

# TESTED TRUTH



CHARLES H. WELCH

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by

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## TESTED TRUTH

In the following pages A and B discuss various subjects, the standpoint of B representing the standpoint of the Author.

No. 1

*“I am satisfied with the words of Christ”.*

Two Christians were standing, with open Bibles, discussing some theme (apparently of great interest), and as the subject of their discussion may possibly be of general interest, let us draw a little nearer so that we may get the benefit of their remarks. We will call them for the sake of clearness A and B.

A – I am satisfied with the words of Christ.

B – Friend, believe me, we are one in that blessed fact, for He is the truth, His words are spirit and life, He came to reveal the Father, and the heart of every believer still says “Show us the Father and it *sufficeth* us”. We are both satisfied with the words of Christ.

A – You interrupted me, I was going to say that I am satisfied with the words of Christ and do not need the opinions of Paul or any other man.

B – By the “words of Christ”, then, I understand you to mean the four Gospels, and by the opinions of Paul I take it that you mean the epistles written by that servant of God. Let me just ask you a question. Am I right in assuming that the words of Christ with which you are satisfied are those of the four Gospels?

A – Certainly.

B – I see. You have not therefore any words of Christ written by Himself?

A – Of course not!

B – What words of Christ you have therefore were written by other men, and not by Himself?

A – They were written by Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

B – Pardon me if I appear too persistent, but supposing I were to take your line and say, “I do not want the opinions of Matthew, Mark, Luke or John, I want the actual words of Christ Himself”, what would you say?

A – I should say that in these four Gospels we have the words of Christ, written by these men as they were guided and inspired by the Spirit of truth. Look at this passage in John 14:26:

“But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, Whom the Father will send in My Name, He shall teach you all things, *and bring all things to your remembrance whatsoever I have said unto you*”.

Here you see my warrant for believing that, although the record may have been made by Matthew or Luke, yet the record is inspired, and in these Gospels I have the words of Christ which are enough for me.

B – I am glad that we both agree on this next point, namely, the full inspiration of the four Gospels, but do you not see that if Matthew could be inspired to write the Gospel that bears his name, Peter, John, James, Jude and Paul could equally have been inspired to record the words of Christ spoken since His resurrection? Your reference to John 14:26 was most apt and it reminds me of another statement in chapter 16. Let us turn to verses 12-14:

“I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now.

Howbeit when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth; for He shall not speak of Himself; but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak; and He will shew you things to come.

He shall glorify Me; for He shall receive of Mine, and shall shew it unto you”.

Now notice one or two important features of this passage:

(1) There is a contrast here with your passage of John 14. In John 14 the subject of inspiration is a question of bringing to remembrance things which Christ had said. In John 16 the same Spirit shows them things which He hears, which suggests that there will be further revelations than the four Gospels.

(2) This is still more clearly taught by the words, "I have many things to say unto you, but you cannot bear them now".

(3) If we are to have "All truth" we must have this later witness, which supplements and goes beyond the teaching of the four Gospels.

These words of Christ make some further revelation, such as is contained in the epistles, a necessity. Do you not see that by limiting yourself to the four Gospels you have not all the words of Christ that you might have, and therefore cannot truly be satisfied?

A – This passage in John 16 does certainly seem to speak of a revelation subsequent to and equally inspired with the four Gospels, and I must look into the matter afresh, lest a mistaken zeal for the supremacy of Christ should rob me of that truth which after all He Himself says "shall glorify Me".

## No. 2

*"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God".*

A – I have been thinking very much about John 16:12-14 and your remarks upon it, but I still feel that the words actually spoken by *Christ Himself* must come to the true believer with greater force than those spoken by fallible men like ourselves, even though inspired for the time.

B – I honour your desire to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ, but I think a little attention to one feature of His ministry

will help you to see the subject of the inspiration of both the Gospels and the Epistles in a clearer light. If Christ spoke *His own* words, and taught *His own* doctrine, then we should possibly feel that His words were of greater weight and authority than those of Peter and of Paul in the Epistles.

A – But did He not speak as one having authority, and not as the Scribes? What do you mean by “speaking His own words”?

B – Do not let us misunderstand one another, let us rather “open the Book”.

A – I suppose you are going to turn to the Epistles?

B – No, we will turn once again to the Gospel according to John. First let us notice John 14:24:

“ ... My sayings; and the Word which ye hear is NOT MINE, but the Father’s which sent Me”.

Here is a distinct statement which should be enough for any who are “satisfied with the words of Christ”. Look again, this time at 12:49,50:

“For I have not spoken of Myself; but the Father which sent Me, He gave Me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak ... whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto Me, so I speak”.

This is added testimony to the same effect. One more verse will suffice us here, viz. John 7:16:

“Jesus answered them and said, My doctrine is not Mine, but His that sent Me”.

It is clear from these words of our Lord that what He taught and spoke was what He had Himself been taught (8:28) and commanded to speak.

A – Do I understand by this that you deny the Deity of Christ?

B – By no means. That the Word “was God” this same Gospel declares, and that I believe with all my heart. But the Lord humbled Himself and took upon Him the form of a servant. As the “sent one” He did not speak His own message, but the words of Him that sent Him.

A – Well, accepting this, I do not see your intention. If every utterance of the Lord’s was actually the Word of God, that seems all the more reason why I should abide by them.

B – Abide by them by all means, but do not forget that the point is that the authority for Christ’s teaching is the Father that sent Him. Now let us look at the Epistles. Turn to 1 Thessalonians 2:13:

“For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the Word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the Word of God”.

You see by this statement that Paul, Silas and Timothy, acting in their capacity as “sent ones”, claimed the self-same authority for their words as did Christ Himself. In 1 Peter 1:25 we read:

“The word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you”.

In 2 Peter 1:20,21 Peter speaks of the inspiration of Scripture, and in 2 Peter 3:16 he links Paul’s Epistles with “the other Scriptures”. In 1 Peter 1:11 Peter, speaking of the Old Testament prophets, says that they spake by “The Spirit of Christ”. Paul in Romans 15, after having spoken in verse 8 of the Lord’s earthly ministry, goes on to say of himself, “That I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles” (verse 16). In 2 Timothy 1:8 Paul says to Timothy, “Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner”. Does it not therefore appear to you that the following facts emerge clearly from these quotations?

(1) The words of Christ and His Apostles are not to be considered as their own, but as the words of Him that sent them.

(2) The testimony of the Epistles is still considered to be the testimony of Christ, this time as the risen One, and speaking through those who had been chosen and “sent” by Him.

(3) In each case the authority for the message is that of the “sender”; in the Gospels Christ is the sent One; in the Epistles the Apostles are the sent ones [the very word apostle (from *apostellō*) means a sent one] and Christ still speaks to us, even though in Person He is now at the right hand of God.

A – This is certainly a most important aspect of the subject and one that has never struck me before. It would appear from what you have pointed out that whether it be the words of Christ recorded in the Gospels, or the words of those sent by Him recorded in the Epistles, we are to see that both go back to God Himself, the “Sender”, for their authority. This, coupled with the words of John 15:26, “When the Comforter is come, whom I WILL SEND unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of Truth”, and John 16:13,14 “He shall glorify Me: for He shall receive of Mine, and shall shew it unto you”, certainly makes me feel the need to reconsider my attitude to the Epistles.

B – Dear friend, if you just regard both Gospels and Epistles as being of equal authority and of equal inspiration, you will have the key to much blessing and light. Remember 2 Timothy 3:16.

A – What is that?

B – Well, you search and see for yourself, and ponder it well till we meet next time.

No.3

*The right division of the Word of truth.*

A – I am afraid I am not clear as to the real results of our conversation on the equal authority and inspiration of both

the Gospels and Epistles.

B – What is your particular trouble?

A – Well, seeing that I had agreed that the Epistles were of equal authority with the Gospels, I felt that I must obey them all, and practice them all, but this I find to be impossible.

B – Why?

A – They do not speak alike. For instance, just one or two features at random – there are so many that I am bewildered. The Sermon on the Mount says “The meek shall inherit the *earth*”, yet Ephesians 1:3 tells me that I am blessed in “*heavenly places*”. Mark 16:17 says that “these signs shall follow” the preaching of the gospel, yet I find Paul saddened because Epaphroditus was sick; why did he not heal him as he did others? Then this made me say, “Why have we not all the evidential miraculous gifts which the church at Corinth had?”

Then I find during the period of the Acts of the Apostles that there were *two* baptisms, one in water and one in spirit, whereas in Ephesians 4:5 I find that “there is *one* baptism”. Which one is it? and why only one? Then I used to believe that the church was the Bride, Peter speaks of the redeemed as being a holy nation and a royal priesthood, while Paul in Ephesians and Colossians says the church is the Body.

Then again I used to believe that we ought to keep the sabbath day, yet I find in Colossians 2:18 “Let no man judge you with regard to the sabbath day”, and in Galatians 4:10, 11 “Ye observe days, I am afraid for you”. Matthew 19:16-20 (the very words of Christ Himself mark you) teaches that eternal life may be had by keeping the ten commandments, yet Galatians 3:21 teaches that life cannot come by the law, but only by faith.

B – What is the solution, do you think? Shall we conclude that the four Gospels are truth and the Epistles untrue?

A – No, for we have seen that John 16:12-14 looks for-

ward to the Epistles (see No.1), and that the Epistles are inspired equally with the Gospels (see No.2).

B – The solution then must be found in some other feature. Let us look once more at John 16:12-14. It is evident that in the Epistles we must expect something deeper and more advanced than we find in the Gospels, for the Lord said “*I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now*”. It is also evident that whatever the difference may be, it will not take away, but rather add to, the glory of Christ, for concerning that added revelation the Lord said of the Spirit, “*He shall glorify Me*”.

A – But what puzzles me is, how can both Gospels and Epistles be true when they say such opposite things?

B – The answer is fairly simple. It is a matter of recognising different dispensations.

A – What do you mean by dispensations?

B – Let us find our answer in John’s Gospel again. This time turn to chapter 1:17,18:

“For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. No man hath seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, Who is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him”.

In these verses two dispensations are referred to, the one of law, the other of grace. The one revealing God as Law-giver and King, the other as Father. You yourself have already recognised the difference between these two dispensations, for being a Christian you do not feel called upon to put into practice *all* that Moses taught under the law, even though you believe the law to be as fully inspired as the Gospels and Epistles. The same principle obtains between the various parts of the New Testament.

