *be gracious* unto you: The LORD lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace” (Num. 6:22-26). How can such a passage as this be fitted into the narrow conception of the Mosaic economy which is being propagated so ardently by the dispensationalists? It cannot. One almost wonders whether many of them know there *is* such a passage in the Pentateuch! Those verses record the benediction which the high priest pronounced upon Israel: what greater and grander blessing can be prayed for today?

The principle of *grace* was prominently exhibited in the civil law which the Lord gave unto His people. Therein Israel was taught to be *gracious* in their conduct. Many examples might be given, but we must here content ourselves with a few, leaving the reader to follow up the subject for himself. In Exodus 21:2 we find that God gave orders, “If you buy an Hebrew servant, six years he shall serve: and in the seventh *he shall go out free for nothing.*” “If you lend money to any of My people that is *poor* by you, you shalt not be to him as an usurer, neither shalt you lay upon him usury. If you at all take your neighbour’s raiment to pledge, you shalt deliver it unto him by that the sun goes down: For that is his covering only, it is his raiment for his skin: wherein shall he sleep? and it shall come to pass, when he cries unto me, that I will hear; *for I am gracious*” (Exo. 22:25-27).

“you shalt not defraud your neighbour, neither rob him: the wages of him that is hired shall not abide with you all night until the morning” (Lev. 19:13): this in order that the labourer might have money with which to purchase food for his evening meal. “If a bird’s nest chance to be before you in the way in any tree, or on the ground, whether they be young ones, or eggs, and the dam sitting upon the young, or upon the eggs, you shalt not take the dam with the young” (Deut. 22:6). “When you buildest a new house, then you shalt make a battlement for your roof, that you bring not blood upon your house, if any man fall from thence” (Deut. 22:8). Who can fail to see the principle of *grace* shining forth in these precepts; God thereby taught His people to be considerate of others, to be compassionate and merciful.

“you have heard that it has been said, you shalt love your neighbour, and hate your enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you” (Matt. 5:43, 44). These verses are often appealed to as a proof of the radical difference which obtains between the



Mosaic and Christian dispensations, but such an appeal betrays deplorable ignorance. Christ was there refuting the wicked errors of the Pharisees. The Old Testament inculcated *the same gracious treatment of "enemies"* as Christ insisted upon. "If you meet your enemy's ox or his ass going astray, you shalt surely bring it back to him again" (Exo. 23:4). "you shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people, but you shalt *love* your neighbour as yourself: I am the LORD" (Lev. 19:18). "Rejoice not when your enemy falleth" (Prov. 24:17). "If your enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink" (Prov. 25:21). One wonders if present-day dispensationalists read their Bibles at all, or if they are content to merely echo what their predecessors have said.

Notwithstanding their waywardness and continued backsliding, God dealt *in grace* with Israel all through their long and checkered history. Read through the book of Judges, and see how often He raised up deliverers for them. Read through the Kings and the Chronicles and note His long-suffering benignity in sending them Prophet after Prophet. After Israel had fallen to the low level they did in the reign of Ahab, what grace was displayed in the ministry of Elijah and Elisha. Read carefully Isaiah 1:2-15, and then ponder that amazing invitation in 1:18, "Come now, and let us reason together, says the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Where in all the New Testament is there a word which, for pure grace, exceeds this of Isaiah 1:18?!

Right down to the end of the Old Testament we find God dealing in grace with Israel. In the days of Hezekiah "the LORD was gracious unto them, and had compassion on them, and had respect unto them, because of His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and would not destroy them, neither cast He them from His presence as yet" (2 Kings 13:23). In the days of Hosea they were invited to, "Take with you words, and turn to the LORD: say unto Him, Take away all iniquity, and *receive us graciously*" (14:2). As late as Malachi we find the Prophet saying, "And now, I pray you, beseech God that He will *be gracious* unto us" (1:9).

The godly in Israel, during the Mosaic economy, had a vastly different conception of God than have our dispensationalists. Hear the Psalmist as he declares, "Gracious is the LORD, and righteous; yea, our God is merciful" (116:5). Hear him again as he bursts forth into adoring praise, "Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits: Who forgives all your iniquities; who heals all your diseases. . . . He has not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities" (Psa. 103:2, 3, 10) — can *Christians* say more? "If Thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?" (Psa. 13:3)! *What*, then, is *the great distinction* between the Mosaic and the Christian dispensation? This: then, God's grace was confined unto one nation; now it flows forth unto *all nations*!

## Part VII

### 13. *The Law of God*

When the Son of God took upon Him the form of a servant, He announced, "I delight to do your will, O My God: yea, your *law* is within My heart" (Psa. 40:8). The sweet Psalmist of Israel declared, "The law of your mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver. . . O *how love I your law!* it is my meditation all the day . . . Great peace have they which *love your law:* and nothing shall offend them" (Psa. 119:72, 97, 165). The Apostle to the Gentiles wrote, "The law *is holy,* and the commandment holy, and just, and good. . . The law is *spiritual* . . . *I delight in* the law of God after the inward man" (Rom. 7:12, 14, 22). In view of these passages, how solemn and how sad is the opposition against the holy Law of God that we now behold on every side.

It is grievous beyond expression to find so many who refused the fables of "Higher Criticism" and who have boldly stood for the full inspiration and Divine authority of the Sacred Scriptures, using their influence *against* the holy Law of God, and telling their hearers that the few now left who insist upon the law being the believer's Rule of Life, are only desirous of "bringing them into bondage." Satan indeed secured a great triumph when he succeeded in getting the "champions of orthodoxy" to declare that Christians are dead to the law in *every* sense, and that its requirements are no longer binding upon them. The vagaries of "Dispensationalism" have had much to do with this modern outcry against the Law of God, and unspeakably solemn is it to think of what their proponents will have to answer for in the Day to come, when they must render an account unto the Law-Giver Himself. O that it may please the Holy Spirit to open the eyes of some of them before it is too late.

There have been four chief mistakes made by our moderns on the subject of the Law. First, that it was never given by God until He promulgated it upon Mount Sinai. Second, that it was given only to and for the nation of Israel, the fleshly descendants of Jacob. Third, that Christians are not under it in *any* sense, and that every effort to press it upon them is an attempt to deprive them of their spiritual liberty. Fourth, that law and grace are mutually antagonistic, and can no more be combined than can oil and water; that they are opposing principles, the one being the enemy of the other. These are the principal errors which have been vigorously propagated the past two or three generations by many who were, and are, regarded as the leading contenders for the Faith once delivered to the saints. Is it too much to ask the reader to follow us now as we seek to challenge these positions, *to test them by Holy Writ?*

Before proceeding further, let us give a definition of what we intend by the Law of God. "It is the eternal rule of righteousness, which is essential to the being and glory of God's moral government and kingdom, and is in a sense the foundation of it, pointing out and declaring the duty of rational creatures, or moral agents, as what is fit and proper to be required of them, and containing the rule of God's conduct toward them, as their Moral Governor" (Sam. Hopkins, 1800). That "eternal rule of righteousness" was formally summarized in the Ten Commandments which were written by the finger of Jehovah on the two tables of stone. Those we speak of as "the moral law" in distinction from the ceremonial.

"What is the moral law? the moral law is the declaration of the will of God to mankind, directing and binding every one to personal, perfect, and perpetual conformity and obedience thereunto, in the frame and disposition of the whole man, soul and body, and in performance of all those duties of holiness and righteousness which he owes to God and man: promising life upon the fulfilling, and threatening death upon the breach of it. Question: is there any use of the moral law to man since the Fall? Answer: although no man since the Fall can attain righteousness and life by the moral law; yet there is great use thereof, as well common to all men, as peculiar either to the unregenerate, or the regenerate. Question: of what use is the moral law to all men? Answer: the moral law is of use to all men, to inform them of the holy nature and will of God, and of their duty binding them to walk accordingly; to convince them of their disability

to keep it, and of the sinful pollution of their nature, hearts, and lives; to humble them in the sense of their sin and misery, and thereby help them to a cleaner sight of the need they have of Christ, and of the perfection of His obedience” (Westminster Catechism). The “Westminster Catechism” was drawn up by many of the ablest of the Puritans, assembling first in 1643. It is still the standard of the Scottish Presbyterians, and was adopted by the synod of New York and Philadelphia in 1788. We have transcribed the above, not because we regard them as of any final authority, but because the definitions given are superior to any that we can frame.

“What is the moral law? I define it to be the holy, just, and good will of God made known and promulgated to His creatures in all those particulars, wherein He requires their perfect obedience, in order to their happiness. The law is the discovery of His will: for the Almighty Creator and sovereign Lord of Heaven and earth governs all His works and creatures according to the good pleasure of His own will.

1. The Lord God, the Almighty Creator of all things visible and invisible, has an unalienable right to make laws for the government of His creatures. This right is founded in His absolute dominion on and sovereignty over them. They are His property, the work of His hands. He has created and made them, and not they themselves. Their life, and all things belonging to it are His, coming from His gift, and continued by His bounty; and therefore He has a most indisputable claim to their obedience. What He requires, they must perform; because they are His creatures. The relation between the Creator and His creatures puts them under a necessity of obeying His law and will, or else of suffering whatever He shall threaten to inflict upon their disobedience.

2. The Law of the Lord God, the Almighty Creator, is unalterable. It changes not; for it is the copy of God’s most holy mind and will, in which there can be no variableness, neither shadow of turning. If the mind and will of God were to change, then God would be a changeable being, and whatever is changeable is amenable to change; but God is perfect, therefore His mind and will cannot change. His Word will He not break, nor alter the Law that has gone out of His mouth. His infinite wisdom and His almighty power stand engaged to maintain its dignity, that it may be always an holy, just, and good law, which He will not break or alter.

3. The moral law, which the Lord God revealed to Adam in Paradise, required of him perfect uninterrupted obedience. The whole moral law is summed up in one word, love; love to God for the blessings of creation and providence, and love to man for God’s sake. This love was the indispensable homage due to the Creator. It could not be alienated from Him, and given to any other object without idolatry; for which reason the moral law is unalterable. If a man withdraw his love in the least from God, he breaks that law which positively enjoins him to love the Lord his God with all his heart, with all his soul, with all his mind, and with all his strength.

4. The law given to Adam being unalterable, all his descendants are bound to keep it; for they are all under the law, as God’s creatures. His will is the indispensable rule of their obedience. He requires their love, and if they refuse to give it to Him, then their will is opposite to His, which is rebellion against their sovereign Lord, and which must bring upon them swift destruction” (W. Romaine, 1760).

