

# The Mystery of the Gospel



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A. E. Knoch

**THE MYSTERY OF THE GOSPEL**

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## PREFACE

SOMEHOW the very word "mystery" seems to shut the door of love in our faces, instead of opening portals for it. The word "mystery" looms large and dark and shadowy. It seems to defy understanding. None but the wisest may even attempt the solution of a "mystery"! Not so with the mysteries in God's Holy Word. They were simply *secrets*. Once they were hidden and could not be known. And yet, after God revealed them, they were easily understood by all who had ears to hear.

THE MYSTERY OF THE GOSPEL was the first book which A. E. Knoch published, about half a century ago. During the last years of his life, he edited it thoroughly so that it might be reprinted in his bimonthly magazine, UNSEARCHABLE RICHES. He changed the title to THE SECRET OF THE EVANGEL in order to emphasize the fact that the conciliation is indeed no longer a "mystery" but rather a secret which God has made known through Paul. Even when the apostle was held captive in Rome, his burning desire was to blaze abroad this secret. No longer could he go among the ecclesias to impart God's glorious revelation, but must content himself with speaking with such liberty as his chain allowed, or with writing to those to whom he could not speak. And so, in Ephesians 6:19, he asked his readers to pray for him,

that he might open his mouth with boldness, "to make known the secret of the evangel," as the Concordant Version has it.

Since it is usually called "the mystery of the gospel" in other versions and because we are offering this edition to a wider audience, to which this term may be better known, we will retain it as the title of this book,

## THE MYSTERY OF THE GOSPEL

## INTRODUCTION

IS THE GREAT CREATOR indifferent to the creatures of His hand and heart? For nearly two thousand years He seems to have set the world adrift. All public communication between the Lord of heaven and a rebellious earth seems to have been cut off.

Once He helped His own people Israel—the nation He brought up out of Egypt with marvelous manifestations of His mercy. But, until recently, their lot has been worse than that of the balance of mankind. Hunted from one country to another, the very fire of persecution has welded them together again, promoting another vast exodus to the land that Ieue\* gave their forefathers.

But, stranger still, those among the nations who take the name of Christ upon themselves, Christendom, whose God He is supposed to be in a special sense; these, also, seem quite forgotten. True, many of them have no valid claim to God's blessing, for in reality they do not worship Him, but serve His adversary, the god of this wicked eon; yet neither do they draw down His displeasure or any sign that He is even aware of their actions.

But, stranger far than all of these, is His apparent apathy towards His own beloved saints. Their relationship to Him is not based upon the ties of creaturehood,

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\*"Ieue" is a transliteration of the Hebrew Name of God, used in preference to the less accurate translation, "LORD", or the modified transliteration, "Jehovah." Ieue is pronounced "Yehveh" and means Will-be-ing-was.

or upon an ancient covenant, or on an outward avowal of His Name, but upon the deep spiritual bond between the Saviour and the sinner, the Justifier and the justified, and, as we shall see, the Reconciler and the reconciled. But their lot, measured by the only standard that the unbelieving world knows, is no better than the common run. They bear, of pain, of suffering, of sore distress, of agony, of shame, as any of the rest. And although this ascends, like fumed incense, with the savor of the Saviour's Name, it brings down no respite, no relief.

In our spirits *only* have we rest, in measure as we know our God, and are acquainted with His ways in this administration. In His Word we see promises of blessing and surcease from sorrow, and we read of the high honors God has reserved for His earthly people. If we "appropriate" these to ourselves, a bitter disappointment awaits us. Then we blame ourselves for lack of "faith," or, alas, blame God, as though He had not kept His promises. In one case we lose the sense of God's *grace*, as though He bartered so much blessing for so much faith; in the other His holy character is assailed. Such dire consequences demand investigation. We must discover their cause, and the remedy must be found.

#### CORRECTLY CUTTING THE WORD OF TRUTH

One of the objects of the following pages is to point out, by correctly cutting the word of truth, where this mischief has its source (2 Tim. 2:15). The remedy is most simple. It lies in faith—*real* faith. Not in "applying" to ourselves that which God has never given to us, or, in plain Anglo-Saxon, *stealing* others' benefits, and misbranding the filched favors "faith," but in believing that, when God promises blessing to Israel, He means *Israel*; when He speaks of the nations, He means the *nations*, and when He speaks to His own, He refers to *them* alone. This is the only just and sensible way to treat God's words.

Another principle, already insisted upon in "A GENERAL SURVEY OF THE DIVINE MYSTERIES,"\* must guide our course. Men cannot know the mind of God until He reveals it. Thus when He *conceals* a thing, then we may rest assured that no one knows aught about His secret before He tells it to them. To expect to find it in a previous revelation is a libel on the Divine record.