It is a fruitful cause of much error and confusion to fail to see that the dispensational dealings of God with Israel during the time of the Lord’s earthly ministry differ from His

dealings with both Israel and the Gentiles since Christ ascended into heaven.

A – Do you mean to say that Christ came to Israel, and did not come to set up His Church?

B – We must not leave our real subject for details, but I will just say that in Matthew 15:24 the words of Christ Himself will answer you:

“I am NOT sent BUT unto the lost sheep of the house of ISRAEL”.

Let us settle one thing at a time. There are evidently different dispensational dealings revealed in the Scriptures, and when once these differences are duly observed difficulties vanish and truth becomes clear. I leave you with another verse taken from 2 Timothy. This time it is 2 Timothy 2:15:

“Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, RIGHTLY DIVIDING THE WORD OF TRUTH”.

#### No. 4

#### *Some examples of*

#### *“Rightly dividing the Word of truth”.*

A – I should be glad if you would give me a little indication of the results of “rightly dividing the Word of truth”, for I rather fear it simply means cutting the Bible to pieces with no advantage when it is done.

B – Let me draw your attention to some instances of a *wrong* division before looking at the other side.

The translators of the A.V. attempted to divide the subject matter, and gave notes at the heading of the chapters. Over Isaiah 29 they say, “God’s heavy judgment upon *Jerusalem*”, but over chapter 30 they say, “God’s mercies towards His *Church*”. Or again, over Isaiah 59 they write,

“The sins of the *Jews*”, but over 60 “The glory of the *Church*”. When it is a case of judgment the literal meaning is retained, but when it is a case of blessing “the Church” is intruded. We will not waste time tabulating error however; let us seek the “Word of truth”.

We have already seen that *all* Scripture is inspired, but that *all* Scripture does not speak (1) to the same people, (2) at the same time, and (3) with the same message. *All* Scripture is FOR us, but *all* Scripture is not ABOUT us. To discover that part of Scripture which is FOR us, ABOUT us, and TO us we must “rightly divide the Word of truth”. The people addressed in the Bible are divided into three companies, “The Jews, the Gentiles, and the Church of God” (1 Cor.10:32). Whenever you open your Bible therefore, seek at once to discover which of these three classes is addressed.

A – How can I do this? It seems that I should have to conduct a very careful enquiry involving much time and ability. Cannot I take the Bible at its face value to mean just what it says?

B – If only you would, your difficulties would vanish. I would say to you, “Read the *envelope* before you read the *letter*”.

A – Explain your meaning.

B – Well, look at the envelope of Isaiah’s prophecy (chapter 1 verse 1) and tell me whether it is addressed to Jew, Gentile or Church.

A – (*Turns to the passage*). It says that it is concerning “Judah and Jerusalem”.

B – Well, that answers the question for you there easily enough. Accept it as “meaning just what it says”. Now look at the “envelope” of James’ epistle.

A – (*Turning to the epistle*). It is addressed to “The Twelve Tribes which are scattered abroad”.

B – Again you have your answer, and you will find that

somewhere in every book of the Bible, there will be these identifying marks, enabling you to “rightly divide” the Word off as belonging either to Jew, Gentile or Church of God. At the same time we must distinguish between *basic* truth that relates to *all* the people of God and that which is peculiar to Jew, Gentile and the Body of Christ.

A — Is there any other important way in which the Word should be “rightly divided”?

B — Yes. *Time* periods enter in very largely. For example Matthew 10:5,6 says:

“Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not; but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel”.

If this passage is not to be divided at all, as some would affirm, there never should have been a single Gentile saved, or even evangelized. Further, if we do not rightly divide the Word, we shall have Christ contradicting Himself, saying in chapter 10 “GO NOT”, and in 28 “GO YE”.

Again, we must keep distinct the various callings that are indicated in the Word. *The earthly Kingdom* must not be confounded with *the Church* the Body of Christ. The Kingdom on earth is yet to come, for the prayer is “Thy Kingdom *come*”, and it relates to the earth as under the power and pattern of heaven, “Thy will be done *on earth* as it is in heaven”. The Church of the one Body is an elect company called out from the world during the present time. Christ is never called the “King” of the Church. Then again, the various “gospels” need carefully *dividing*.

A — Surely you do not mean me to understand that there is more than one gospel?

B — No, I do not, not in the sense that you mean. There is but *one gospel* and *one way of salvation*, nevertheless, there are “gospels” in the Scriptures that are not all alike. For example “The gospel of the Kingdom” is defined for us in Mark 1:15:

“The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand, repent and believe the gospel”.

The twelve Apostles went out and preached this gospel (Matthew 10), yet Peter reveals that he did not know at the time that the Lord Jesus was *to die and rise again* (16:21-23). Surely the “gospel of the grace of God” could not be preached without Christ’s death and resurrection being either expressed or acknowledged! In Revelation 14:6 we have the “everlasting gospel”. Read its terms for yourself. There is no reference to redemption or to Christ, just “Fear God the Creator”. This again is no gospel for the present time.

Then again we read in some Scriptures of a “mystery” or secret, which had been hidden by God, and revealed at a definite period (see Eph.3 and Col.1). We must be careful not to read into earlier Scriptures therefore the truth revealed in later ones. This applies to the epistles of Paul as a whole. While all his epistles are necessary for the Church, we shall find upon examination that his ministry needs rightly dividing, and that not only is it as a whole distinct and independent, but that within itself it divides into two distinct sections. But I think you have had enough for the time being. Just open your Bible and make a few tests. Consider (1) the envelope, (2) whether Jew, Gentile or the Body of Christ, (3) whether Past, Present or Future, and (4) whether the dispensation be Law, Grace, earthly Kingdom, Church or Millennial.

## No. 5

### *The Distinctive Ministry of the Apostle Paul.*

A — I should like to know a little more fully what you mean by saying that while Paul’s epistles as a whole are distinct from the rest of Scripture, yet they themselves need rightly dividing.

B — I am glad this important matter has arrested your attention and will do all I can to make the position clear.

We must look at the subject first to see that Paul's ministry is something quite distinct from that of any other apostle, and then, having that ministry before us, realize that it is divided into two clear sections. This is not merely interesting – it is vital to the full understanding of God's purpose and our place therein.

First of all, *Paul was not one of the twelve.*

A – How do you prove that?

B – In Matthew 10:2-4 the names of the twelve are given, and Paul is not among the number.

A – No, but I have been given to understand that when Judas fell and left the number, Paul was Divinely chosen to take his place, the appointment of Matthias (Acts 1) being a hasty attempt on the part of the apostles and done erroneously.

B – There are a good many of the actions of the apostles which certain teachers today call “apostolic mistakes”, but which are not so called in the Scriptures. Look at the state of affairs at the time of the appointing of Matthias.

(1) The risen Christ had spent a large portion of 40 days instructing the Apostles (Acts 1:3).

(2) Not only did the Lord *open* the Scriptures, but He also *opened* the Apostles' understanding (Luke 24:45). This settles for ever the question of whether the Apostles “understood” His meaning.

(3) The Lord declared that the things written in the books of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms concerning Himself must be fulfilled.

(4) Peter, whose understanding had been *opened*, and who had been taught the prophetic meaning of the Messianic *Psalms*, stood up after 40 days' instruction and said, “Men and brethren, **THIS SCRIPTURE MUST NEEDS BE FULFILLED**, which the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake before concerning Judas which was guide to them that took Jesus ... it is written in the book

of the Psalms ... his bishoprick let another take” (Acts 1:16,20). Peter had evidently been taught by the risen Christ the meaning of the Psalms that spoke of His betrayal, and acting upon that teaching he said that it was necessary that another should take the forfeited place of Judas.

A – Would not the Apostle Paul have filled that place?

B – No, there was one qualification which Paul did not possess.

A – What was that?

B – He had never been associated with Christ and the eleven from the beginning.

A – But was that essential?

B – Listen to what the Lord said:

“And ye also shall bear witness, *because ye have been with Me from the beginning*” (John 15:27).

And also Peter:

“Wherefore of these men which have companied with us ALL THE TIME that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, BEGINNING from the baptism of John, unto that same day that He was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of His resurrection” (Acts 1:21,22).

This limited the number of possible candidates to two, and as the Lord had done many times during Israel’s history, He did again; He used the lot to convey His choice.

“And the lot fell upon Matthias; and he was numbered with the eleven” (verse 26).

Then came Pentecost.

Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:5-8 gives the names of several witnesses to the resurrection of Christ, viz. Cephas (Peter), the twelve, five hundred brethren, James, all the apostles, and last of all Paul himself. This enumeration places Paul outside the twelve.

A – Do you mean then that there is another order of apostleship outside that of the twelve?

B – Look at Ephesians 4:8-11:

*“When He ascended up on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men ... And He gave some apostles”.*

The “twelve” were appointed while Christ was on earth, but here is an order of apostles appointed “When He ASCENDED”.

A – What is there distinctive about Paul’s apostleship then?

B – Let the Apostle himself tell us:

*“I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am THE APOSTLE OF THE GENTILES, I magnify mine office” (Rom.11:13).*

*“He that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in me towards the Gentiles” (Gal.2:8).*

*“I am ordained a preacher and an apostle, (I speak the truth in Christ and lie not); a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and verity” (1 Tim.2:7).*

*“I am appointed a preacher, and an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles” (2 Tim.1:11).*

Paul was the Apostle to the Gentiles. And therefore, while all Scripture is profitable, yet, before we concern ourselves too much with the sin of Israel, or the Great Tribulation and other equally important themes, it is incumbent upon us to give due place to the message of the risen Christ, which He has sent to us through Paul the Apostle to the Gentiles.

*“Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision”.*

*“I (Paul) ... a minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles” (Rom.15:16).*

Remember it is not Paul and Paul’s ideas that we want. It is still Christ Who speaks, the difference being that in the Gospels He speaks on earth, while in the Epistles He speaks

from heaven. The human instruments of the earthly ministry were Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. The human instruments of the heavenly ministry are Peter, Paul, James, John, Jude, and of these Paul is the Apostle to the Gentiles.

A – I can certainly appreciate better your strong emphasis upon the claims of Paul, and now I see that in his epistles it is not Paul's opinion I have but still the words of Christ, I feel that I have possibly neglected a most important part of Holy Scripture.

B – We will not go further just now. Give the epistles of Paul a careful reading, and when we meet again you will be the better able to enter into the question of Paul's two-fold ministry.

#### No. 6

##### *The Appointment of Matthias.*

A – When you were speaking of the ministry of the Apostle Paul on the last occasion, I wanted to ask some further questions as to the appointment of Matthias.