The law was given to Adam in a twofold manner: subjectively and objectively. Subjectively, God endowed our first parents with a nature suited to and responding unto all the requirements of His holy will. The Creator placed in Adam’s heart holy instincts and inclinations unto whatsoever He commanded, and an aversion for all which He prohibited. As it is the “nature” of beasts to care for their young, for birds to build nests before they lay their eggs, for ants to lay by a store of food for the winter, so it was the “nature” of unfallen man to love and fear God, and seek His glory in a spiritual manner. This was wrought into the very constitution of his soul and spirit, enlightening his understanding, inclining his

affections, and moving his will Godwards. He was endowed with inward abilities suited to every duty required from him. It is one of the many errors of Plymouth Brethrenism (echoed from Socinianism) that Adam had merely a negative “innocence,” and lacked a positive righteousness and holiness.

In proof of what has been affirmed in the preceding paragraph, we appeal to Genesis 1:26, “And God said, Let Us make man in Our image, after Our likeness.” This cannot mean less than that, in his original state, man reflected in his nature the moral perfections of God — love, wisdom, holiness. That Adam was endowed with *spiritual* life is clear from the fact that in the day he disobeyed his Maker, he *died spiritually*, and he could not have done so unless he had first been in possession of spiritual life. That Adam, and all his posterity as federally represented by him *were* originally in possession of spiritual life is clear from Ephesians 4:18, where his fallen children are declared to be “*alienated from the LIFE OF GOD*”: how could they be “alienated from” that life, had it never been theirs? That the Law of God was written upon Adam’s heart in the day of his creation, that this formed his very “nature,” or the characteristic constitution of his soul (distinguishing him from the beasts), and that his being created in the image and likeness of God signified that his nature reflected His moral perfections, is clear from the fact that in regeneration the elect are “*renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him*” (Col. 3:10), which is amplified in Ephesians 4:24 as, “which after God is created *in righteousness and true holiness.*”

Though all his descendants fell in and with Adam, their federal head, and have inherited from him a depraved nature and constitution, being born into this world “dead in trespasses and sins,” nevertheless, they still bear clear traces of that Law of God which was, originally, written on their first parent’s heart. Positive proof of this is furnished in Romans 2:14, 15, “For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do *by nature* the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, (the scriptural revelation of the same), are a law unto themselves: Which show *the work of the law written in their hearts.*” The “work of the law” is that which the law *does*, namely, *instructs* concerning the goodness and badness of actions, teaching men what is right and wrong. In honouring their parents, paying their debts, being kind to the poor, men do (some of) “the things contained in the law,” for those are actions which the law prescribes; and thereby they give evidence that the law was once written on their hearts. The *effects* thereof are sufficient to render men inexcusable, but not enough to direct them in the way of holiness and happiness.

But Adam also had the Law of God set before him *objectively*. Being “made upright” (Eccl. 7:29), or perfectly holy, necessarily supposes a *rule* of conduct, or that there was a *standard* to determine right and wrong in moral character and action; in other words, man was placed under moral government, which supposes a law requiring perfect obedience of him — defining his whole duty — and forbidding all disobedience on pain of suffering the just dessert of it. He was required to love God with all his heart, and his neighbor as himself; and to express this in all proper ways, and to obey every precept which God should give him. To suppose otherwise would be to deny that man was treated as a moral agent at his creation. Nor does this conclusion rest merely on logical supposition. While it be true that no particular account is found in Genesis of man’s being placed under this moral government, yet it may be clearly demonstrated from what has been since revealed.

The Apostle Paul, speaking of the law under which all mankind are, asserts the tenor of it in these words, “Cursed is every one that continues not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them” (Gal. 3:10). Now that “law” must have existed *before* man sinned, and while he had opportunity and was in a capacity *to* “continue” to do everything required by it; for if man, when in those circumstances, was not under law, with this sanction, and bound by it, there could be no reason or propriety in making this requirement of such a penalty, when man had *already* violated it, and rendered it impossible *to do* what it required. It necessarily follows, therefore, that man was originally made under the law, when in a state of innocency, which denounced a curse upon him, if he failed to render perfect obedience!

This is further confirmed by what the Apostle says of the law given to man, in his primitive state, namely, that it was “(ordained) *unto life*” (Rom. 7:10), and that the man who does the things required by it “*shall live by them*” (Rom. 10:5). This *must* refer to the *original* law given to man when innocent, or before he sinned; for no such law could be ordained or given “unto life,” that is, proposing and promising life, on *this* condition, since sin took place; for it is *impossible* that men, since the first apostasy, should obtain “life” in this way! This the Apostle plainly observes in his own case: “the commandment, which was ordained (or “given”), unto life, I found to be *unto death*” (Rom. 7:10). Thus, the law given to man in the day of his creation, and which threatened death for transgression, also promised *life* to him upon obedience!

A careful study of the book of Genesis reveals the fact that, from the beginning, all the posterity of Adam were under the Law of God, and that they possessed a knowledge of the same. It is passing strange that anyone should imagine the opposite: Romans 4:5 plainly enough declares, “Where no law is, there is no transgression.” If the early descendants of Adam had not been under the Law of God, then they had been left *without any Divine standard for the regulation of their conduct*, they had been without any moral government and consequently, none of their actions had been either good or evil. To what gross absurdities does a departure from Holy Writ reduce us!

“Sin is not imputed when there is no law” (Rom. 5:13). What could be plainer than that? If from Adam to Moses men had not been under the Law of God, then none of their actions would have deserved punishment, for it is a breach of His law only which subjects men to God’s displeasure and penalty. How could God charge Cain with the murder of Abel, had there been no law forbidding murder? By what authority did Noah curse his son (which curse was approved by God Himself) if there was then no commandment *to “honour”* parents? Why was Abimelech held guilty for taking unto himself the wife of Abraham, had there been no law forbidding the same? God Himself told him “I also withheld you from *sinning* against Me: therefore suffered I you not to touch her” (Gen. 20:6). “Sinning” *against what?* why, the commandment “you shalt not commit adultery”! Why should Judah say “Bring her forth, and let her be *burnt*” (Gen. 38:24) when he learned his daughter-in-law had “played the harlot,” unless the *same* law as Leviticus 21:9 had *then* been in force: “And the daughter of any priest, if she profane herself by playing the whore, she profanes her father: she shall be *burnt* with fire”!

Noah was a “preacher of *righteousness*” (2 Peter 2:5), and the standard or rule of “righteousness” is *the law*. Noah pressed upon the Antediluvians the holy claims of God, denounced their rebellions against Him, and threatened them with the certain doom awaiting them if they repented not and turned from their evil ways. The sending of the Flood upon the world of the ungodly, is clear proof that God *was* then “imputing sins” and executing the penalty of His law. Once more: “I made a covenant with mine eyes; why then should I think upon a maid?” (Job 31:1): read through the whole of that chapter, and then ask, If the holy Law of God was unknown to men in those early times, *where* had Job learned such a high standard of morality and piety? An echo will still answer “where!” O the blindness of men who affirm that there was no Divine law given before Sinai.

## ***14. The Law of God (Continued).***

After what has been pointed out in the previous section of this article there is little need for us to devote much space here unto demonstrating the error of those who affirm that the moral law was given *only* to and for the nation of Israel. One plain Scripture is quite sufficient to expose such a fallacy. In Romans 3:19 we read “Now we know that what things soever the law says, it says to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.” Observe, “the law *says*,” not “said”: it is still speaking with Divine authority, commanding and threatening. It speaks to “them who are under the law,” and *who* these are is distinctly defined as “all the world.” Nothing could be simpler or more conclusive, and no arguments of ours can possibly strengthen its force; nor can any repudiation of others blunt its sharp edge.

We pass on, then, to *test by Scripture* the third great error which “dispensationalists” have made on this subject, namely, that Christians are not “under the law” in *any* sense, that it is not a Rule of Life to them for the regulating of their conduct. Concerning this particular the utmost confusion now prevails in many quarters, and as it is an important part of the work committed unto God’s servants to heed that Divine command “Take up the stumbling block *out of the way* of My people” (Isa. 57:14), we shall endeavour to deal with this point with the more care, and at some length. No doubt some of our readers will regret this, and would much prefer for us to write on other subjects. We ask all such to kindly bear in mind the needs of others who urgently require to be delivered from the baneful effects of this pernicious error.

“Wherefore, my brethren, you also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ . . . But now we are delivered from the law” (Rom. 7:4, 6); “For I through the law died unto the law” (Gal. 2:19 R.V.). Such verses as these are eagerly pressed into their service by those who declare that the law has no jurisdiction over the Christian, yet let it be pointed out that these very verses flatly contradict their other assertion that the law was never given to any but the nation of Israel. How could the Roman saints be “delivered from the law” *if they were never under it?* and how could the Gentile Galatians have “died unto the law” if they had never been alive unto it? Thus, the very verses which these errorists are so fond of quoting make directly against one of their own positions. Verily, “the legs of the lame are not equal” (Prov. 26:7).

“For sin shall not have dominion over you: for you are not under the law, but under grace” (Rom. 6:14). Yet we are expressly told that “Being not without law to God, but *under the law to Christ*” (1 Cor. 9:21). Obviously these two verses need “rightly dividing,” or rather, properly interpreting, or we shall have the New Testament contradicting itself. And here we may perceive the real need for an anointed *teacher*, for surely the man who toils hard for his living through the day and spends only a few minutes in the evening or on the Sabbath, cursorily reading the Scriptures can scarcely expect to acquire the skill which is needed to see into the mysteries and solve the difficulties of the Word. No, a lifetime of prayerful, diligent, and patient study is called for, if one is to be an “able minister of the New Testament” (2 Cor. 3:6), and such study is not possible where one is in the pulpit or on the platform almost every day of the week.

To understand the above verses a four-fold distinction needs to be made in regard to the Christian’s relation to the law. First, as he was in and federally represented by Adam, when he was under the law as a covenant of works, life being promised to him if his legal head obeyed it. Second, as a fallen descendant of Adam, a personal transgressor of the law; being in his unconverted days under its curse. Third, as he was in and federally represented by Christ, who was made under the law, fulfilled all its requirements by a perfect obedience, and suffered its penalty on the behalf of and in the stead of His people. Fourth, as converted: the Holy Spirit having united him to Christ, so that God now pronounces

him free from *the condemnation of the law* and imputes to him the perfect obedience of his Surety; and, the Spirit having wrought in him a desire and determination to love and serve God, he delights in the law and takes it as his Rule of Life, or standard of conduct.