#### GOD'S ADMINISTRATIONS

God, in His rare wisdom, for His great Name's sake, proposes to place mankind in a variety of circumstances, not only to manifest what is in humanity—its fearful failure in every environment—but also to display the variety of His own wisdom, and the adaptability of His resources for every emergency, and to reveal the deep recesses of His heart. As a result, His dealings with mankind have varied in different administrations. Each of these administrations is characterized by a new dispensation, or gift, on God's part, and usually closes with His judgment on account of its abuse.

#### THE KEY TO EACH ADMINISTRATION

The key to each administration, and its part in God's purpose, is His attitude as expressed in the character and magnitude of His gifts. Twelve administrations seem indicated in God's Word. It leads only to confusion to mingle them all together, and hinders the understanding of any of them. We must discriminate between the major portion of God's Word, which is concerned with a number of different administrations (which are ours to study and understand, but not to apply directly to ourselves), and that comparatively condensed account of the truth which is in point at the present time. The overwhelmingly important question for us is this: "What is God's real attitude *now*?"

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\*Available from the publishers in pamphlet form for ten cents.

We have said that there seem to be outward indications of indifference and apathy, but we dare not allow a mere *seeming* to usurp the place of God's own explanation. *He knows!* It is easy to misunderstand another, and man misjudged Him at the very first. It is quite possible that His lack of interference shows His unwillingness to sound the trumpet's loud alarm, or to pour out the hoarded bowls of indignation. For such is man's high-handed rebellion now, that any interposition on God's part in mundane affairs must send down the thunders and lightnings of His vengeance. And this might soon occur. When this eon closes, after He has withdrawn His embassy of peace, an era of unmingled wrath will rage like a tornado, for a brief period. At its beginning, Providence retires, heaven's door opens, and God comes on the scene. The great day of His indignation is marked by the fact that He does just what the infidel dares Him to do now. Wrongs are righted; wickedness avenged; justice is meted out with an impartial hand. But who can abide that fiery day?

#### GOD IS AT PEACE

So then, His silence now betokens that He is still concerned with peace. This is His inviting attitude. Men may challenge Him with brazen mouths, may curse Him to His face, may murder His beloved saints, may muster every argument to banish Him from His own creation—but He entreats for peace (2 Cor. 5:20). His sword is wedded to its sheath and may not be withdrawn. The world's hostile attitude toward Him cannot move a conciliated God. Even the attitude of His own is often improper, and He is seldom understood, yet His settled smile remains upon each one. And if they find it difficult to maintain an attitude of peace, let them not imagine that God has any such difficulty. May a realization of His constant favor be the boon of every heart that ponders these pages!

In the chapters which follow, the reader will find the various aspects of the Conciliation\* (which is the secret of the evangel) separated for clearness' sake. We will consider this secret as it affects humanity as well as its application to all creation. We will examine its aspect toward all men, and its effect upon the believer. We will consider its influence upon the proper presentation of that evangel which is in point at present.

#### THE SECRET OF THE EVANGEL

The phrase "the secret of the evangel" may be new to those who are accustomed to the Authorized "King James" Version rendering, "the mystery of the gospel." While the "Bible" may speak of *mysteries*, the inspired original sets forth *secrets* which, once they are revealed, may be easily understood. They are not *mysteries*, beyond human comprehension, but *secrets* which were *concealed* until God made them known at the predetermined time (See Rom. 16:25, 26; Eph. 1:9, 3:9; Col. 1:26). Alas! These secrets seem to have become mysterious to most of God's dear saints. May He grant, in these "last days," that these precious secrets may be recovered and set forth for all the saints to understand and enjoy! For it is these very secrets which will illumine the pathway leading to maturity (Col. 1:27-29).

#### "GOSPEL" OR "EVANGEL"

But why alter *gospel* to *evangel*? The Greek word here translated "gospel" is *eua[n]ggelion*, which literally means, WELL-MESSAGE. While we may cling to the term "gospel" for sentimental reasons, the rendering "evangel" is advantageous in that it provides the verb *evangelize* and the noun *evangelist*. This consideration alone should be sufficient for the earnest truth-seeker

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\*A special term describing *God's* present attitude of PEACE toward the world (See 2 Cor. 5:19). The Authorized Version reads "reconciliation," but this is required for the strengthened form of the word when *two* parties are at peace with one another.

since it provides uniform equivalents for each grammatical form of the Greek. Even the King James Version translates the noun *evangelist* in its three occurrences (Acts 21:8; Eph. 4:11; 2 Tim. 4:5). The use of the word *evangel* may also help to eliminate the many unscriptural associations and phrases which crowd around the word "gospel," hindering the divine light from illuminating the reader's mind. We know that Matthew, Mark, Luke and John do not present four *gospels* but rather each gives an *account* of our Lord's life suited to His varied glories as the *King*, the *Servant*, the *Son of Mankind* and the *Son of the Father*.