B – I shall be glad if I can help in any way, what is your difficulty?

A – Well there are quite a number of great and good men, leaders in their several spheres, who believe that Peter made a mistake in Acts 1 as to the appointing of Matthias, and that he should have waited for the call and commission of Paul. In this you differ, and you will pardon me so saying, you have no such authority as those to whom I refer.

B – As to the personal side it stands as follows. Certain great and good men, leaders in different sects of Christendom (and therefore *practically* charging each other with error on sectarian points) charge other, equally great and good men, leaders in a divinely constituted unity, with intruding the reasonings of the flesh into the purposes of God. You will

see therefore that we may omit all reference to the character of those for or against, and turn afresh to the Word to “search and see”. In Acts 1:15,16 we read:

“And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples and said ... men and brethren, this Scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake before concerning Judas, which was guide to them that took Jesus”.

A – How are we sure that Peter was using this Psalm aright?

B – There are two reasons.

(1) In John 13 at the last supper, just before Judas betrayed the Lord, Christ said:

“I speak not of you all; I know whom I have chosen; but that the Scripture may be fulfilled. He that eateth bread with Me hath lifted up his heel against Me. Now I tell you before it come, that, when it is come to pass, ye may believe that I am. Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that receiveth whomsoever I send receiveth Me; and he that receiveth Me receiveth Him that sent Me”  
(verses 18-20).

This clearly proves that Psalm 41 speaks of Judas, and moreover this passage very solemnly declares that the disciples were forewarned, and were shown the awful responsibility of receiving “whomsoever” the Lord saw fit to send. This solemn utterance was only separated from Acts 1 by a few weeks.

(2) The second reason is found in Luke 24:44:

“These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and IN THE PSALMS concerning Me”.

A – These are, certainly, weighty arguments in favour of your interpretation.

B – I have not finished yet. After making this statement concerning Himself, Luke 24:45-48 continues:

“Then opened He their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures. And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day; and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations, beginning with Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things”.

You will see that not only did these men have an opened Bible during that wonderful forty days (Acts 1:3), but they had *an opened understanding* also. When Peter said “This Scripture *must needs* have been fulfilled”, he was echoing the words of Luke 24:26 and 46, where “must needs” is translated “ought”, and “behoved”.

A – I begin to realize what a great responsibility rests upon those men, who, so many centuries after the event, with so much tradition between themselves and the beginning, have so lightly presumed to be the critics of Peter, James and John.

B – So you may. Yet there is more. These same correctors of the Apostles tell us that Peter limited God to the two men Joseph and Matthias. Now let us see whether this is so. Peter’s words are:

“Wherefore of these men which have companied with us ALL the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of His resurrection” (Acts 1:21,22).

A – What was Peter’s authority for making this stipulation?

B – We have noted the Lord’s own words in John 15:26, 27:

“But when the Comforter is come, Whom I will send unto you from the Father ... He shall bear witness of Me, and ye also shall bear witness of Me, BECAUSE YE HAVE BEEN WITH ME FROM THE BEGINNING”.

This is confirmed by Luke's statement in Luke 1:2

A – This stipulation would rule out the Apostle Paul then!

B – Yes, and it testifies against all those who seek to place Paul among the twelve, for his knowledge of Christ did not commence until after the resurrection. Let us briefly indicate one or two further points in favour of Peter's action.

Scripture declares of Matthias, "He was numbered with the eleven" (Acts 1:26). Our "great and good" friends declare he was not. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15:5, "He was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve". So Paul himself believed that Matthias was one of the "twelve". Our friends must therefore set about correcting Paul also. Then, further, when Matthias had been appointed, nothing further is recorded until the descent of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost. Do these great and good leaders dare to teach that the Spirit of God also needed a little of their correction! for exactly the same words "with the eleven" occur after as before Pentecost.

These inspired men suffered persecution and even death for their testimony, yet never once is there the slightest indication that they had made a mistake. Shall Peter be allowed to strike Ananias and Sapphira dead for "lying to the Holy Ghost", and shall Peter himself perpetuate a fraud, remain unrepentant and indifferent to his colossal blunder, and not come forward at the appointment of Saul of Tarsus to make amends? One passage of Scripture sums up the attitude of mind of all those who by reason of their dispensational views are continually finding fault with the Apostles and their ministry:

"Full well ye reject the commandment of God, *that ye may keep your own traditions ... making the Word of God of none effect through your tradition*" (Mark 7:9-13).

## No. 7

*The two-fold ministry of Paul, and its bearing upon  
the revealed purpose of God for the Gentiles.*

A – Will you help me to understand what you mean by the “Two-fold ministry of Paul”?

B – Yes, most willingly, for the due appreciation of Paul’s later ministry is an entrance into great blessing. You are already acquainted with the conversion and commission of Paul as given in Acts 9, and so we will pass on to the critical moment in his ministry as given in Acts 20:17-38. Paul addresses the elders of the church at Ephesus in a strange way:

“Ye know, from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons, serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears, and temptations, which befell me by the lying in wait of the Jews, and how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you” (20:18-20).

“Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God” (20:26,27).

A – It sounds very much like a farewell sermon.

B – That is exactly what it is, for the Apostle says:

“And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, *shall see my face no more*” (20:25).

A – What had happened to make the Apostle so confident about this?

B – Listen:

“And now, behold, I go bound in the Spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there, save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me. But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God” (20:22-24).

A – Does Paul mean that the bonds and afflictions were an essential part of the ministry he desired to finish?

B – Yes. The passage before us points in that direction, and other passages confirm it. Turn to Acts 26 where the Apostle makes his statement before Agrippa. After speaking of the appearance of the Lord to him on the road to Damascus Paul says that the Lord answered him:

“I am Jesus Whom thou persecutest. But rise, and stand upon thy feet, for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness BOTH of these things which thou hast seen, AND of those things in the which I WILL APPEAR UNTO THEE, delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, UNTO WHOM NOW I SEND THEE” (26:15-17).

Here is a two-fold ministry. The one, a testimony of the things which he had seen (see 22:14,15), the other, a testimony of those things which the Lord promised He would at some future date reveal to him.

A – I see this plainly enough, but I fail to see what difference it can make to us.

B – Well, turn to Acts 28:17-31. There the chief of the Jews came to Paul’s lodging and for a whole day the Apostle testified the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses, and out of the prophets, but they would not accept the testimony. “One word” said Paul, is fulfilled in you, that word being Isaiah 6:10, when blindness settled down upon the people of Israel.

All through the Acts Israel are still a people before God. Evidential miracles are everywhere the accompaniment and confirmation of the apostle’s witness, but at this point Israel pass off the scene. Such miracles cease. “The salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles” (28:28). A new dispensation begins, and Paul the prisoner becomes the vessel through whom hitherto unrevealed blessings to the Gentiles are for the first time made known.

A – How do you prove that?

B – There is a set of epistles known by some as “The

Prison Epistles”, because in them the Apostle alludes to his bonds or imprisonment.

A – What are the names of these epistles?

B – They are Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians and 2 Timothy. There the references to the prison are vitally connected with Paul’s new ministry, as can be seen by turning to Ephesians:

“For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ *for you Gentiles*, if ye have heard *of the dispensation* of the grace of God which is given me to *you-ward*, how that by revelation He made known *unto me the Mystery* ... unto me who am less than the least of all saints is this grace given that I should preach among the Gentiles the *unsearchable riches of Christ*, and to make all men see what is the dispensation (R.V.) of the Mystery, which since the ages hath been hid in God” (Eph.3:1-9).

Here is a prisoner, “for you Gentiles”. Here is a dispensation, “the grace of God which is given me to you-ward”. Here is a mystery or secret, revealed for the first time. For the “mystery of the gospel” the Apostle was an “ambassador in bonds” (Eph.6:19,20). This new dispensation of the secret was for the church which is His Body (Col.1:24-26). This second ministry of the Apostle fulfilled his ardent desires expressed in Acts 20:24:

“I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith” (2 Tim.4:7).

## No. 8

### *The Apostles’ Doctrine.*

A – I have been warned by some to avoid both you and your teaching because you do not, as did the early church, “continue steadfastly in the Apostles’ doctrine” (Acts 2:42).

B – This is certainly a serious charge, but it strikes me as being somewhat biassed, for these very same teachers who are

now so zealous for the “Apostles’ doctrine” did not spare these same Apostles over the appointment of Matthias.

A — That is so, but possibly this is the exception that proves the rule.

B — Let us search and see. After 40 days’ instruction from the risen Christ, with special emphasis upon the teaching of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms concerning the Lord Himself, and moreover with the inspired statement that these same Apostles UNDERSTOOD these same Scriptures (Luke 24:45), the “Apostles’ doctrine” is expressed in the question which was the outcome of such teaching and such understanding:

“When they therefore were come together, they asked Him, saying, ‘Lord wilt Thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?’ ” (Acts 1:6).

This restoration of the kingdom to Israel *we* accept as an integral part of the “Apostles’ doctrine”: those who have the temerity to warn you as to *our* attitude, have also the audacity to teach that this question, in spite of its context, is the result of Jewish prejudice, and that the Apostles should, instead, have been found asking about the Body of Christ!

A — But may it not be that after the descent of the Spirit at Pentecost the scales would fall from their eyes?

B — Yes, it may, but the question for us is, Did they alter their doctrine, and announce teaching concerning the church?

A — Yes, I believe they did, for it is universally accepted that *the church which is the Body of Christ began at Pentecost*.

B — I will not quarrel with your word “universally”, but would rather direct you to the attitude of Paul when opposed by sheer numbers (2 Tim.1:12-15). As to the change of doctrine which takes place in Acts 2, that I believe is a tradition foisted upon an undiscerning people. Let us further search and see.

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In Acts 2 Peter declares that Pentecost is the fulfilment of that which was spoken by the prophet Joel, and he has no reason, by any supposed change of doctrine, to hesitate in quoting the words:

“I will shew wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke: the sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord come” (Acts 2:19,20).

A – Perhaps Peter felt that he ought not to break off in the middle of a quotation.

B – Not so. The same Spirit who had just endued Peter anointed also the Lord, and at the opening of His ministry He *did* stop half-way through a quotation because of dispensational reasons. See Isaiah 61:1-4, and note Luke 4:18-20. Peter expected the restoration of the earthly kingdom, and Joel was rightly interpreted. This kingdom is connected with the great and notable day of the Lord, but the church is not. Here again is another item of the Apostles’ doctrine which I believe, but which your friends do not.