The Christian is released from the law as the procuring ground of his justification and as the ground of his condemnation before God, because Christ has rendered in his room and stead that perfect obedience which the law required, and also suffered its penalty: therefore he is freed from the law as a covenant of works, to obtain life and glory thereby, but not from that submission to God which its terms enjoin. The Christian has been delivered from the curse of the law (Gal. 3:13), but not from its requirements. The Christian has been delivered from the condemning power of the law, but not from its precepts — otherwise liberty would be his to live in sin, which is the only other possible alternative. The Christian has been delivered from the terror of the law, but not from obedience thereto. The Christian died to the penalty of the law when his Surety suffered in his stead, but he is under the law to Christ as a Rule of Life or director of conduct.

One thinks this issue would be settled once for all by a calm reading of Exodus 20. Is a Christian, any more than a non-Christian, permitted to have more Gods than one? May the Christian make *for himself* a graven image and fall down and worship it? Will the Lord hold *him* guiltless if he takes His name in vain? May the Christian break the Sabbath? Is *he* at liberty to dishonour his parents, kill his neighbor, commit adultery, steal, or covet something which belongs to another? Surely the very things required by the law approve themselves to every honest man's conscience. What a state of heart must they be in who *hate* the law! We earnestly beg every Christian parent who reads these pages to diligently teach the Ten Commandments to his or her children; if you do not, you are an enemy of God, an enemy to your offspring, an enemy to the State. What right have you to denounce the lawlessness which is so rife throughout the land, if you fail to enforce the law in your home?

It is contended by many that since the Law of God requires *perfect obedience* in heart and life, and since men are depraved and cannot obey it, or obtain life by it, that therefore Christ has introduced a new regime, upon *easier* terms; a regime which enjoins conditions that *are* in the power of fallen man to keep, and secure eternal life thereby. But mark well what such a theory involves. *It sets the Son against the Father*: it places Christ in opposition to the moral Governor of Heaven and earth. It represents the Redeemer as *deserting* the Father's honor and interests — the honor of His Law and government; and supposes that He shed His precious blood with the object of persuading the Ruler of this world to slacken the reins of government and grant an impious license to iniquity. To suppose *that* would make the holy Saviour a friend to sin and the enemy of God. From such horrible blasphemy may Divine grace preserve both writer and reader.

So far was Christ from setting aside the law, or even abating its high requirements, that in His first sermon (published in the New Testament) He said, "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled" (Matt. 5:17, 18). In that same Sermon He *condemned* the Pharisees for their sin of abating the law. They taught that though the law did forbid certain external and gross sins, yet not so the first stirrings of corruption in the heart. They affirmed that a man must not commit murder, but that there was no harm in his being angry without a cause, in speaking reproachfully, and harbouring a secret grudge in the heart (Matt. 5:21, 22).

The Pharisees taught a man must not commit adultery, but that he should be excused for secret lascivious *thoughts* (Matt. 5:27, 29). They affirmed that a man must not be guilty of perjury, but that petty oaths in common conversation were quite permissible (vv. 33-37). They argued that a man should not hate his friends, but supposed it was quite right for him to hate an enemy (vv. 43, 44). These, and such like *allowances*, the Pharisees imagined were made by the law, and therefore that such things were not

sinful. But the Lord Jesus condemned their doctrine as false and damnable, and insisted that the high and holy demands of the law were *not abated* in the slightest degree, nor ever shall be; but rather that the law required us to be “perfect” as our heavenly Father (v. 48); and declared, “I say unto you, That except your righteousness *shall exceed* the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven” (5:20). No wonder the “dispensationalists” hate so bitterly the Sermon on the Mount!

But the carping objector will reply, Is it fair and just for God to require of His creatures *more* than they can possibly render? In answering, let it be duly considered *what it is* that God requires from us. In Matthew 22:37-40 we find the Lord Jesus declaring, “you shalt love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, you shalt love your neighbour as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.” We turn, then, to the objector and ask, Is it wrong that the Governor of Heaven and earth requires men to *love* Him with all their hearts? Is *that* too much to ask from them? Is it more than He deserves from us? Shame! shame! Is it not rather the truth that the objector *hates* God so much that he cannot find it in his heart *to* love Him, and therefore says, “He must not insist upon it; and if He does, He is unjust and very hard with us.” What is this but the objector saying, “We will not have this man to reign over us” (Luke 19:14)!

Yet notwithstanding all that has been pointed out above, there are many who loudly insist that Christ’s death entirely annulled the Law of God, and that it has now wholly ceased to be a Rule of Life to the believer; whereas one great and declared design of Christ’s coming into the world was to recover His people unto obedience, to bring them back in heart and life to God: “That He would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve Him without fear, *in holiness and righteousness* before Him, all the days of our life” (Luke 1:74, 75). The Lord Jesus came here not to dissolve our obligations to God, but rather to promote them. Christ died to restore His people to conformity unto the law: Titus 2:11, 12. Why, to deliver any *creature* from the law would be to make it supreme, independent! How could there be a “kingdom” (Col. 1:13) without any law to regulate its subjects?

No, so far from Christ’s death having repealed God’s Law, as the Psalmist declared, “The righteousness of your testimonies *is everlasting* . . . Concerning your testimonies, I have known of old that you have founded them *for ever* . . . your Word is true from the beginning: and every one of your righteous judgments *endures for ever*” (Psa. 119:144, 152, 160). And again, “The works of His hands are verity and judgment; all his commandments are sure. *They stand fast for ever and ever*” (Psa. 111:7, 8). O how men love their own corruptions and hate God and His Holy Law, though, of course, they seek to conceal the same under a religious disguise as did Cain and Judas. Nevertheless, “The LORD *sits King for ever*” (Psa. 29:10): yes, and He will yet *assert the rights* of His crown, maintain the honor of His majesty, glorify His great name, and vindicate His injured Law, although it be in the eternal damnation of millions of His creatures: “But those Mine enemies, which would not that I should *reign over them*, bring hither, and slay them before Me” (Luke 19:27).

From the last-quoted Scripture the real Christian may perceive what an aversion men have to right thoughts of God and Divine things, and in view of it (and John 7:47, 1 Cor. 2:14, etc.) may be convinced of the absolute necessity of a supernatural and invincible power being brought to bear upon them if their prejudices are to be removed and their hearts made to really love the Truth. A holy God does not appear infinitely glorious to an unholy heart; and the unregenerate not seeing the *grounds* of loving God with all their hearts, do not see the *reason* of the law, nor do they see how “holy, just, and good” the law is. The carnal mind being enmity *against God*, it is, at the same time, enmity against His Law, which is a transcript of the Divine nature (Rom. 8:7). Hence, sinners do not wish to believe either God or His Law to be what they really are; and their depraved inclinations make them blind to what Scripture so



plainly says, and leads them to frame a *false* image of God, and entertain *wrong* notions of His Law, that they may have a God and a law to suit their own minds.

From Luke 19:27 we may also perceive what is the character of genuine regeneration and conversion: it is a marvel and miracle of Divine grace, which transforms a lawless rebel into a loving and law-abiding subject. By a “lawless rebel” we mean one who is determined to please himself, have his own way, follow out his own plans, and gratify his own desires. By a “loving and law-abiding subject” we mean one who is brought to recognize the claims of God upon him, and who yields to those claims; one who gives up himself to God, to honor, please, and serve Him: not by constraint, but gladly; not through fear of Hell, but out of gratitude and love. But such a transformation of character and conduct is only brought about by the supernatural operations of the Holy Spirit. The great triumph of Divine grace is to win the heart to God, so that the favored recipient of it sincerely declares, “*I delight in the law of God after the inward man*” (Rom. 7:22).

From what has just been before us we may clearly perceive the worthlessness of the religion of our degenerate age. The poor deluded creatures in most of the “churches” and “assemblies” will dearly love those ministers who cry “Peace, peace” unto them, but bitterly hate any who expose their “refuge of lies.” The religion of vast multitudes consists in little more than a firm confidence that their sins are forgiven and that their souls are eternally secure. They consider it a serious fault to doubt their salvation, and the whole of their experience is made up of “faith” and “joy”: faith that their sins are blotted out, joy in the sure prospect of eternal bliss. *But there is no conformity to God’s Holy Law*, no mourning before Him because of self-love and self-seeking, no humility and brokenness of heart. Let one bid them “examine themselves,” test their foundations, take upon them the yoke of Christ, and they at once raise the howl of “Legalism, Dangerous teaching!” O what a rude awakening awaits all such the first five minutes after death!

## 15. *The Law of God (Continued).*

The moral law is the eternal rule of righteousness which God has given to men, requiring them to love Him with all their hearts and their neighbors as themselves. In the very nature of the case, such a law can neither be repealed nor modified. The grand reason why the great Governor of the world gave such a law *was because it was infinitely fit we should love Him with all our hearts*; nothing less was due Him. For us to suppose that God should ever annul or alter this law when the grounds and reasons of His first making it remain as forcible as ever, when what it requires is as right as ever, when what it becomes Him as the moral Ruler of His creatures to require it from them as much as ever—to suppose such a thing constitutes the highest reproach upon all God's moral perfections. It would suppose Him releasing His creatures from doing right, and giving them license to do wrong. So far from man being benefited by having such a law abrogated or altered, it would be one of the greatest and sorest calamities that could happen.

How sad it is, then, to think that the mind of fallen man is enmity against the Law-Giver! And how humbling when the Christian realizes that there is still within him that which is opposed to such a holy, such a righteous, such a spiritual law! And why is it that fallen man hates the law? Because it *condemns* him. But let the Christian place the blame where it truly belongs: within and not without. The law condemns none whose heart and life is in conformity with it. *Sin is the cause* of the condemnation. We have none but ourselves to blame when the holy law denounces our wrong-doing. Instead of looking askance at the law, the Christian should eye it with profound gratitude, for it is the very instrument which the Holy Spirit uses to convince him of his self-will and self-love, for “*by the law is the knowledge of sin*” (Rom. 3:20).

How sad and serious, then, is the error that Christ came here in order to make an end of the law. Instead, it was foretold centuries beforehand “He will *magnify* the law, and make it honourable” (Isa. 42:21). To suppose that the Son of God became incarnate, suffered and died in order that the law might be repealed, would be to suppose that He had become the enemy of God—to His holiness and justice, His claims and His government—and that He had gone over to the side of His Father's rebellious subjects. The law was, indeed, in the way of the sinner's salvation, and *this* was the ground of the *necessity* for His incarnation, obedience and death. Yet that was so far from being designed to set the law aside, it was for the express purpose of fulfilling it: it was to obey its precepts and endure its penalty on the behalf of His people, so that the law was as much honoured as though His people had themselves obeyed it, or suffered its curse.

So far from the law having been repealed, every Christless sinner is as much under the law today—as much under its demands, its condemnation and curse for his failure to meet those demands—as if Christ had never come into the world, and there were no Mediator between God and men. He who believes not in and surrenders to the lordship of Christ, he who is not united to Him by the Spirit so that His merits and righteousness (which consist in what He did and suffered to maintain and honour the law) is properly imputed to his account, is under the condemnation and wrath of God (i.e., the curse of His Law) as much as if there had been no Saviour. In proof of this we ask the reader to carefully ponder John 3:18-20; Romans 1:18; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9.

So far from the Christian being released from the requirements of the law, he is as much under the law *as a rule* as he ever was, and under as great obligations to a perfect conformity unto it in heart and life, as the non-Christian is. And everything in him or of him which comes short of perfect holiness, or full obedience to the law—considered in its utmost spirituality and strictness—is perfectly inexcusable, and is as criminal (or evil) in him as if he were not a believer in Christ; yea, much more so, for the superior light, discernment, and advantages he has, and the special favors and privileges bestowed on him

*do vastly increase his obligations* to perfect obedience, and therefore render every degree of opposition or want or conformity to the infinitely excellent Law of God immensely more heinous than in others.

The law, considered in all its unmodified strictness, requiring perfect holiness of character and conduct, is as much a rule for Christians to walk by now as ever it was. Christ never designed to deliver His people from their full obligations to the law, but instead greatly increased their obligations by what He has done for them. He has indeed made full atonement for *all* their sins against the law, and so has delivered them from the *curse* of the law, being Himself made a curse for them, so that they are, in *this* sense, “not under the law, but under grace” (Rom. 6:14). They are no longer subject to the infinitely dreadful punishment which it pronounces upon the transgressor, for they have been completely delivered from this by a free pardon. But that has not canceled their obligation to obey the law. The design of Christ’s blessed work was to deliver His people from all sin, and bring them to a full conformity to the law—and, eventually, this shall be fully realized.

To say that Christ came here to purchase a cancellation of the law would be procuring lawless liberty for rebellious subjects. No, He did not magnify the law and make it honourable, that His disciples might despise and violate it; but that they should be delivered from its condemnation and brought to delight in and obey its precepts. An unequivocal proof that the law *was not* set aside is seen in the fact that one of its commandments came in power to the conscience of Saul some years after the Cross: he distinctly says, “I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, you shalt not covet” (Rom. 7:7). Most certainly the Holy Spirit would never have applied an abrogated and superseded statute. Had the moral law been canceled, the Spirit would no more have revived it than He would have restored the Levitical sacrifices.

“And the LORD said unto Moses, Hew you two tables of stone like unto the first: and I will write upon these tables the words that were in the first tables, which you brakest” (Exo. 34:1). “The treaty that was on foot between God and Israel, being broken off abruptly by their worshipping the golden calf, when peace was made, all must begin anew, not where they left off, *but from the beginning*. Thus backsliders must ‘repent, and do the first works’ (Rev. 2:5). Before, God Himself provided the tables, and wrote on them; now, Moses must hew out the tables, and God would only write upon them. Thus, in the first writing of the law upon the heart of man in innocence, both the tables and the writing were the work of God; but when those were broken and defaced by sin, and the Divine Law was to be preserved in the Scriptures, God therein made use of the ministry of man, and Moses first. But the prophets and Apostles did only hew the tables, as it were, the writing was God’s still; for ‘all Scripture is given by inspiration of God.’ Observe, when God was reconciled to them, He ordered the tables to be renewed, and wrote His Law in them, which plainly intimates to us:

“First, that even under the Gospel of peace and reconciliation by Christ (of which the intercession of Moses was typical), the moral law should *continue to oblige believers*. Though Christ has redeemed us from the ‘curse of the Law,’ yet not from the command of it, but still we are under the law to Christ; when our Saviour, in His sermon on the mount explained the moral law, and vindicated it from the corrupt glosses with which the scribes and Pharisees had broken it (Matt. 5:19), He did in effect renew the tables, and make them like the first, that is, reduce the law to its primitive sense and intention. Secondly, that the best evidence of the pardon of sin, peace with God, is the writing of the law in the heart. The first token God gave of His reconciliation to Israel was the renewing of the tables of the law; thus, the first article of the new covenant is ‘I will write My laws in their hearts’: Hebrews 8:10” (Matthew Henry).

The great blessing of the Gospel is that it is the appointed channel through which God gives grace to keep the law: ponder Jeremiah 31:33, Ezekiel 36:27, Ephesians 4:24. “None enter into the Gospel state but those that readily and entirely give up themselves to the will of God; and therefore none can have benefited in the sin-offering and sacrifice of Christ but those that consent to return to their duty of the law

and live in obedience to God. Surely God never pardons any while they are in rebellion and live under the full power and dominion of sin: no, they must consent to forsake sin and return to the allegiance due to their proper Lord” (T. Manton, 1660). Repentance (which is sorrow for and repudiation of rebellion against God) precedes “the remission (forgiveness) of sins” (Mark 1:5). We must be “converted” turned round and brought into subjection to God) in order that our “sins may be blotted out” (Acts 3:19).

The law does not and cannot change; its requirements are not modified nor its penalty relieved by the Cross of Christ. But the Christian’s *relation* to the law has been changed: he has been placed on a new footing in regard to it. Christ having substituted His obedience for us in the matter of *justification*, and endured in His own Person the law’s condemnation, we are forever freed from its penalty, having in Him died to its curse. What, then, is the relation between the Christian and the law, which conversion and faith establishes? Answer, it is now *our Rule of Life* as it is held (so far as Christians are concerned, not in the hands of God as “Judge,” but) in the hands of the Mediator: 1 Corinthians 9:21. The Christian’s new relation to the law is that of Christ Himself: *His* feelings toward the law ought to be *ours*. He declared, “I delight to do your will, O my God: yea, your law is within My heart” □ the seat of the affections (Psa. 40:8); and the Christian having been made a partaker of His nature also “*delights* in the Law of God after the inward man” (Rom. 7:22), and the more he mortifies the flesh and walks in the Spirit, the greater is his love for the law, and the closer and fuller his conformity to it.

“Some speak as if the servant were greater than the Master, and the disciple above his Lord; as if the Lord Jesus honoured the law, and His people were to set it aside; as if He fulfilled it for us, that we might not need to fulfill it; as if He kept it, not that we might keep it, but that we might not keep it, but something else in its stead, they know not what. The plain truth is, we must either keep it or break it. Which of these men ought to do let those answer who speak of the believer having nothing more to do with the law. There is no midway. If it be not a saint’s duty to keep the law, he may break it at pleasure, and go on sinning because grace abounds.

The word *duty* is objected to as inconsistent with the liberty of forgiveness and sonship. Foolish and idle cavil! What is duty? It is a thing *due by me to God*; that line of conduct which *I owe to God*. And do these objectors mean to say that because God has redeemed us from the curse of the law, therefore we *owe* Him nothing, we have no duty now to Him? Has not redemption rather made us doubly debtors? We owe Him more than ever, and we owe His Holy Law more than ever; more honour, more obedience. Duty has been doubled, no canceled, by our being delivered from the law; he who says that duty has ceased, because deliverance had come, knows nothing of duty, or law, or deliverance. The greatest of all debtors in the universe is the redeemed man. What a strange sense of gratitude these men must have that, because love has canceled the penalty of the law, and turned away its wrath, say, therefore, that reverence and obedience to that law are no longer *due*. Is *terror* in their estimation the only foundation of duty; and when love comes in and terror ceases, does duty become a bondage?

“No,” they may say, “but there is something higher than duty, there is privilege; it is that we contend for.” I answer, the privilege of what? Of obeying the law? *That* they cannot do with; for they are no longer under the law, but under grace. What privilege, then? Of imitating Christ? Be it so. But can we imitate Him whose life was one great law-fulfilling without keeping the law? What privilege, again we ask? And has our free forgiveness released us from the privilege of conformity to the revealed will of God?

“But what do they mean by thus rejecting the word duty, and contending for that of privilege? Privilege is not something distinct from duty, nor at variance with duty; but it is duty *and something more*! It is duty influenced by higher motives; duty uncompelled by terror or suspense. In privilege the *duty* is all there; but there is something superadded, in the shape of motive and relationship, which exalts and ennobles duty. It is my duty to obey government; it is my privilege to obey my parents. But in the

latter case is duty gone because privilege has come in? Or has not the loving relationship between parent and child only intensified the duty by superadding the privilege, and sweetening the obedience by the mutual love? 'The Love of Christ *constraineth*.' There is something more than both duty and privilege added" (Andrew Bonar, 1860).

Many object that the Ten Commandments are insufficient as a rule of duty for the Christian because they do not contain the whole of it. But in \Matthew 22:37-39 Christ Himself reduced them unto two, for love to God and love to our neighbour comprehends *every* act of duty that can possibly be performed; he who loves God supremely, willingly obeys Him in whatever forms He shall prescribe. The *new* commandment of love to the brethren is comprehended in the *old* commandment (1 John 2:7, 8), for he that loves God cannot but love His image wherever it is seen: Galatians 5:13-15; Romans 13:8-10. God's commandment is "exceeding broad" (Psa. 119:96), and though the whole of Christian obedience be not *formally* expressed in the Ten Commandments, yet *virtually* it is. When Christ said, "On these two commandments hang *all* the law and the prophets" (Matt. 22:40), He made known the fact that all the exhortations and admonitions contained in the entire Scriptures are but an exposition and enforcing of the law. Few perceive the *extent* or scope of the Ten Commandments what each one includes, implies, and involves. The Ten Commandments are the main root from which all other trunks and branches of duty are drawn.

Yet notwithstanding all that has now been pointed out in these articles, many imagine the whole of it is practically set aside or refuted by the words, "*Love is the fulfilling of the law*" (Rom. 13:10). Of course it is, and we have not written a single sentence which is in the slightest degree contradicts or clashes with that Divine statement. From the moment of Adam's creation till now *love* has always been the "fulfilling" of the law. Where love be absent, no matter how carefully our actions be attended to, there is no real and acceptable fulfilling or keeping of the law, for the law itself enjoins and requires *love* to God and to our neighbour. The trouble is that the objector confounds the principle or *spring* of obedience (love) with the *rule* (the law) itself.