Yet further, Peter declares the resurrection of Christ to be with the object that He should sit upon the throne of His father David (Acts 2:30-33), whereas tradition would once more substitute the Body of Christ.

A – This one feature however is not all that the Apostles taught.

B – No, but it is the foundation of all that follows. For example, is it “church truth” to teach baptism for the remission of sins? Yet this is a part of the Apostles’ doctrine. Your friends, who are so zealous for the truth, do they possess the Holy Spirit as did these believers in Acts 2? Do they, further, sell their possessions and have all things common? Would they, if it were still possible, continue stedfastly not only in the Apostles’ doctrine, but also in the temple (Acts 2:46) even though the epistle to the Hebrews has since been given?

Tell me wherein do these friends of yours agree with the doctrine of the Apostles? Is it too harsh to say that they hold

a creed of what they *imagine* the Apostles taught, or what they think they *ought* to have taught. Dear friend, “prove all things”, “search and see”, say in the language of the Psalmist:

“I have stuck unto Thy testimonies”.

“The fear of man bringeth a snare”.

## No. 9

### *Pentecost and the Gentile.*

A – I believe that it might be true to say that, whilst outwardly the church of the one Body did not begin at Pentecost, potentially it did.

B – To give a concrete illustration, you would say that the fact that there were no Gentiles in the assembly on the day of Pentecost was more by accident than of purpose.

A – I can hardly say that, for there were multitudes of Gentiles addressed by the Apostles on the day of Pentecost.

B – Is that so? I was under the impression that none but Israelites were spoken to.

A – You have many times told me to “search and see”, so I suggest you take a dose of your own prescription.

B – Most readily. I have nothing to lose but error, and nothing to gain but truth by so doing. Where do you propose we start?

A – At Acts 2:5-11, for there we read:

“And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven ... and they were all amazed and marvelled, saying ... how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born? Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, etc.”

Surely Parthians, dwellers in Egypt, strangers of Rome, indicate Gentiles!

B — Not so fast. In verse 5, which you read, we have stated that there were dwelling in Jerusalem JEWS, devout men, from every nation under heaven. Therefore the long geographical list that follows gives the country of origin of these Jews, who had come up to Jerusalem to keep the feast of Pentecost according to the law. “Strangers of Rome” is literally “sojourning Romans”, and they were all either “Jews or prosleytes”. Further, do you notice how the Apostle Peter addresses these so-called “Gentiles” of yours?

“Ye men of Judæa, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem” (verse 14).

“Ye men of Israel ... ye have taken and by wicked hands have crucified and slain” (verses 22 and 23).

“Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David” (verse 29).

“Let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, Whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ” (verse 36).

These were the dispersion, Israelites who had been born in foreign lands, many of them Roman citizens as was Saul of Tarsus, some of them proselytes, but none of them Gentiles.

A — Well supposing that is so, does it follow that the saints gathered at Pentecost would not have had the greatest joy in receiving a believing Gentile into their company?

B — Such is the tradition, but Acts 10 will give us the truth:

“There was a certain man in Cæsarea called Cornelius, a centurion of the band called the Italian band, a devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway” (verses 1 and 2).

Look at the man’s credentials. He was devout, he feared God, his household did the same, he gave alms, he prayed to God continually. He was a God-fearing Gentile. Now tell me, would that man have been received by the assembly on the day of Pentecost?

A — Most assuredly he would.

B – Well, how do you account for Peter's attitude toward him?

“He said unto them, Ye know how that it is *an unlawful thing* (note the place of the law of Moses) for a man that is a Jew (Peter's own definition of himself) to keep company or come unto one of another nation (yet in the church there is neither Jew nor Gentile), but God hath shewed me that I should not call any man common or unclean” (Acts 10:28).

By his own confession Peter would not have hesitated to have classed Cornelius the devout with the swine and the creeping things which he saw in the net. IS THAT THE UNITY OF THE SPIRIT?

A – What do you intend me to understand then, that Peter had been wrong all along?

B – By no means. *Peter was right all along*. He had no idea such as that “the Body began at Pentecost”, and he therefore prosecuted the commission given to him to urge his own people Israel to repentance. The thought of such an association with a Gentile as is implied in the idea of the church was totally foreign to the “Apostles' doctrine, and fellowship”. It is your friends who have departed from the Apostles' doctrine, and have made Scripture void by their traditions.

A – Why then should Peter have made the change in Acts 10?

B – Because in Acts 9 the Apostle Paul had been called and appointed as the messenger of the risen Christ to the Gentiles, thereby introducing a change of dispensation. This was followed by the warning vision to Peter and by the confession:

“Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life” (Acts 11:18),

a pointless remark if the church began at Pentecost.

Moreover, the divine reason for the admission of the Gentile is given in Romans 10:19 and 11:11:

“But first I say, Did not Israel know? First Moses saith, I will provoke you to jealousy *by them that are no people*, and by a foolish nation I will anger you”

“I say then, Have they (Israel) stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but rather through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, *for to provoke them to jealousy*”.

Thus the stirring up of Israel, fast dying in unbelief and hardness of heart was in view and this is further confirmed by the Gentile believer being likened to a wild olive graft into the true olive tree – Israel (Jer.11:16,17; Rom.11:16-29); the object being to revive the old tree which represented Israel as a nation in covenant relationship to the Lord.

## No. 10

### *Can two Dispensations run together?*

A – In talking over the question of membership of the one Body with other believers, one of them suggested the possibility of two dispensations running together at the same time. This I said was absurd, but thought I would ask you about it.

B – What makes you think it absurd?

A – Well, you might as well say that April and May can run together as to say that two dispensations can run at the same time.

B – I wonder whether your difficulty arises out of the meaning of the word “dispensation”. Do you take the word to indicate a period of time?

A – Yes, just the same as an age.

B – That is where you are mistaken. Even an age indicates something more than a period of time, although the time sense is strong, but a dispensation is much further removed from a time sense than an age. Turn to Luke 16 and let us consider the first occurrence of the word in the N.T.

A – (*Reading the first few verses*). I see something here about a rich man and a steward, and the necessity to render an account of his stewardship, but I have not come across the word “dispensation” yet.

B – The word translated “stewardship” is exactly the same as that rendered “dispensation” in 1 Corinthians 9:17; Ephesians 1:10; 3:2,9 (R.V.); Colossians 1:25, and can be rendered in all cases by the word “administration”. The Greek word is *oikonomia*, and appears in English as *economy*, which in its primary sense refers to administration either in politics or in domestic affairs.

Turn now to Galatians 2:7,9. There you have Peter and Paul. The leaders at Jerusalem recognised that Paul had been entrusted with the gospel of the uncircumcision, and that Peter had been entrusted with the gospel of the circumcision, and that one was right in going to the Gentiles and the other equally right in limiting himself to the circumcision, the Jew. So that it appears in this case that two stewardships connected with the good news as related to Jew and Gentile, addressed to two divisions of the human race, were in operation at one and the same time.

A – If that is the meaning of the word “dispensation” then I must admit the possibility.

B – When God gave the law of Sinai to Israel, that nation was under the dispensation of law. The nations of the earth were under the dispensation of conscience and creation; that is another illustration of the same principle. See Romans 1:18-2:29; Acts 17:25-28; 14:17.

A – If I admit the possibility of two dispensations running together, I shall have to reconsider another item about which I have expressed myself rather strongly.

B – What is that, if I may ask?

A – It is a question of the membership of the church of the one Body, but I think I will leave that for another time.

B – By all means, only let your love for truth outweigh any feeling you may have in the matter. Better to confess error a thousand times than through foolish pride entertain untruth to one's own spiritual hurt.

A – Thanks for your help. The greatest difficulty we seem to have is the necessity to *unlearn*.

### No. 11

#### *Membership of the One Body.*

A – I believe you teach that the church of the one Body did not come into being until after Acts 28?

B – To be exact, I believe that the church of the one Body did not come into being until after the all-day conference recorded in Acts 28:23-28, and during the two whole years of Paul's detention at Rome, when three of the prison epistles were written (Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians).

A – Does that mean that membership of the one Body depends upon Paul's imprisonment? or upon the acceptance of some particular truth? If that is what you teach I certainly cannot bring myself to believe it.

B – If you turn to the opening chapter of Ephesians you will find that every single member of the one Body is an elected person, having been "chosen in Christ before the foundation (or possibly 'overthrow') of the world". So that in the first instance membership of the one Body depends neither upon Paul's imprisonment nor upon the acceptance of the truth, but solely upon the purpose and will of God. Further, I think you must make a distinction between *salvation* and *position*.

A – Just what do you mean by that?

B – The basis of the salvation for the church which is the Body of Christ was laid before Acts, 28, and is found in the

epistle to the Romans, particularly in chapters 5-8, but although all believers both pre- and post-Acts are saved with the same salvation, it does not follow that they are all destined for the same position in the life to come. During Paul's earlier ministry the position of the Gentile believer could be expressed by the words, "Blessed with faithful Abraham". After Acts 28 the name of Abraham never occurs in Paul's writings. The believer after that, as a member of the one Body, while still saved with the same salvation as Abraham (Rom.4, Gal.3), is chosen to a different destiny which can only be expressed by the words "With Christ in the heavenly places, far above all principality", etc.

Then, further, we have no warrant to teach that every believer at the present day is *necessarily* a member of the church of the one Body. The great bulk of Christians are ignorant of the revelation of the mystery (secret) of Ephesians and Colossians. They do not believe the truth for which the Apostle suffered, they do not entertain its hope, they do not endure anything for its doctrine. In all dispensations it has been true, "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God".

A – Yet this seems to make acceptance of the truth the basis of membership.

B – Scripture says, "It pleased God through the foolishness of the preaching to save them that believe", and at the same time says, "As many as were ordained to eternal life believed". You might just as well bring your objections against these Scriptures as against the teaching concerning the one Body. Every member of the Body of Christ will hear and believe the truth, yet every member is nevertheless as much "ordained" to that membership as were those who were "ordained to eternal life".

A – You mean, then, that seeing it is within the bounds of possibility that two dispensations may run together at the same time, it also is a possibility that all Christians are not necessarily members of one elect company and that there are "earthly kingdom" believers today as well as "church" believers with a heavenly destiny, and that the church of the one Body may be termed "An election within an election".

B — Yes, and further, instead of adopting the attitude that Christians who do not see with us in these things must necessarily be wrong, we believe that our responsibility ends with the presentation of the truth, and that according to whether the one who hears has been chosen to membership of the one Body or not, so will his response be.

A — That explanation accounts for the very obvious difference that I found between your attitude toward differing believers and their attitude toward you. The spirit of condemnation and bitterness would certainly not be so manifest if all Christians saw the truth from that standpoint. I do not pretend to accept your teaching yet, but I do most certainly appreciate the spirit that it produces.

B — Think the subject over, and let us talk it over again.

## No. 12

### *Heavenly Places.*

A — I believe you teach that the sphere of blessing peculiar to the church of the one Body, viz. “heavenly places”, is something distinct.

B — Yes, that is so. I believe we can truthfully say that it is “far above all”.

A — Well, I have been told by those *who know* that precisely the same Greek word that is used in Ephesians 1:3 is used in Matthew, John, 1 Corinthians and Hebrews, and therefore that you have been carried away by zeal that is not according to knowledge in teaching that the heavenly places of Ephesians indicate a position distinct from, and superior to, that of the church as revealed in the Gospels or Hebrews.

B — We will not be too much concerned about the opinions of those “who know”, for Galatians 2 reveals that such at times have to be set aside. We are however concerned about the truth, and therefore we will continue to “search and see”.

A – The word is, I believe, *epouranios*.

B – Yes, it is a compound word made up of *epi*, meaning *over, above, or upon*, and *ouranos*, meaning heaven.

A – It is used in Matthew 18:35 in the phrase “My heavenly Father” (though some texts read *ouranios*) and in John 3:12 of “heavenly things”. In 1 Corinthians 15:40,48 and 49 it is used five times, where Paul speaks of “celestial bodies” and their glory, and of some who are “heavenly” and who shall “bear the image of the heavenly”.

Hebrews 3:1 speaks of those who are “partakers of the heavenly calling”.

Hebrews 6:4 speaks of those who had “tasted the heavenly gift”.

Hebrews 8:5 speaks of the “shadow of heavenly things”.

Hebrews 9:23 speaks of the “cleansing of heavenly things”.

Hebrews 11:16 speaks of a “heavenly country”, and Hebrews 12:22 speaks of the “heavenly Jerusalem”.

B – It does my heart good to see this earnest search, and to listen to this presentation of the occurrences of the word. The concordance can be one of your greatest servants, but you must not think that a mere accumulation of texts of itself constitutes an argument. I should like to hear what you learn from these passages that makes the teaching advanced concerning the one Body to be untenable.

A – Well, you have very definitely taught two things, viz.:

(1) The church of Ephesians is blessed in a sphere called the super-heavenlies, and is distinct from all other companies of the redeemed: and

(2) That those addressed in the epistle to the Hebrews are to be distinguished from the church of Ephesians, and that their hope does not place them so high as does the hope of the Body of Christ.

Now seeing that the Hebrews were partakers of a heavenly

calling, and looked for a heavenly Jerusalem, it seems as though your distinction falls to the ground.

B – Let us see. My contention is that the heavenly places of Ephesians are unique; yours is that they are one and the same with those of Hebrews. Tell me, did those Hebrews, who had tasted of the heavenly gift and who were in danger of falling away, ascend up to heaven in order to taste it?

A – Certainly not, they tasted the gift which had been sent down from heaven.

B – Will the heavenly Jerusalem remain where it is now, in heaven?

A – Well, now you mention it, I suppose not.

B – We will have no suppositions; please read Revelation 21:10.

A – (*Reads*). “He ... showed me the holy Jerusalem, *descending out of heaven* from God”.

B – These two passages must therefore decide the “heavenly calling” of Hebrews 3, and do not prove that such calling is the same as that of Ephesians.

A – Why do you say then that the same word when used in Ephesians means “up in heaven”, whereas when it is used in Hebrews you are careful to draw attention to the fact that it refers to things that come down “out of heaven”?

B – The reason is this. First the construction of the phrase “in heavenly places” is peculiar to Ephesians. While *epouranios* occurs elsewhere, *en tois epouraniois* occurs nowhere else in the New Testament.

The “heavenly” calling, gift, country, etc., of Hebrews gives us the *character* of the calling, gift, etc., but does not give its *locality*. Ephesians tells us that the character of its blessings are “spiritual”, *not* “heavenly”, and the sphere of its enjoyment is not “heavenly”, but “IN heavenly places”. These heavenly places are definitely declared to be:

- (1) At the right hand of God.
- (2) Far above all principalities and powers, etc., (1:20,21), and
- (3) To be occupied by principalities and powers who are either learning from, or antagonizing, the church (3:10; 6:12).

These spiritual wickednesses are certainly not “heavenly” in character, although for the time they occupy “heavenly places”.

I think you will see that you must not only collect Scripture references, but you must seek their meaning. Use the concordance by all means, but use it with understanding. None of the passages you have quoted make the slightest difference to the teaching of Ephesians, for not one passage outside the five occurrences in Ephesians uses the word in the sense of locality, and as *that* was our contention you have spent your effort in beating the air.

A — Will you explain Hebrews 9:23,24? Why is first *ouranoi*, then *epourania*, then *ouranos* used?

B — “Things in the heavens”, *Ta ... en tois ouranois*, is but another way of expressing “heavenly things”, *ta epourania*. Heaven, *ouranos*, must be viewed as comprehending the whole. It is used of the overarching expanse above the earth, even the atmosphere in which the “birds of heaven” fly, and the “heaven of heavens” which is the dwelling-place of God. *Epouranios* in the epistle to the Ephesians denotes that position which is “far above all principality” (1:21), and the abode of two classes of principalities, the good and the bad (3:10; 6:12). This word too, you will see, has a wide scope. Think of these expressions as you do the word church. There are several different called-out companies that are composed under the generic word church.

Or again, think of the word *kingdom*. There are several phases of God’s Kingdom. However, the interchange of words does not alter in the slightest the teaching already given concerning the glorious calling of the church of the one Body which is linked with heavenly places “far above all” where Christ is now enthroned (Eph.1:19-23; 2:6).

## No. 13

*The Day of the Lord, and the Day of God.*

A – I believe you make a distinction between “the day of the Lord” and “the day of God”?

B – Yes, I believe such a distinction is found in the Word of truth which I am called upon to divide aright.

A – But don't you think you can carry the idea to excess, for surely, after all, the “Lord is God”, and you are probably straining the meaning of the Scriptures, as I fear you do in many other of your fine distinctions.

B – Well, one thing at a time. What particular passage have you in mind?

A – 2 Peter 3:10-12.

B – Perhaps you will read it.

A – (*Reads*).

“But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up ... the day of God wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved and the elements shall melt with fervent heat”.

Now surely you do not maintain that there will be two separate occasions when the heavens shall be dissolved in fire and the elements shall melt with a fervent heat?

B – No, I have never taught such a thing. I certainly believe these two references deal with one and the same event.

A – Well then, out of your own mouth you condemn yourself, for if these two passages refer to the same event, the

day of the Lord and the day of God are the same, and your so called “rightly dividing” would be better called “hair-splitting”.

B — Had we better not be sure that we have understood the double reference first? Here is the Revised Version: perhaps if you had consulted that, your criticism might have been spared. Please read the passage again.

A — (*Reads from the R. V.*).

“But the day of the Lord will come as a thief, in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise and the elements shall be destroyed with fervent heat, and the earth and the works that are therein shall be burned up ... the day of God, by reason of which the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat”.

What difference is there? I see none, “melt” is the same as “dissolve”, and only makes the two references the more alike.

B — Well, I would much rather you discovered the difference for yourself. Many problems that unsettle the children of God are the result of inability to “read and see” for themselves. Look again. I will help you so far as to ask a question. Does it say in the A.V. that this great fire takes place “in” the day of the Lord and “in” the day of God?

A — (*Reading from A. V.*).

“In the which” (referring to the day of the Lord). “Wherein” (referring to the day of God).

B — Now read the same passages again in the R.V. :

“In the which” (referring to the day of the Lord). “By reason of which (referring to the day of God).

A — I see it. How sorry I am that I have spoken so rudely!

B — Let that pass. You see the difference now? The fire that dissolves the elements and the heavens takes place **IN** the day of the Lord as to time, and takes place **BY REASON OF**

the character and necessity of the day of God for which the day of the Lord is a preparation. The book of the Revelation is occupied largely with the day of the Lord, and in chapter 20 we have the lake of fire which destroys all things that offend, and ushers in the new heavens and new earth of chapter 21.

Just as an additional note, there is one further item wherein the record concerning the day of the Lord indicates a difference from that of the day of God. You will observe in the R.V. margin of 2 Peter 3:10 that the best manuscripts read "discovered" instead of "burned up". The actual burning takes place after the close of the millennial reign of Christ.

#### No. 14

#### *Our Hope is said to be "Vague".*

A – I feel that a very weak point in this teaching is the lack of definite detail with reference to what you feel is the hope of the church which is the Body of Christ.

B – What do you consider to be "definite detail" in the teaching of those from whom you differ?

A – Well there are those who believe 1 Thessalonians 4 sums up their hope, and there we find such details as:

- (1) The Lord Himself.
- (2) The descent into the air.
- (3) The voice of the archangel.
- (4) The trump of God.
- (5) The resurrection of the dead in Christ.
- (6) The rapture of both raised and living.
- (7) The fact that *so* shall they be ever with the Lord.

Added to this we have in chapter 1:10 the fact that the hope of this church was expressed in the words, "to wait for

His Son from heaven”. In 2:19 we learn that the believer’s reward for faithful service is connected with this same coming, and in 3:13 and 5:23 that the goal before God is that our heart may be stablished unblameable in holiness before the Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints.

B – Yes, you certainly have a wealth of detail in the epistle as to the coming of the Lord, but perhaps I interrupt.

A – I was going on to refer to Matthew 24. There the disciples ask, “What shall be the sign of thy coming?” The Lord gives wondrous details dealing with:

- (1) The rising of nation against nation.
- (2) Famines.
- (3) Pestilences.
- (4) Earthquakes.
- (5) The fulfilment of Daniel 9:27.
- (6) The great tribulation.
- (7) The disturbances of the sun, moon and stars, and
- (8) The appearing of the sign of the coming of the Son of man.

Here again is detail and definition.

B – And your objection to this particular teaching is ...?

A – That there is no detail, but everything is vague. We have been robbed of 1 Thessalonians 4 and have been given nothing in its place.