The law tells me what to do, love urges me to the doing of it. Romans 13:10 does not say, "love is a *substitute* for the law," but "love is the fulfilling of the law." To make love and law synonymous would be like confounding the railroad track on which the engine must run, with the power which pulls the train. "To make the rule of obedience that which is the moving cause of it, is the same thing as for a son to say to his father, 'Sir, I will do what you desire me when I feel inclined to do so, but I will not be *commanded*.' Whatever may be argued against the authority of God, I believe there are few if any parents who would put up with such language from their own children" (A. Fuller, 1814).

## ***16. The Law of God (Concluded).***

All truth is catholic or universal. It embraces many elements and opens upon wide horizons, and therefore involves endless difficulties and apparent inconsistencies. But the mind of man seeks for unity, and tends prematurely to *force* unity in the sphere of his imperfect knowledge by securing one element of truth at the sacrifice of another. This is eminently the case with all rationalists: they are clear and logical, but at the expense of being superficial and half-orbed. Such is the case with heretics. The Greek word from which “heresy” is derived means an act of choice, and hence of diversion, a picking and choosing one part instead of comprehensively embracing the whole truth. The man who holds to the Law of God and repudiates Divine grace is a heretic. Equally so, the man who glories in the grace of God and throws overboard His Law is a heretic. Jude 4 speaks of “turning the *grace* of our God into lasciviousness.”

In his Estimate of Manton, J.C. Ryle wrote, “I admire the scriptural wisdom of a man who, in a day of hard-and-fast systems could *dare to be apparently inconsistent*, in order to ‘declare all the counsel of God.’ I firmly believe that this is the test of theology, which does good in the Church of Christ. The man who is not tied hand and foot by systems, and does not pretend to reconcile what our imperfect eyesight cannot reconcile in this dispensation, he is the man whom God will bless. Manton was such a man; and because he was such a man, I think his works, like the ‘Pilgrim’s Progress,’ deserve the attention of all true Christians.”

Alas, how few such men has Christendom been favoured with during the last century. For the most part certain favorite portions of Scripture have been seized, and every thing which appeared to conflict with them has been either ignored, explained away, or repudiated. Some aspects of the truth have been eagerly contended for by champions of the faith, but anything which appeared “inconsistent” therewith, has been studiously avoided or bitterly denounced. The great majority would not allow that there is a perfect agreement between the invincibility of God’s decrees and the freedom of human actions, insisting that if God has definitely predestinated a certain course of conduct, the individual is reduced to the level of a machine. Some believe in God’s sovereignty, and some in man’s responsibility; but few indeed *really* believe fully in both, and with rare exceptions, the more strongly the one is retained, the more loosely the other is held.

Few perceive there is a perfect consistency between justification by the righteousness and blood of Christ and the necessity of our obedience, if ever we are to reach Heaven; nor can they reconcile the efficacy of Divine grace with the indispensability of our performance of duty. There have been some good men who have honoured the Spirit in clearly teaching His effectual call, but those same men have denounced others who exhorted unsaved sinners to repent of their sins and believe in Christ. Certain men of God have rightly affirmed that Scripture assures the real saint of the absolute security of his salvation, but have denied that the solemn warnings and admonitions addressed to Christians in the New Testament also belong to them: they gloried in the immutability of God’s promises, but failed to see that the Christian is preserved from apostasy by his own use of appointed means.

Logic takes a certain premise and draws from it a rational and “consistent” conclusion. But faith appropriates a Divine statement and leaves God to draw His own conclusions, for faith knows that “logical conclusions” *often contradict the Scriptures*. For example, logic says, “God is one, and *therefore* there cannot be three persons in the Godhead.” Faith says, “God *is* one, yet Scripture affirms there are three Divine Persons, and [by God’s grace] I believe it.” Logic says, “Jesus Christ is man, and *therefore* He cannot be God.” Faith says, “Christ *is* man, but Scripture also declares He is *God*, and [by God’s grace] I believe it.” It is really pitiful to see some men such slaves to “logical consistency” that they use one portion of Truth to overthrow another portion equally blessed. So it is deplorable to find so many

ignoring or despising passage after passage of Holy Writ because they are unable to “harmonize” them with some favorite text. O for grace to receive *all* that God has given us in His Word.

The same spirit of partiality or lopsidedness explains why so many insist that law and grace are antagonistic principles. In his youth the writer was taught by men he looked up to, that law and grace could no more be united than oil and water: may the Lord forgive him for inserting this error in some of his earlier writings. How many are now being told by the “champions of orthodoxy” that law and grace are hostile to each other, and that where the one is in exercise the other must necessarily be inactive. But this is a serious mistake. How could the Law *of God* and the grace *of God* conflict? The one expresses Him as “light” (1 John 1:5), the other manifests Him as “love” (1 John 4:8); the one makes known His righteousness, the other reveals His mercy. The manifold wisdom of God has made known the perfect consistency between them. Instead of their being contradictory, they are complementary. Both shone forth in their full glory at the Cross; both are published in the true Gospel.

In all of God’s works and ways we may discern a meeting together of *seemingly* conflicting elements. The centrifugal and centripetal forces which are ever at work in the material realm illustrate this principle. So it is in connection with Divine providence: there is a constant inter-penetration of the natural and supernatural. So it was in the giving of the Scriptures: they are the product both of God’s and man’s agency; they are a Divine revelation, yet couched in human language and given through human media: they are inerrantly true, yet written by fallible men. They are inspired throughout, yet the superintending control of the Spirit over the writers did not exclude nor interfere with the natural exercise of their faculties. So it was with Christ. He was omniscient yet He marveled at unbelief. He was omnipotent, yet He hungered and slept. He was eternal, yet He died. He was man, yet He rose again from the dead by His own power.

In view of what has been pointed out in the preceding paragraph, to which many other examples might be added, why should so many stumble over the fact of Divine Law and Divine grace being exercised side by side, operating at the same season? Do law and grace present any greater contrast than the inexorable justice and abounding mercy of God, or between His fathomless love and everlasting wrath? No indeed, not so great. Grace must not be regarded as an attribute of God which eclipses all His other perfections. As Romans 5:21 so plainly tells us, “That as sin has reigned unto death, even so might grace reign *through righteousness*,” and not at the expense of righteousness. Divine grace and Divine righteousness, Divine love and Divine holiness, are as *inseparable* as light and heat from the sun. In bestowing grace God never rescinds His claims upon us, but rather enables us to meet them. Was the prodigal son, after his penitent return and forgiveness, less obliged to conform to the laws of his father’s house than before he left it? No indeed: but more so.

“The LORD came from Sinai, and rose up from Seir unto them; He shined forth from mount Paran, and He came with ten thousands of saints: from His right hand went *a fiery law* for them. *Yea, he loved the people*” (Deut. 33:2, 3). What a strange collocation of terms must those words present unto many today! The very giving of the fiery law unto Israel was an effect an evidence of Jehovah’s special *love* for them! His very grant unto them of what is now so bitterly hated, is here said to be a signal instance of God’s benignity, being a distinguishing blessing which other nations were not favored with. So too, as good old Matthew Henry says, “The law of God written in the heart is a certain evidence of the love of God being shed abroad there.”

Divine grace was exercised unto Israel throughout the entire Mosaic economy. It seems to be generally overlooked that full provision was made for forgiveness and restoration unto those who transgressed the Divine statutes. The ceremonial institutions, which afforded expiation and ablution, were wholly of *grace*. Amongst the “statutes and judgments and laws, which the LORD made between Him and the children of Israel in mount Sinai” (Lev. 26:46), was this one, “If they shall confess their iniquity,

and the iniquity of their fathers, with their trespass which they trespassed against Me, and that also they have walked contrary unto Me; And that I also have walked contrary unto them, and have brought them into the land of their enemies; if then their uncircumcised hearts be humbled, and they then accept of the punishment of their iniquity: Then will I remember My covenant with Jacob, and also My covenant with Isaac, and also My covenant with Abraham” (Lev. 26:40-42)! Note how this was reiterated in the time of Solomon: 1 Kings 8:37-40; 44-49! Thus, under the Old Testament dispensation there was *provision of pardon* for penitent sinners.

How deplorable, then, that one who exercised such a wide influence as the late J.N. Darby should say in volume 1 of his “Synopsis” (p. 126), “Had it been a human righteousness, it would have been by the law, which is the rule of that righteousness — a law given *to the Jews only*.” And again, “It is certain we have not commandments like those of the old law — they would be quite contrary to the spirit of the Gospel of grace” (p. 218). Yet the Lord Jesus plainly enough declared, “If you love Me, keep *My commandments*” (John 14:15). Equally baneful is this statement found in the introduction to “The Four Gospels” in the popular Scofield Bible, “The sermon on the mount is not grace . . . the *doctrines* of grace are to be sought in the epistles, not in the gospels.” We are prepared to show that *every* doctrine of grace contained in the epistles is found clearly expressed in the four gospels; while the law is just as clearly enforced in the epistles.

That there is no conflict whatever between the Law and the Gospel is plain enough from Romans 3:31, “Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we *establish* the law.” Here the Apostle anticipates an objection which might be drawn from what he said in verses 26-30, namely, that justification is entirely by grace through faith. But so far from this annulling the law, it recognizes and enforces it. No greater respect could have been shown to the law than in determining to save some men from its curse, God sent His own co-equal Son to fulfill all its requirements. O marvel of marvels! the great Legislator humbled Himself to full obedience unto its precepts; the God who gave the law became incarnate and bled under its condemning sentence, rather than a tittle thereof fail. Magnified thus was the law indeed, and forever “made honourable.”

God’s method of salvation by grace has “established” the law in a threefold way. First, by Christ, the Surety of God’s elect, being “made under the law” (Gal. 4:4), fulfilling its precepts (Matt. 5:17), and suffering its penalty in the stead of His people; and thus He has “brought in everlasting righteousness” (Dan. 9:24). Second, by the Holy Spirit, at regeneration, imparting a nature which delights in the law, which is what is meant by His writing the law in our *hearts* (Heb. 8:10). Third, by the Christian’s voluntary consent unto the law as his Rule of Life, so that he can say, “With the mind I myself *serve* the law of God” (Rom. 7:25). Thus is the law established both in the high court of Heaven and in the affections of the saint. Faith is not opposed to the doing of good works, in obedience to the Law of God, from right principles and with right ends; but to trusting in and depending upon them as the matter of justification before God.