B – First as to 1 Thessalonians 4. It is not possible to rob any child of God of the teaching of Scripture. What has been done is to show that 1 Thessalonians 4 is not the hope of the church of the one Body. Each one must decide as to what is their calling. The writer cannot. Attention has certainly been drawn to one or two facts which should be weighed over by every seeker after truth. One is that the word “coming”, which is *parousia* in 1 Thessalonians 4:1 and Matthew 24, is never used of the hope of the Body in the prison epistles. We

have also drawn attention to the fact that the archangel of 1 Thessalonians 4 is Michael, and this “prince” stands for Israel (Daniel 12:1). Also that when he stands up there will be a resurrection and an unprecedented tribulation, which links 1 Thessalonians 4, 2 Thessalonians 1, Matthew 24, and Daniel 12 together. The Apostle Paul at the very end of Acts, *after having written* 1 and 2 Thessalonians, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians and Romans, still declares that he was bound “for the hope of Israel” (Acts 28:20).

As to the “vagueness” of the teaching concerning the hope before the church of the one Body, there is no vagueness in Colossians 3:4 and Titus 2:13 as to *Who* constitutes the hope. In the one case He is described as “Christ Who is our life”, and in the other “Our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ”. Then there is no vagueness as to *what* we look for. The same two passages say:

“When Christ Who is our life *shall be made manifest*, then shall ye also *be made manifest* with Him IN GLORY”.

“Looking for that blessed hope and the *manifesting* of THE GLORY of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ”.

Now turn if you will to Ephesians 1 and read verses 15-18.

A – (*Does so*). What do you wish me to notice here?

B – Does Paul *teach* the saints much detail here as to their hope?

A – No, I cannot say he does.

B – Does he *teach* them anything at all?

A – Just what do you mean?

B – Does he not rather say, I have come to the hour when *my teaching* ends, and when the Lord’s teaching must begin? Paul instead of going into details concerning the hope *prays* that these believers may themselves receive from God a spirit of wisdom and revelation ... that they may *know what is the hope of His calling*. Must not your charge of lack of detail be laid to the door of the Apostle himself, nay, to the very

inspired Word of God? Nevertheless, there is far more detail enshrined in this passage than may at first appear.

The Apostle here reveals the key to full knowledge. It is this. As you grow in knowledge of the ascended Christ and the related mystery or secret, so you will understand the nature, sphere, character, glory and blessedness of your hope. Learn what Christ's present position is as related to the one Body, and you learn where the hope of the one Body is situated. You must also realize the essential difference between 1 Thessalonians 4 and Colossians 3:4, "in the air", and "in glory".

Do not go away with the false notion that those who seek to "live ... looking for the blessed hope" feel that in exchanging the words "in the air" for "in glory" they have exchanged something real for something vague. Do not think that "to be manifested with Him in glory" is less blessed than to meet Him in the air on His return to the earth as in 1 Thessalonians 4. The so called "vagueness" is entirely in harmony with the greatness and exaltation of the Body of Christ. If you believe that you have any part or lot in the church of the one Body I cannot do more or better than commend you to pray the prayer of Ephesians 1:15-23.

## No. 15

### *Parousia Titles.*

A — I appreciate the fact that the word *parousia* (meaning 'arrival'), which is translated "coming" many times in the N.T., is confined to the earlier epistles of Paul, James, Peter, 1 John and is related to the Second Advent described in Matthew 24; but I feel that there is a great deal of teaching to be gathered by noticing the different titles of the Lord that are associated with it.

B — You think that possibly the titles will indicate that the *parousia* coming may be the hope of the one Body as well?

A – I do rather, for you will remember that in 1 Thessalonians 4 we do not read “*the Son of man* shall descend from heaven with a shout”, but “*the Lord*”.

B – Your suggestion is a valuable one, but whether your deductions are true must await investigation. Let us turn up the passages and see what we can learn.

A – Let us start at Matthew 24. The occurrences are in verses 3,27,37 and 39, and the title used is “*the Son of man*”. The next reference is 1 Corinthians 15:23. There the title is “*Christ the firstfruits*”. There are four occurrences in 1 Thessalonians, viz. 2:19; 3:13; 4:15; and 5:23. Here the titles are “*our Lord Jesus Christ*” and “*the Lord*”. In 2 Thessalonians 2:1 and 8 we have the same two titles again. James 5:7,8 give us the one title, “*the Lord*”, 2 Peter 1:16 “*the Lord Jesus Christ*”, and 3:4, looking back to verse two, “*the Lord and Saviour*”. 1 John 2:28 reads “His coming”, and I cannot really see with what title the pronoun is connected.

B – That is quite a commendable analysis of the subject. Shall we see what these titles teach us? I suppose you have no difficulty in fixing the Scriptural association of the title “*Son of man*”?

A – As far as I have gone with the subject it appears that Daniel 7:13,14 is the scene at the back of this title.

B – Yes, let us read the verse:

“I saw in the night visions, and behold, one like unto the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought Him near unto Him. And there was given unto Him dominion and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations and languages should serve Him; His is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed”.

Soon after uttering the prophecy of Matthew 24 the Lord, standing before the council, said:

“Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven”.

A – Is there not a reference to this in the Revelation?

B – Yes, in chapter 14 verse 14:

“And I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud One sat like unto the Son of man, having on His head a golden crown, and in His hand a sharp sickle”.

A – I think I am quite clear over the prophetic usage of this title. The titles however that are used in the epistles are those that perplex me somewhat.

B – Let us come to 1 Corinthians 15:23, “*Christ the firstfruits*”. In verse 20 we read, “But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept”. This seems to give the clue to the title in verse 23. In all its other occurrences it pledges a harvest. Here in 1 Corinthians 15 the context speaks of Adam at the one extreme, and God all in all at the other. This scope of course overleaps all barriers and dispensational distinctions. The period with which this *parousia* is connected is fixed rather by verse 54, “When ... then ...”, while verse 52 associates it with “the last trump”.

A – Yes, but the title that I am most concerned about is that used in 1 Thessalonians 4, “*the Lord*”. This seems to be so related to the church of the one Body, “one Lord” coming so prominently in Ephesians 4.

B – I think you will find that the title “Lord” is a title that covers Gentile as well as Jew. For example: you remember the woman of Canaan who first approached Christ with the title “Son of David”? but when she realized the dispensational limitation of that title, she used the wider title “Lord” (Matt.15:21-28). Again, when Peter was sent to Cornelius and perceived that the purpose of God’s grace went outside the confines of Israel, he said:

“The word which God sent unto the children of Israel preaching peace by Jesus Christ (He is Lord of all)” (Acts 10:36).

The use of this title in 1 Thessalonians 4 would not necessarily mean more than that Gentile believers were included, but could not of itself decide whether it included the church associated with the secret revealed in Ephesians and Colossians. I think you would discover more of the character of this *parousia*, and whether it included the hope of the one Body, by observing the setting of the occurrences as well as the titles used.

A – I must confess that when I first noticed the use of the title “Lord”, I felt that I had found a weak place in your argument, but I realize that none of the titles after all do decide the question I raised. I will collect the various settings and perhaps we shall arrive at something more definite.

B – Yes, do, and see that you pursue the truth for its own sake, and not for the purpose of finding a flaw in the argument of somebody else. That often prejudices the study.

#### No. 16

##### *Parousia Contexts (Matthew 24:3, 27-29).*

A – I have collected together various items that constitute the immediate contexts of the word *parousia* in its various occurrences and should be pleased for any help you can give me as to their effect upon our understanding of the Lord’s Coming.

B – Will you go over the list first so that we may have the scope of the enquiry before us?

A —

Scripture Reference	Immediate Context
(1) Matt. 24:3	“The end of the world”.
(2) ” 24:27	“As the lightning”.
	“Immediately after the tribulation”.
(3) ” 24:37	“The days of Noah”.
(4) ” 24:39	“The flood”.
(5) 1 Cor.15:23	“The end ... God all in all”.
(6) 1 Thess. 2:19	“The crown of rejoicing”.
(7) ” 3:13	“Coming with all His saints”.
(8) ” 4:15	“Those alive and waiting shall not prevent those who are asleep”.
(9) ” 5:23	“The whole spirit and soul and body preserved blameless”.
(10) 2 Thess. 2:1	“The day of the Lord”.
(11) ” 2:8	“The destruction of the wicked”.
(12) James 5:7	“Patience needed”.
	“The early and latter rain”.
(13) 2 Peter 1:16	“The transfiguration”.
	“Prophecy”.
(14) ” 3:4	“Scoffers in the last days deny”.

B — This is a fairly formidable list, and will occupy more time than we can give at one sitting. Let us however make a commencement with the references in Matthew 24:

“Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of Thy coming, and of the end of the world?” (verse 3).

“These things” have reference to the destruction of the Temple buildings. “The end of the world” would be better translated “the gathering point just before the end of the age”. This latter passage we may have to consider more carefully at another time. The immediate question is *What shall be the sign of Thy coming?* The very first thing the Lord does in answering this threefold question is to warn against deception:

“Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in My name, saying, I am the Messiah, and shall deceive many” (verses 4 and 5).

A – What do you think will be the character of their deception?

B – These false christs will have false signs, “And shall show great *signs*” (verse 24).

A – Wherein will the sign of the Lord’s coming differ from the false signs?

B – Principally in its magnitude:

“For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be” (verse 27).

This indicates the world-wide nature of this sign. The next passage fixes its date, and gives further details concerning the sign in the heavens.

A – Pardon me, but are you one of those who believe in fixing dates for the Lord’s coming?

B – If you mean that any man can know “the day and the hour”, most certainly not, but if you mean whether the *parousia* will take place before or after the Tribulation, yes, we can speak definitely:

“Immediately *after* the tribulation of those days ... ” (verse 19).

This refers back to verse 21, which is “the great tribulation” referred to in Daniel 12 and Matthew 24.

A – How do you know that “the great tribulation” of Matthew 24:21 is the same as that of Daniel 12? It does not say so.

B – Well tell me just exactly what it does say, and I will tell you just exactly what Daniel 12 says.

A – “Such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be” (Matt.24:21).

B – “Such as never was since there was a nation, even to that same time” (Dan.12:1). Can you possibly have two separate tribulations answering to these descriptions?

A – No, I see that they must refer to the same event.

B – So then the sign of the Lord’s *parousia* is not seen till *after* the great tribulation of Daniel 12; and if that coming is the hope of the church of which you are a member, that church must share the hope of Israel. The greatness of the sign is seen by its forerunners:

“The sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken, and THEN shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven; and then shall all the tribes of the land mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory” (Matt.24:29,30).

A – Why do you say “tribes of the land”? I read “tribes of the earth”.

B – The passage refers to Zechariah 12:12, where it speaks of the mourning of the families of Israel after they look upon Him Whom they have pierced. Revelation 1:7 refers to the same event. The coming in the clouds of heaven refers to Daniel 7 where the Son of man is given dominion, glory and a kingdom that all people, nations and languages should serve Him. The references to the sun, moon and stars are taken from Isaiah 13:10:

“For the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their light; the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine”.

A – I notice that the “day of the Lord” is mentioned several times. Also that it is cruel with wrath, and the day of fierce anger. In fact the whole context speaks of a day of judgment.

B – Do you notice anything of importance?

A – There is so much, what do you intend particularly?

B – Do you see any mention of any particular city coming into judgment at the same time?

A – Yes:

“Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldees’ excellency, shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah. It shall never be inhabited ...” (Isa.13:19,20).

B – Well, you see where this leads us. This *parousia* of the Lord is not only dated as taking place *after* the great tribulation, but as being connected with the Lord’s final judgment upon Babylon.

A – But suppose “Babylon” means Rome?

B – Is Rome the glory of the *Chaldees’* excellency? I commend to you the other passage quoted by the Lord in Matthew 24:29, viz. Isaiah 34:4, noting also verses 8-10.

A – I will certainly look this passage up. I had no idea that the coming of the Lord in Matthew 24 had so much to do with O.T. prophecy and the people of Israel.

## No. 17

### Parousia Contexts.

#### *The Days of Noah and the “Overthrow” of Genesis 1:2.*

A – Shall we resume our study of the contexts of the word *parousia*?

B – Yes, let us notice the two remaining passages in Matthew 24, viz. verses 37 and 39.

A – (*Reads*):

“As the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be”.

Verse 39 is much the same.

B – You say that verse 39 is “much the same”, and you are right; but I just wonder whether you fully realize the point of these two verses. In what particular will the coming of the Son of man be “as the days of Noah”?

A – I suppose you mean that the believer like Noah will be saved in the hour of judgment.

B – That is hardly the chief factor here. Look at verse 36:

“But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but My Father only”;

but the Coming of the Son of man shall be as the days of Noah, which came suddenly upon a world taken up with the affairs of every day life.

“They knew not until the flood came and took them all away”,

so the feature that most prominently stands out here is the unexpectedness of the Coming.

“Watch therefore, for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come”.

You will remember that the conclusion of the parable of the ten virgins strikes the same note (see Matt.25:13). If I may suggest a departure from the order of your list of references, it would be a fitting sequel to consider here 2 Peter 3:4.

A – By all means, I do not consider that the order of the books as we have them is binding upon us.

B – Perhaps you will read verse 3 as well.

A – (*Reads*):

“Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last day scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of His coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation”.

B – What do you understand by the words “Where is the promise of His coming”?

A – I understand them to mean that the scoffers were not mindful of the words spoken by the prophets and the Lord Himself, as verse 2 urges, and consequently did not know where to look for those Scriptures which referred to the *parousia* or arrival of the Lord on the earth.

B – I hardly think you have caught the meaning. These scoffers certainly will be ignorant of Scripture, but Peter means to say that they will scoff at the idea that the *parousia* will *ever* be fulfilled, as though they said, “Where is the fulfilment of this much vaunted promise?” Now notice the way in which the Apostle deals with the implied failure of the Lord to keep His promise. Why does he go right back to the beginning of creation?

A – Frankly I cannot see any connection.

B – You will notice that he is explicit. It is the beginning of creation.

A – Yes, I see that.

B – Where would you look for any reference to that?

A – I should turn to Genesis 1:1, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth”.

B – Well, the word “continue” in 2 Peter 3:4 means “to continue right through without a break”. When you read on in Genesis 1, do you find that the creation of the first verse “continues right through”?

A – No, I believe verse 2 speaks of an overthrow, and that God did not create the earth without form and void, but it *became* so.

B – I see, you have grasped that much. You therefore can answer the question. The creation did not continue right through without a break. There was a Divine interruption.

A – Yes, but what has that to do with the Second Coming of Christ?

B – Why this. Just as these scoffers ridicule the teaching of Genesis 1:2, saying that there never was an “overthrow”, that God never has intervened in judgment, so, they argue, He never will. You will find these same scoffers in Psalm 50:21:

“These things hast thou done, and I kept silence; thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself: but I WILL REPROVE THEE”.

You remember I left with you Isaiah 34 when we last met? Did you give it an examination?

A – Yes, I did, and now that you mention it I remember that the condition called *tohu and bohu* (without form and void) of Genesis 1:2 is to be repeated, for it says:

“He shall stretch out upon it the line of confusion (*tohu*) and the stones of emptiness (*bohu*)” (Isa 34:11).

B – You answer your own question therefore as to the connection between Genesis 1:2 and the coming of the Lord.

A – Yes, but I had never seen it in that light before. I had not realized that there is to be a repetition of Genesis 1:2 at the Lord’s Coming.

B – In 2 Peter 3:9 Peter returns to the charge of the scoffers:

“The Lord is not slack concerning His promise as some men count slackness”.

Whatever the reason may be that causes the apparent delay, slackness is not that reason. For one thing Peter sees the longsuffering of the Lord waiting as it did in the days of Noah, and links the *parousia* with the day of the Lord (verse 10).

You will remember that Peter refers his readers to the writings of Paul for fuller exposition of the purpose of God

in the long interval that exists between the First and the Second Coming. This is an inspired admission that Paul's ministry occupies the interval that has become so prolonged by reason of Israel's blindness. All the references to the *parousia* in Paul's writings occur in those epistles written before Acts 28. After having written 1 Thessalonians 4 Paul can say that he was bound with a chain "for the hope of Israel". There is one clear distinct character given to the *parousia* in all its occurrences, which severs it most completely from the hope of the one Body. Had you continued, and brought into prominence the references in 2 Thessalonians as well as those in 1 Thessalonians, you would have seen the close association this hope has with:

- (1) The day of the Lord, and
- (2) The man of sin.

James, too, who uses the word *parousia* of the hope, addresses his epistles to the twelve tribes of Israel, and not to the church of the one Body.

No. 18

*The Lord's Supper.*

A — While you appear to believe the Scriptures, I cannot understand how you can reconcile your laxity in regard to the Lord's Supper and Believer's Baptism with your professed submission to the Word of God.

B — While I do not observe the Lord's Supper, nor teach or practice Believer's Baptism, I must correct the error manifested in your use of the word "laxity". It is one thing, as Hebrews 2:1, to "let slip" any part of the Word of God, but quite another definitely to "leave" certain doctrines and commands as a necessary prerequisite to "going on unto perfection" (maturity), which is enjoined in the self-same epistle (Heb.6:1). You will recognise that in one feature Baptism and the Lord's Supper are alike.

A – Yes, they are both types. I quite understand that the Lord's Supper is, in no sense, a sacrifice, or that Baptism can by any means be the medium of regeneration.

B – Have you noticed how abundant types and shadows are during the Mosaic economy?

A – Yes, there is the Passover, and the Unleavened Bread, the firstfruits, and the –

B – Pardon my interruption, but you have enumerated three typical observances which Paul speaks of in 1 Corinthians that may help us. What does he say in 1 Corinthians 5:7,8?

A – (*Reads*):

“Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ, *our passover*, is sacrificed for us. Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth”.

B – The typical Passover is fulfilled in Christ, and the typical feast of Unleavened Bread is fulfilled in “sincerity and truth”. Could you accuse any Hebrew believer of “laxity” because he abstained from partaking of the national feast?

A – Certainly not, for he had by faith exchanged the shadow for the substance.

B – The same will be found true of the firstfruits. In 1 Corinthians 15:20-23 we read:

“But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become *the firstfruits* of them that slept ... Christ the firstfruits”.

I have in my study a number of books. Some are heavy, concordances, lexicons, commentaries, etc., others are light, and among them some have a plentiful sprinkling of illustrations. My little girl has access to my books. Which do you think attract her most?

A – I should say those illustrated with pictures.

B — She but confirms the statement of Paul who said:

“When I was a child, I spake as a child, I thought as a child”  
(1 Cor. 13:11).

Israel, the child, had pictures on every hand. The daily sacrifice, the glorious Tabernacle, the Temple, the elaborate ritual, the symbolic clothing of priests, these types and shadows led the way to Christ:

“But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. When I became a man, I put away childish things” (1 Cor. 13:10,11).

The church at Corinth were, with a small exception, “babes in Christ”, and to them the Apostle could not expound the deep things of God. To them he said:

“I have fed you with milk, and not with meat; for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, *neither yet now are ye able*”  
(1 Cor. 3:2).

With this statement before us it is difficult to accept the idea that Paul did there and then proceed to the deeper things in this epistle; and it is in this epistle and in this one alone that we read of the Lord’s Supper. Let us now seek to understand the Scriptural setting of this typical feast. Will you turn to Matthew 26:26-30?

A — (*Reads*):

“And as they were eating (i.e. the Passover, see verses 17 and 19), Jesus took bread (i.e. the passover loaf of unleavened bread), and blessed, and brake, and gave to the disciples, and said, ‘Take, eat, this is My body’. And He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, ‘Drink ye all of it; for this is My blood of the new testament (covenant), which is shed for many for the remission of sins. But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father’s kingdom’. And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives”.

B — You will see that the Lord’s Supper is closely associated with the Passover and the New Covenant.

A — I do not read “new covenant” in my Bible.

B – No, that is so, and we must deal with this before we go further. The word in the original is *diathēkē*. How is this word translated in the A.V.?

A – “Covenant” 20 times, and “testament” 13 times.

B – Are there any changes in the R.V.?

A – Yes, in 10 of the occasions where the A.V. reads “testament”, the R.V. reads “covenant”.

B – Does the R.V. ever change “covenant” into “testament”?

A – No, evidently “covenant” is the true rendering.

B – Is the word in Matthew 26:28 rendered “covenant” in the R.V.?

A – Yes.

B – I think these evidences are sufficient for us.

A – Well, granted that the Lord’s Supper is connected with the New Covenant, what then?

B – Let us read Jeremiah 31:

“‘At that same time’ saith the Lord, ‘I will be the God of all the families of *Israel*, and they shall be My people ... again I will build thee ... O virgin of *Israel* ... Behold I will bring them from the north country ... for I am a Father to *Israel* ... He that scattered *Israel* will gather him ... for the Lord hath redeemed Jacob’ ” (1-11).