The law is a mirror to believers in which, by the light of the Spirit, they behold the deformity of their souls by sin, and the imperfection of their obedience, whereby they grow out of love with themselves. In this view of things, David said, “I have seen an end of all perfection — Thy commandment is exceeding broad” (Psa. 119:96). So the Apostle Paul, comparing his heart and conduct with the Law of God, declared “We know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin” (Rom. 7:14). The law is also used by the Spirit to make the righteousness of Christ more precious to the Christian, for he sees how imperfect is his own righteousness and how far short of the demands of the law his obedience comes; and thus he desires to, “be found in Him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith” (Phil. 3:9).



There is therefore no feud whatever between the Law and the Gospel. They sweetly stand together in their proper place. In the Gospel we see the law fulfilled (by Christ) as a *covenant*, and established (in the hands of Christ) as a *rule* of obedience. The Gospel brings to light new motives and arguments to obedience, arguments drawn from the consideration of redeeming grace and love, which have a far greater constraining power than all the threats and cursings which the law denounces against those who do not continue in obedience thereto. Thus in the case of the Christian, the law remains, although the motives to obedience are changed: our obedience is spontaneous, our motive love. Should it be asked, What happens when the Christian deliberately breaks the law? The answer is given in Psalm 89:30-33, “If His children forsake My law, and walk not in My judgments; If they break My statutes, and keep not My commandments; Then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless My lovingkindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer My faithfulness to fail” — he comes under the rod of his heavenly Father’s displeasure, but the Spirit leads him to repentance and confession, and he is forgiven: Proverbs 28:13, 1 John 1:9.

Summing up now what has been before us in the four articles.

1. Adam was under the Law of God in a twofold way: His fear and love ruling his heart, there was wrought into the very constitution of his soul that which answered to all the requirements of his Maker; and further, he received from Him, objectively, a revelation of His will: Genesis 1:26, Romans 7:10.
2. The whole human race was, in Eden, placed under the law as a covenant of works, and fell under its penalty when their federal head broke it: Romans 5:18.
3. The law was known long before Sinai: Genesis 26:5.
4. All mankind are under the law, and will be judged by it: Romans 3:19.
5. Christ satisfied every demand of the law and His righteousness is imputed to His people: Romans 5:19, 2 Corinthians 5:21.
6. The Holy Spirit implants in the heart of the regenerate a love for the law: Romans 7:22.
7. The true Christian is under the law to Christ (1 Cor. 9:21), and gladly obeys it: Romans 7:25.

*“It is time for you, LORD, to work: for they have made void your law”* (Psa. 119:126).

## Part VIII

### 17. *The Word of God.*

A Divine revelation, though it consists of many parts and be given through numerous instruments, must be perfectly consistent and harmonious throughout: to say that the God of Truth contradicts Himself is to be guilty of uttering blasphemy. The Holy Scriptures have but one Author: though He employed many mouthpieces, yet “holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost” (2 Peter 1:21). The Divine Author of the Scriptures is immutable: though He “at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets” and “has in these last days spoken unto us by his Son” (Heb. 1:1, 2), nevertheless, there is absolute agreement between them. Therefore the Word of Truth sets forth *one* system of doctrine, *one* way of salvation, *one* rule of faith. We never read of the “doctrines of God,” but always of “the doctrine” (*see* Deut. 32:2, Prov. 4:2, Matt. 7:28, John 7:17, Rom. 16:17, 1 Tim. 1:10; 4:16; 6:3, Titus 2:10; and contrast Mark 7:7, Col. 2:22, 1 Tim. 4:1, Heb. 13:9), because it is one single, intricate, organic whole.

Though the Scriptures were penned by forty different writers, of every variety of culture and condition, during the space of sixteen centuries, that is, through about fifty successive generations of mankind: yet, without collusion, there is perfect agreement between them. Though those forty writers lived in different ages of the world, and were men of vastly varied interests and capacities, yet they were of one sentiment, they all spoke in substance the same things, they all delivered the same doctrine, they all enjoined the same moral duties. There are no contradictions in their several productions, no jarring discords between the notes they sounded; all is of a piece. They concur in their statements, and exactly coincide in the Truth they taught. All were of the same judgment, all sought to enforce the same principles, all applied them to the same practical purpose.

The character of their writings varied as much as the men who composed them. There is history and poetry, law and lyrics, prophecy and ritual; yet amid all this diversity, there is an underlying unity, which is not so much one of mechanism as one of organism. One part depends upon another, both for its interpretation and its completion. Links of connection run throughout the whole, like the nerves of the body uniting its varied members. There is an essential agreement between all parts of the Bible: certain conspicuous concepts pervade its whole, like golden cords on which all else is strung; such as the Messiah-Mediator and the kingdom of God, sin and salvation, law and grace, sacrifice and priesthood, duty and privilege. There is also a marvelous *progress* of doctrine to be observed throughout; where one writer leaves a theme, another picks it up and carries it forward.

Though separated by four hundred years, there is an unmistakable connection between the Old Testament and the New: what was latent in the former, is patent in the latter; what is concealed in the one, is revealed in the other. Only one explanation of the above phenomena is adequate or possible: one Controlling Mind spanned the centuries from Moses to John, superintending and directing each instrument. It is like an orchestra, the members of which take up their different parts, playing what was previously composed for them, and all uniting in one grand harmony. Or, we may compare the same unto the building of one of the great cathedrals which took centuries to complete: scores of workmen, of different calibre, being engaged thereon, yet all executing the plan of the one architect. The unmistakable and perfect *unity* of the Scriptures plainly manifests their one Divine Author.

The Scriptures as a whole constitute an organism, instinct with the life of God; a whole consisting of many parts, exquisitely correlated and vitally interdependent upon each other. God so controlled all the agents He employed, and has so co-ordinated their efforts, as to produce one single living Book. Within this organic unity there is great variety, but no discord. Man’s body is but one, though it is made up of many members, diverse in size, character, and operation. The rainbow is but one: though it reflects

distinctly the seven prismatic rays, yet they are harmoniously blended together. So it is with the Bible: its unity appears in the perfect accord of doctrine taught throughout: the oneness yet trinity of God, the Deity and humanity of Christ united in one Person, the Everlasting Covenant which secures the salvation of the entire election of grace, the justification of the ungodly by faith alone, the highway of holiness as the only path leading to Heaven, are plainly revealed in Old and New Testament alike.

The question may be raised, If the Holy Scriptures are a strict unit, then why has God Himself divided them into two Testaments? That is an interesting question, which we cannot here fully investigate. It may help us a little to ask, Why has God appointed *two* principal heavenly bodies to illumine the earth, the moon and the sun? Why, too, is the human frame duplex: having two legs and arms, two ears and eyes, two lungs and kidneys? Is not the answer the same in each case: to augment and supplement each other. But returning to our first inquiry, four replies may be suggested. First, to more distinctly set forth the *two* covenants, which are the basis of all God's dealings with mankind: the Covenant of Works and the Covenant of Grace. Second, to show more plainly the *two* separate companies which are united in that one Body which constitutes the Church, redeemed Jews and redeemed Gentiles. Third, to demonstrate more plainly the providence of God: using the Jews to be, for many centuries, the custodians of the Old Testament which condemns them for their rejection of Christ; and employing the Papists, through the "dark ages," to preserve the New Testament, which denounces their idolatry. Fourth, that one might confirm the other: type in antitype, prophecy in fulfillment.

"The mutual relations of the two testaments. These two main divisions resemble the dual structure of the human body, where the two eyes and ears, hands and feet correspond to and complement one another. Not only is there a general, but a special mutual fitness. They need therefore to be studied together, side by side, to be compared even in lesser details, for in nothing are they independent of each other; and the closer the inspection the minuter appears the adaptations, and the more intimate the association. . . . The two Testaments are like the two cherubim of the mercy seat, facing in opposite directions, yet facing each other and foreshadowing with glory one mercy seat; or again, are like the human body bound together by joints and bands and ligaments, by one brain and heart, one pair of lungs, one system of respiration, circulation, digestion, sensor and motor nerves, where division is destruction" (A.T. Pierson from "Knowing the Scriptures").

But what has all the above to do with the subject we are now investigating? Much, very much. The central design of "Dispensationalism" is not to make manifest the accord of Scripture, but the discord between that which pertained unto the "dispensation of law" and that which obtains under the "dispensation of grace." Studied efforts are made to pit passage against passage, and all sound principles of exegesis are thrown to the winds in order to accomplish this purpose. As a sample of what we have reference to: Exodus 21:24 is cited, "eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot," and then against this is quoted Matthew 5:39, "But I say unto you, That you resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite you on your right cheek, turn to him the other also"; then it is triumphantly asserted that these two passages can *only* be "reconciled" by allocating them to different people in different ages; and with such superficial handling of the sacred Scriptures thousands of gullible people are deceived. Why, if such *were* the case, not only would large sections of God's Word *be no longer* "profitable" for us (2 Tim. 3:16, 17), but most of the Old Testament would be *of no more value than an obsolete almanac!*

Those possessing a "Scofield Bible" may turn to Exodus 21:24, and they will see that in the margin opposite to it the editor refers to "Leviticus 24:20, Deuteronomy 19:21; cf. Matthew 5:38-44, 1 Peter 2:19-21," upon which this brief comment is made, "The provision in Exodus is *law*, and righteous; the New Testament passages, *grace* and merciful." How far Mr. Scofield was consistent with himself may be seen by a reference to what he states on page 989, at the beginning of the New Testament under "The Four Gospels" where he expressly affirms, "The sermon on the mount is law, *not grace*" (italics ours); verily, "the legs of the lame are not equal." In his marginal note to Exodus 21:24 Mr. Scofield cites

Matthew 5:38-44 as “grace”; in his Introduction to the Four Gospels, he declares Matthew 5-7 is “law, and not grace”: which of these assertions did he wish his readers to believe?

Still the question may be asked, How are you going to reconcile Exodus 21:24 with Matthew 5:38-44? Our answer is, There is nothing between them *to* “reconcile,” there is nothing in them which clashes. Exodus 21:24 contains statutes for *public magistrates* to enforce; Matthew 5:38-44 lays down rules for *private individuals* to live by! Why do not these “Rightly Dividers” *rightly* “divide” the Scriptures and distinguish between what belongs to different classes? That Exodus 21:24 *does* contain statutes for “public magistrates” to enforce is clearly established by comparing Scripture with Scripture. In Deuteronomy 19:21 the same “statute” is again recorded, and if the reader will but turn back to Deuteronomy 19:18 he will there read, “And the *judges* shall make diligent inquisition” etc.! It would be real *mercy unto the public* if our judges dealt thus with conscienceless criminals today!