Before we read more let us see whether we are clear on one or two points. First the words “At that same time”. What time is meant?

A – I should say from 30:24 that prophetic period known as “the latter days”.

B – Some understand “the latter days” of the prophets to be fulfilled in the church. Do you believe that?

A – Well, I did in a sense, but as you were reading just now I could not avoid noticing the emphasis upon *Israel* and now realize that the time is that of *Israel's* restoration.

B – That is so, and with *Israel's* national restoration and blessing the chapter closes (35-40). The redemption of Israel out of Egypt was under the Old Covenant, but this was a foreshadowing of a fuller and greater exodus under the New Covenant. The typical passover lamb was sufficient for the first, but Christ Himself becomes the true Passover for the New Covenant.

A – How do you know this?

B – We find this in the same chapter of Jeremiah that we have already had before us. Read from verse 31:

A – (*Reads*):

“Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a NEW COVENANT with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which My covenant they brake”.

B – Here you see the close association between the exodus from Egypt with its Passover and the future gathering of Israel from among all nations.

A – Yes, I clearly see that at the institution of the Lord's Supper the Lord set aside the typical feast which was connected with the Old Covenant, instituting another typical feast in connection with the New Covenant.

B – In Exodus 20 we have the covenant “which they brake” introduced by the words:

“I am the Lord thy God Which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage” (Deut.29:25; Jer.11:7,8; Heb.8 and Isa.11:11-16 should also be noted).

You will observe also in Matthew 26 that the Lord Jesus looks forward to His “Father's kingdom”:

“Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done *in earth*” (Matt.6:10).

“I appoint unto you a kingdom, as My Father hath appointed Me, that ye may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the *twelve tribes of Israel*” (Luke 22:29,30).

Can this kingdom by any legitimate method of interpretation be made to mean “The church which is His Body”?

A – No, it cannot.

B – Can Jeremiah 31, which speaks of the restoration of *Israel as a nation*, by any possibility include the church which is the Body of Christ?

A – No, it cannot.

B – Is a “covenant” old or new ever used of this church?

A – No, I find that it is used in two passages only after Acts 28, and these are Revelation 11:19 and Ephesians 2:12.

B – The reference in Ephesians is to Israel and their privileges, and therefore it is true to say that while Paul uses the word 25 times in his epistles written before the end of the Acts, he never uses it again in any connection, except the one instance mentioned, and that but emphasises the great change that took place at the end of the Acts.

The hymn that was sung before going out to the mount of Olives was the Hallel, probably Psalms 115-118, and the reference to the mount of Olives makes one more link with Israel and the earthly kingdom (see Acts 1:12; Zech.14:4).

A – All that you have brought forward would be conclusive proof to me that the Lord’s Supper was not for the church of the Mystery or Secret were it not for the words of 1 Corinthians 11:26:

“For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord’s death TILL HE COME”.

B – I suppose you reason like this – The Lord has not come, therefore we must continue the feast until He does.

A – Yes, that seems the only legitimate inference.

B – That would be true if no change had been made by God in connection with the outworking of His purposes, but we have already seen enough to realize that the ministry of Paul, known as his prison ministry, was connected with the revelation of a secret till that time completely hidden, and with that revelation had been set up a church with a new constitution, a new sphere, and a new hope.

We have also examined the question of the hope of the church *before* Acts 28, and the hope of the church *after* Acts 28, and found that they differ. The “coming” intended by 1 Corinthians 11:26 can be nothing else than the *parousia* which was “the hope of Israel” (Matt.24; Acts 28:20), that is, Christ’s coming again to the earth.

When this hope was temporarily set aside with the people of Israel all things connected with that hope necessarily went with it. For example: the church at Corinth possessed an abundance of supernatural “gifts”, which were miraculous evidences of the earthly kingdom of Christ. Such gifts are entirely absent from the dispensation of the Mystery. 1 Corinthians 11 cannot be severed from 1 Corinthians 12. What warrant have we to pick out a passage in chapter 11 and leave chapter 12 unfulfilled?

We are not left without instruction as to the present time. Paul, writing to Timothy, gives detailed instructions “that he may know how to behave in the house of God”. Do you notice anything in 1 Timothy 2 that links it with 1 Corinthians 11?

A – Yes, I note in verses 11-13 the Apostle repeats his teaching concerning the ministry and position of women in the church.

B – Is it not then strange that he should be so careful to repeat the truth of 1 Corinthians 11:1-16, but omit the slightest reference to the very next subject in the chapter, viz. the Lord’s Supper!

The fact is that the church of the one Body was an entirely new creation. Its relation to the purpose of the ages was a

matter of revelation. We are not warranted to bring over one item from the church of the Acts unless we are told to do so. When any doctrine or practice is to be repeated, *we are told so* (e.g. 1 Cor.11 and 1 Tim.2). When there is a modification, we are told so. Ephesians 4 specifically states that in the church of the one Body there is *one* baptism, whereas during the Acts there were *two*. Where there is an addition to the recognised order of ministry, we are told so. Compare the ministry mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12:28 with Ephesians 4:11. There is no need for a list of things we are not to do, that would involve a complete re-writing in the negative of the whole of the early epistles.

They only are consistent who, in addition to observing the Lord's Supper, prophesy, speak with tongues, work miracles, heal, etc. Which of the four Gospels approaches nearest to the doctrine of Paul?

A – While Luke seems to have written his narrative with the Gentile always in mind, I think John's Gospel is nearest in point of doctrine – in fact I suppose nine-tenths of modern gospel preaching is founded upon John's Gospel.

B – Is it not suggestive then, that this Gospel *makes no mention of the Lord's Supper*? John occupies chapters 13 to 17 with a close and intimate revelation of those closing scenes, and yet finds no necessity to mention this typical feast.

The peculiar character of the church of the one Body – namely the Mystery – places it entirely beyond the sphere of the New Covenant. This church has no relation whatever to Israel or its hope. All the special characteristics of the church at Corinth are absent from the Body of Christ. The very epistle to the Corinthians indicates that the types and shadows of childhood must be left behind when the “perfect or full-grown man” is reached. That is the measure of the faith of the church of the Mystery (Eph.4:13).

In obedience therefore to the teaching of the Scriptures concerning:

- (1) The place of type and shadow.
- (2) The place of the New Covenant.

- (3) The setting aside of Israel at Acts 28, and
- (4) The revelation of the Mystery, with its complete constitution, sphere, ministry and hope,

we do not observe the Lord's Supper. This does not by any means indicate laxity or indifference, but rather a diligence to keep the *unity of the Spirit* which has been entrusted to us. Christendom is split today into fragments, and I suppose it would be safe to say that fifty percent. of these splits arise out of conflicting conceptions concerning the Lord's Supper and Baptism.

A – If these are your principles, I can well understand that you would most strenuously resist any attempt to introduce the ordinances into any meeting for which you were responsible, and I can quite see that, granting your teaching concerning the unique character of the church of the Mystery or Secret, the rest necessarily follows.

## No. 19

### *Baptism.*

A – Seeing that you do not observe the Lord's Supper upon principle, I can understand how it is that you do not believe in baptism.

B – Nothing could be further from the truth.

A – How can you perpetuate one ordinance while setting aside the other?

B – You did not say the “ordinance” of baptism. What you said was that I did not believe in baptism. Every member of the one Body is a “baptized believer”. We have already agreed that typical ordinances are *shadows*. Do you then say that those who emphasize the *shadow* have a monopoly of the word “baptism”, while we who rejoice in the *substance* (the “one baptism” of Eph.4:5) must perforce allow you to say of us that we “do not believe in baptism”? Tell me, would you

agree that neither of us believes in a sacrifice for sins because we do not individually offer a lamb or a bullock upon an altar?

A – No, because the law had but a *shadow* of good things to come, and not the *very image*.

B – So is it with baptism. If you will read Hebrews 9:10 you will find that among the “carnal ordinances” which were imposed upon Israel until the time of reformation is included “diverse baptisms”, which is the correct rendering of the word translated “washings”. These Hebrew believers were instructed to “leave” these “words of the beginning”, and go on unto perfection, and among these elementary things you will find “the doctrine of baptisms” (Heb.6:1,2).

Ephesians 4:5 is sufficient for every member of the one Body. For him the precious unity of the Spirit can contain but one baptism, and that of the one Spirit as the parallel shows, for it cannot be allowed for a moment that the one baptism of the church of the one Body is that of water only. That would deny to this church the *substance* while leaving it the *shadow*.

A – May not the words “one baptism” merely mean one and the self-same baptism that was practised by the more Jewish assemblies?

B – Paul has a special phrase for “one and the self-same” which you can see in 1 Corinthians 12:11. In Ephesians 4:5 the parallel is to be found in 1 Corinthians 8:6, where the “one Lord” implies “one Lord, not many”. So in Ephesians 4:5, one baptism, not two, as obtained during the Acts. When John Baptist commenced his ministry there was one baptism – that of water, with a promise of another – that of spirit and fire (Matt.3:11).

The course of this teaching, rising from the typical shadow to the pure substance, may be set out as follows:

Spirit		Acts period	Ephesians
Water	John Baptist	Acts period	

*The reality has always been the baptism of the Spirit.* True baptism unites the believer with his Lord in His death and resurrection — a union typically set forth in the ceremony of water baptism. How can anyone say that those believers who, by the Divine fiat, are united by one Spirit to the death, burial, resurrection and ascension of the Lord, are *un*-baptized simply because through possessing the *reality* they are not called upon to set forth the *shadow*?

Doubtless, in the Apostle's day, many strenuously denied that the Gentile church of the one Body could ever take to themselves the words "We are the circumcision" (Phil.3:3) simply because they had not, and would not submit to a typical external rite. Their modern successors simply change the word "circumcision" to "baptism", and manifest precisely the same spirit.

A — I must say that I felt so strong in my position concerning believer's baptism that I made sure you could never cause me to admit the possibility of your case being true, but now you have explained I see once again that granting your teaching as to the revelation of the Mystery, this teaching, together with that concerning the Lord's Supper, must necessarily be accepted as logical, consistent and Scriptural.

B — Starting as we did with the question of inspiration and right division, we soon found that it led to the distinctive ministry of the Apostle Paul, which in its turn leads on to the goal and crown of his calling, namely, the dispensation of the Mystery of Ephesians and Colossians. This dispensation differs in many essential features from the church of the Acts period, and I would prayerfully leave with you the exhortation to "search and see" whether these things be so, knowing as I do the strength that comes to heart and mind from TESTED TRUTH.

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