Ere leaving what has been before us in the last three paragraphs, let it be pointed out that when our blessed Lord added to Matthew 5:38 “But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you” (v. 44), He was *not* advancing a sentiment which had never previously been revealed. No, *the same* gracious principle of conduct had been enforced in the *Old Testament*! In Exodus 23:4, 5 Moses had commanded, “If you meet your *enemy’s* ox or his ass going astray, you shalt surely bring it back to him again. If you see the ass of him that hates you lying under his burden, and wouldest forbear to help him, you shalt surely help with him.” Again, in Proverbs 25:21 we read, “If your *enemy* be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink”!

The same God who bids *us*, “Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. If it be possible, as much as lies in you, live peaceably with all men. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath” (Rom. 12:17-19), also commanded His people in *Old Testament* times, “you *shalt not avenge*, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people, but you shalt love your neighbour as yourself: I am the LORD” (Lev. 19:18), and therefore was David grateful to Abigail for dissuading him from taking vengeance on Nabal: “Blessed be thou, which have kept me this day from coming to shed blood, *and from avenging myself* with mine own hand” (1 Sam. 25:33). So far was the *Old Testament* from allowing any spirit of bitterness, malice, or revenge, it expressly declared, “Say not thou, I will recompense evil; but wait on the LORD, and He shall save you” (Prov. 20:22). And again, “*Rejoice not* when your enemy falleth, and let not your heart be glad when he stumbleth” (Prov. 24:17). And again, “*Say not*, I will do so to him as he has done to me: I will render to the man according to his work” (Prov. 24:29)!

As another example of the fearful confusion which now prevails, take the following from page 18 of Mr. I.M. Haldeman’s “How to Study the Bible.” Under “Classification of Dispensational Truth” he states, “It is not only necessary to know the Dispensations, but eminently important to keep truth in its proper dispensational relation. To put the truth applicable to one dispensation into another is to risk confusion, and not only theological, but spiritual death. Take, for example, the imprecatory psalms, as indicated in Psalms 58:10: 137:8, 9. These scriptures are full of imprecation and breathe the spirit not of forgiveness but vengeance on the enemy. This spirit seems such a contradiction to the age in which we live, such a contradiction to the attitude of love, grace and forgiveness occupied by the church, that many efforts have been made by good Christians to reconcile them with the teachings of Christianity; others finding the attempt useless have been led to expurgate them altogether from their Bibles.”

Yes, Mr. Haldeman, these Scriptures do breathe the spirit of “vengeance on the enemy,” but *whose* “enemy”? Why not *rightly* “divide” the Word on these passages? Was David thirsting for “vengeance” on his *personal* enemies? Read his history and ponder his magnanimous treatment of Saul! Let Scripture interpret Scripture and there will be no difficulty. Hear him saying, “The enemies *of the LORD* shall be as the fat of lambs: they shall consume; into smoke shall they consume away” (Psa.

37:20); “Let God arise, let *His* enemies be scattered: let them also that hate Him flee before Him” (Psa. 68:1); “For, lo, your enemies, O LORD, for, lo, your enemies shall perish” (Psa. 92:9). It is true that in many Psalms David speaks of “mine enemies”: in some he refers to his *spiritual* foes — his lusts and sins; in others, it is the Spirit of prophecy speaking through him messianically, as in Psalm 110:1, 2; in yet others, he so identifies himself with God that the Lord’s enemies are *his!*

But it is affirmed these imprecations of the Psalmist against enemies is quite at variance with the benign and gracious spirit which characterizes the present “dispensation of grace.” We reply that such an objector errs grievously, “*not* knowing the Scriptures.” Why, the New Testament “breathes” identically the same “spirit” as the Old. Did not Peter say to one who was deceiving the people and who sought to purchase the miraculous power of the Holy Spirit, “thy money *perish with you*” (Acts 8:20)? Did not the Apostle Paul write, “If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be *Anathema* Maranatha” (1 Cor. 16:22)? Did he not also affirm “But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, *let him be accursed*. As we said before, so say I now *again*, [the resistance of the human heart to such an imprecation requiring this repetition] If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that you have received, *let him be accursed*” (Gal. 1:8, 9). Did he not also write to the Galatians, “I would they were *even cut off* which trouble you” (5:12)? Did he not say, “Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil: the Lord reward him *according to his works*” (2 Tim. 4:14)! One really wonders how much these “Dispensationalists” really read *their Bibles!*

We are well aware that what has been pointed out in the last paragraph will not be at all palatable to those who are filled with the sickly sentimentality of this degenerate age; nevertheless, it is the Word of God! They who want to see capital punishment abolished, and are in favour of turning penitentiaries into social clubs, where the prisoners are coddled and pampered — given tobacco, regaled with the radio, and provided with dining rooms superior to an hotel — are not likely to welcome such expressions of holy hatred of that which is dishonouring to God. For his own part, the writer desires grace to emulate the Psalmist when he said, “Surely you wilt slay the wicked, O God: depart from me therefore, you bloody men. For they *speak* against you wickedly, and your enemies take your name in vain. *Do not I hate them*, O LORD, that hate you? and am not I grieved with those that rise up against you? I hate them with perfect hatred: I count them *mine enemies*” (Psa. 139:19, 22).

As one more sample of the excuseless ignorance betrayed by these “Dispensationalists,” we quote from E.W. Bullinger’s “How to Enjoy the Bible.” On pages 108, 110 he says, “*Law and Grace*. To those who lived under the Law it could rightly and truly be said: ‘It shall be our righteousness, if we observe to do all these commandments before the LORD our God, as He has commanded us’ (Deut. 6:25). But to those who live in this present Dispensation of grace, it is as truly declared, ‘By the deeds of the Law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight’ (Rom. 3:20). But this is the very opposite of Deuteronomy 6:25! What then are we to say, or to do? Which of these two statements is true? and which is false? The answer is that neither is false. But both are true if we rightly divide the Word of truth as to its Dispensational truth and teaching. . . . Two words distinguish the two dispensations. ‘Do’ distinguishes the former; ‘Done’ the latter. Then, salvation depended on what man was to *do*; now it depends upon what Christ has *done*.” It is by such statements as these that “unstable souls” are “beguiled.”

Think of a man with such a reputation for academical learning pitting Deuteronomy 6:25 against Romans 3:20: as well might he argue that fire is “the very opposite of water” — nevertheless each has its use in its right place: the one to cook by, the other for refreshment and cleansing. Think of one who posed as a teacher of preachers being so culpably ignorant as to affirm that under the old dispensation “Salvation depended on what man was to *do*.” Salvation has *never* been procured by human merits, on the ground of any human performances. Read Genesis 4:4; 15:6; Exodus 12:13; Leviticus 17:11, Psalm 51:17, etc., and the error of such a statement is at once apparent. Deuteronomy 6:25 is paralleled by such verses as Matthew 5:20, James 2:20-26, 1 John 2:29. Deuteronomy 6:25 is speaking of *practical*

“righteousness” in the daily walk of God’s people; whereas Romans 3:20 is affirming the impossibility of *acceptance with God* on the ground of creature-doings — true in all ages.

## 18. *The Word of God (Concluded).*

“What says the Scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness . . . David also describes the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputes righteousness without works, Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin” (Rom. 4:3, 6-8). In view of such a plain declaration who dares to affirm that the Patriarchs were strangers unto the salvation of which *we* are made partakers? Christians are “heirs” of Abraham (Gal. 3:18, 29), which means they possess (by faith) the identical blessings which God covenanted unto the father of all them that believe.

We have the same Gospel which was preached unto Abraham (Gal. 3:8), yea, which was preached unto Israel in the wilderness after they received the law at Sinai (Heb. 4:2). The Old Testament saints were participants in the same covenant blessings which we are (2 Sam. 23:5 compared with Heb. 13:20). The Apostle makes the redeemed Israelites equal to us in the significance of the ordinances (or “sacraments”): “since the Lord not only favored them with the same benefits, but illustrated His grace among them by the same symbols: 1 Corinthians 10:1-11” (John Calvin). They desired the same “Heavenly Country” which we do, and God “has prepared for *them* a City” (Heb. 11:16), as He has for us.

Abraham “rejoiced to see My day” declared Christ, “and he saw it, and was glad” (John 8:56). Dying Jacob said, “I have waited for your salvation, O LORD” (Gen. 49:18): *what* “salvation” could he expect when he felt himself about to expire, unless he had seen in death the commencement of a new life? Moses “refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter; Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; Esteeming the reproach *of Christ* greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense *of the reward*” (Heb. 11:24-26). Job exclaimed, “I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God” (19:25, 26). David avowed, “Whom have I in heaven but you? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside you. My flesh and my heart faileth: but *God* is the strength of my heart, and *my portion for ever*” (Psa. 73:25, 26).

What is true here in the general pertains also unto particulars. Not only was God’s dealings with His people in Old Testament times substantially the same as those with His people under the New Testament era, but in many, many details too. So instead of seeking to pit Scripture against Scripture (as the “Dispensationalists” are constantly doing), let us rather compare passage with passage, and note the blessed harmony which exists between the two Testaments. For example, do we read “He believed in the LORD; and He counted it to him for *righteousness*” (Gen. 15:6), then in Acts 13:39 we are also told, “By Him all that *believe* are *justified*” (pronounced righteous). Did God say to His people of old, “you are strangers and sojourners” (Lev. 25:23), so does He now address them, “I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims” (1 Peter 2:11). Are we told that “The LORD’S portion is His people; Jacob is the lot of *His inheritance*” (Deut. 32:9), Paul also prayed that we might know what is “the riches of the glory of *his inheritance in the saints*” (Eph. 1:18).

In Deuteronomy 33:3 we are told, “All His saints are in your *hand*” while in John 10:28 Christ says of His sheep “they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of *My hand*.” “Yield yourselves unto the LORD” (2 Chron. 30:8): compare with this “yield yourselves unto God” (Rom. 6:13). “And my God *put into mine heart* to gather together the nobles” (Neh. 7:5): compare with this “For it is God which *works in you* both to will and to do of His good pleasure” (Phil. 2:13). “you gavest also your good Spirit *to instruct them*” (Neh. 9:20): compare with this “when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will *guide you into all truth*” (John 16:13). “I will *behold your face* in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with your *likeness*” (Psa. 17:15): compare with this “we shall be *like Him*; for we shall *see Him* as He is” (1 John 3:2). Read carefully Psalm 34:12-16 and compare 1 Peter 3:10-12.

“I will cry unto God most high; unto God that *performs all things for me*” (Psa. 57:2): compare “but our sufficiency is of God” (2 Cor. 3:5). “Men shall be blessed *in Him*” (Psa. 72:17): compare “Who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places *in Christ*” (Eph. 1:3). Read carefully Psalm 89:30-33 and compare Hebrews 12:8-11. “For there the LORD *commanded* the blessing, even *life for evermore*” (Psa. 133:3): compare “the Father which sent Me, He gave Me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. And I know that His *commandment is life everlasting*” (John 12:49, 50). “Whatsoever the LORD pleased, that did He in heaven, and in earth, in the seas, and all deep places” (Psa. 135:6): compare “Him who works all things after the counsel of His own will” (Eph. 1:11). “In the day when I cried you answered me, and strengthened me with *strength in my soul*” (Psa. 138:3): compare “strengthened with might by his Spirit *in the inner man*” (Eph. 3:16).

Before pointing out some more of the numerous parallelisms between the Old and New Testaments, let us here anticipate an objection: While there be many close comparisons between the earlier and the later Scriptures, yet there are more numerous points of dissimilarity — how are the latter to be explained? In meeting this objection, let us begin by noting that Christians are said to “*walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham*” (Rom. 4:12): how, we ask, could they do so if they had a *different* rule of faith to walk by? To this it may be answered, Abraham circumcised all the male members of his household (Gen. 17:23): ought we to do the same? If we answer, No, then the objector imagines he has scored a victory. That is his mistake, arising from failure to distinguish between *two distinct kinds of Divine laws*. This brings us to a point of considerable importance, and one upon which there is widespread ignorance today; we ask the reader to give his best attention to what follows.

The Divine commands and precepts recorded in Scripture need to be classified under two heads: moral and positive — a distinction well known among God’s people in days gone by when they were better instructed. Moral duties are those which pertain prior to any command to perform them, existing in the very nature of the case. Positive duties are binding only because of the Divine command, and would not be duties at all did not God enjoin them. Hence there is a *double* responsibility resting on us to discharge the former, but only a single one to discharge the latter. For example, the worship of God is a *moral* duty, something which in the very nature of the case we owe unto God — as His creatures, as the recipients of His bounties. But to worship God in a certain place (the temple), after a prescribed order, at specified times, were *positive* duties which God required of the nation of Israel under the old covenant. Again: to believe in Christ and surrender to His Lordship is a *moral* duty devolving on all who hear the Gospel; whereas baptism is a *positive* duty required of His disciples.

“Positive laws are taken to be such as have no reason for them in themselves, nothing in the matter of them is taken from the things themselves commanded, but do depend merely and solely on the sovereign will and pleasure of God. Such were the laws and institutions of the sacrifices of old; and such are those which concern the sacraments and other things of the like nature under the New Testament. Moral laws are such as have the reasons of them taken from the nature of the things themselves, required in them. For they are good, from their respect to the nature of God Himself, *and* from that nature and order of all things which He has placed in the creation. So that this sort of laws is but declarative of the absolute goodness of what they require; the other is constitutive of it, as unto some certain ends. Laws positive, as they are occasionally given, so they are esteemed alterable at pleasure. Being fixed by mere will and prerogative, without respect to anything that should make them necessary, antecedently to their being enacted, they may by the same authority at any time be taken away and abolished. Such, I say, are they in their own nature, and as to any firmitude that they have from their own subject matter. But with respect to God’s determination, positive Divine laws may become eventually unalterable.

“And this difference is there between legal and evangelical institutions. The laws of both are positive only, equally proceeding from sovereign will and pleasure, and in their own natures equally



alterable. But to the former, God had in His purpose fixed a determinative time and season wherein they should expire, or be altered by His authority: to the latter, He has attached a perpetuity and unchangeableness during the state and condition of His church in this world. The other sort of laws are perpetual and unalterable in themselves, so far as they are of that sort that is moral. For although a law of that kind may especially enjoin such circumstances as may be changed and varied, as did the whole Decalogue in the commonwealth of Israel, yet so far as it is moral, that is, as its commands or prohibitions are necessary emergencies, or expressions of the good or evil of the things it commands or forbids, it is invariable” (John Owen).

“By positive Laws of God we mean such institutions as depend only on the sovereign will and pleasure of God: and which He might not have enjoined and yet His nature has remained the same. Such was the command given to Adam not to eat the forbidden fruit; for we can easily conceive that some other test of obedience might have been given, and which, if it had been given, would have been equally binding. And all the ceremonial precepts under the Mosaic dispensation were certainly of this description; for they have long since been actually abrogated by Christ, the Law-Giver of the Church” (Green’s Lectures on the Shorter Catechism).

If the above be carefully pondered, the very real distinction between moral and positive duties ought not to be difficult to grasp. The former are manifestations of the *nature* of God, the latter are expressive of His *will*. The former proceed from God’s goodness and righteousness, the latter issue from His absolute sovereignty. The former are designed for *our* good, the latter are for the enforcement of *His* authority. The former are necessarily unchanging, the latter may be rescinded when and as the Law-Giver pleases. These two diverse elements may combine in a single institution. That is seen in *the holy Sabbath*: it is a bounden moral duty that some part of our time be set apart and dedicated unto God as it is for our own good that we periodically rest from all work; but it is by a *positive* decree God makes known how much time and *which* day of the week shall be sanctified to His worship. The moral duty of the Sabbath is permanent and perpetual, but the particular day on which it falls may be changed by God as He pleases.

The natural pre-eminence of the man above the woman ensues from the order of creation, in that the man was first made, and the woman for the man, as the Apostle argues in 1 Timothy 2:12, 13; and therefore it is the moral duty of the wife to be subject to her husband. In like manner, the original creation of only one man and one woman gave the natural or moral law of marriage: polygamy and fornication becoming the violation of the law of nature. A Divine precept given for the due exercise of this principle *completes* the law of it, with the addition of a *formal* obligation. The moral nature with which we are now endowed inclines unto actions suitable thereto; the command of God concerning the regulation thereof transforms it into a formal law.

“The LORD *will perfect* that which concerns me” (Psa. 138:8): compare “He which has begun a good work in you *will perform it*” (Phil. 1:6). “*Draw me*, we will run after you” (Song. 1:4): compare “no man can come to Me, except the Father which has sent Me *draw* him” (John 6:44). “you art all fair, my love; there is *no spot in you*” (Song. 4:7): compare “the blood of Jesus Christ His Son *cleanses us from all sin*” (1 John 1:7). “How beautiful are your *feet with shoes*, O Prince’s daughter!” (Song. 7:1): compare “And your feet *shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace*” (Eph. 6:15). “All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags” (Isa. 64:6): compare “I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwells no good thing” (Rom. 7:18). “That you may suck, and be satisfied with the breasts of her consolations” (Isa. 66:11): compare “desire the sincere *milk of the Word*” (1 Peter 2:2). “I have loved you with an everlasting love” (Jer. 31:3): compare “beloved of the Lord, because God has from the beginning chosen you to salvation” (2 Thess. 2:13). “From Me is your fruit found” (Hosea 14:8): compare “he that abides in Me, and I in him, the same brings forth much fruit” (John 15:5). “The just shall live by his faith” (Hab. 2:4): compare “we walk by faith” (2 Cor. 5:7). “I will strengthen them *in the LORD*” (Zech. 10:12): compare “be strong *in the Lord*” (Eph. 6:10).

Above we have given twenty-five examples of the minute harmony which exists between the Old and New Testaments. The moral teachings of the one are harmonious with the moral teachings of the other. The promises given to the Patriarchs were made to them not as Jews, *but as believers*, and therefore the spiritual contents of them belong unto believers today. The promises given to carnal Israel are the legitimate property of the spiritual Israel now. The moral laws and precepts given under the old economy are equally binding upon those who live under the new covenant. The positive (including the “ceremonial”) laws which God gave throughout the Old Testament, and which were either *special* injunctions to particular individuals or *typical* institutions which were imposed “*until* the time of reformation” (Heb. 9:10) are *not* binding on Christians today.

In Genesis 22:2 we hear God bidding Abraham, “Take now your son, your only son Isaac . . . and offer him there for a burnt offering,” whereas in Genesis 22:12 we find Him saying, “Lay not your hand upon the lad, neither do you any thing unto him.” With as much propriety might seducers of souls say that *these* two commandments “can only be reconciled by rightly dividing the Word and placing them in separate dispensations,” as to make the other arbitrary divisions of Scripture which they do. As well might they say that the book of Acts “does not belong to *us* because God does not require Christians to remain on an endangered ship and refuse to get into the lifeboats (Acts 27:31), as to argue that Matthew’s Gospel “is not for us” because when the Lord is pleased to grant physical healing to one of His elect today, he is no longer required to go and show himself “to the priest” (Matt. 8:4).

Our unwelcome task (for the present, at any rate) is completed. From what has been before us in these papers we now draw up the following bill of indictment against the “Dispensationalists.”

1. Their starting-point is wrong: they begin at the Garden of Eden instead of going back to the Everlasting Covenant.
2. They rob God’s children of many of their Father’s precious promises.
3. They force into 2 Timothy 2:15 a meaning which its context in nowise warrants.
4. They are all at sea concerning the mystical Body of Christ, failing to see that the Church of God is commensurate with the entire Election of Grace.
5. They introduce the utmost confusion into the study of Prophecy, by ignoring the fundamental distinction between carnal or national Israel and the spiritual “Israel of God.”
6. They ignore the grace of God in Old Testament times, and teach the monstrous error that under the Mosaic economy sinners were saved by their own doings.
7. They repudiate the moral Law of God as a Rule of Life for the Christian today.
8. They invidiously seek to pit Scripture against Scripture, instead of showing their perfect unity and lovely harmony.
9. They split up the one predestinated, adopted, redeemed, and regenerated Family of God into various groups and cliques, many of them going so far as to insist that the father of the faithful will have no part in the inheritance of many of his children.

10. They are woefully ignorant of the vast difference there is between the commands and precepts of God which are special and peculiar and those which are general and universal, between those which are evanescent and those which are perpetual, between ceremonial and moral duties.

Thus they are perverters of God's Truth, enemies of the Faith, and their preachings and writings should be shunned by all who desire the *pure* milk of the Word.

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