We trust that all who are not familiar with the CONCORDANT VERSION will patiently consider any renderings which appear "strange" at first, because each alteration from the accepted version is based on the solid foundation of the inspired original *consistently* translated.

Thus the CONCORDANT VERSION\* is used in all lengthy appeals to the text because of its uniformity and fidelity to the facts of the ancient manuscripts. This version seeks to avoid translating one word of the original in a variety of ways, preferring, instead, to assign it a single *standard* English equivalent. The grammatical forms are treated in the same manner. This insures an impartial and "concordant" version. With the aid of a Greek-English concordance, each reader may assure himself of the aptness of each English equivalent by examining the contexts in which the word is found. Instead of many different renderings, which tend to dim our apprehension, we are led to distinguish the fine shades of meaning and determine the force of each word.

In our quotations from the Scriptures we have endeavored to include enough of the context so as to avoid the danger of importing a foreign meaning into the text.

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\* Also known as the CONCORDANT LITERAL NEW TESTAMENT.

## PAUL'S PRAYER

Paul realized the great importance of the secret of the evangel. Even when he was held captive in prison his burning desire was to blaze abroad this grand secret. No longer could he go among the assemblies to impart this glorious revelation, but must content himself with speaking with such liberty as his chain allowed, or with writing to those to whom he could not speak. He was burdened for lack of utterance. And so he prayed this prayer:

During every prayer and petition be praying on every occasion (in spirit being vigilant also for it with all perseverance and petition concerning all the saints, and for me), that to me expression may be granted, in the opening of my mouth with boldness, to make known the secret of the evangel, for which I am conducting an embassy in a chain, that in it I should be speaking boldly, as I must speak. (Eph. 6:18-20).

God heard that prayer, and He will answer it again.  
O that every saint would join with us in our petition that  
God would indeed recover and restore to His saints

*THE SECRET OF THE EVANGEL!*

## ISRAEL CAST AWAY (ISAIAH 6:1-13)

In the year of the death of king Uzziah,  
I am seeing Ieue, sitting on a throne.  
High and lifted up is He, and His skirts are filling the temple.  
Seraphim are standing above it with six wings,  
Six wings to each one. With two it is covering its face,  
And with two it is covering its feet, And with two it is flying.  
And one calls to another, and says, "Holy! Holy! Holy!  
Ieue of hosts! All the earth is filled with His glory!"  
And the cubit widths of the thresholds are swaying at the sound  
of the call.  
And the house is filling with smoke.  
And saying am I, "Alack to me! For stilled am I,  
For a man of unclean lips am I,  
And amidst a people of unclean lips am I dwelling,  
For the King, Ieue of hosts, my eyes have seen!"  
And flying to me is one of the seraphim,  
And in its hand is a glowing coal.  
With snuffers he takes it off the altar.  
And he is touching my mouth and saying,  
"Behold! This touches your lips.  
And withdrawn is your depravity.  
And for your sin there is a propitiatory shelter."  
And I am hearing the voice of Ieue, saying "Whom shall I send?  
And who shall go to this nation?"  
And saying am I, "Behold me! Send me!"  
And He is saying to me, "Go to this people and say:  
'Hear ye to hear, yet you must not be understanding.  
And see ye to see, yet you must not be knowing.'  
Stouten the heart of this people,  
And their ears make heavy,  
And their eyes make squint.  
Lest they are seeing with their eyes,  
And with their ears are hearing,  
And with their heart are understanding,  
And, turning back, then healing is theirs."  
And saying am I, "Till when, Ieue?"  
And saying is He,  
"Till a desolation should be the cities from having no dweller,  
And houses, from having no human.  
And the ground is remaining a desolation,  
And Ieue removes the human afar,  
And much is forsaken within the land.  
Yet still a tenth remains in it, for it turns back,  
And it becomes consumed as a terebinth.  
And, as an oak which, when flung down, is a monument,  
The holy seed among them is its monument."

## ISRAEL CAST AWAY

ACCESS INTO GOD'S PRESENCE is the most solemn and awesome consideration which can occupy the human heart. In arranging for presentation to an earthly potentate, there are various rules and customs to be observed. A monarch has the right to prescribe the manner in which he may be approached. So the great Ieue\* made it clear how His people, Israel, may draw near to Him. To neglect His provisions, to override His commands, was to invite dire disaster.

This is the solemn lesson taught to the mighty King Uzziah (*Ozie* STRONG-will-be). Ieue had decreed that none but the priests, upon whom the holy anointing oil had been poured, might enter His sanctuary (Ex. 30:30). Uzziah was one of the few kings who had the enviable record that "he is doing what is upright in the eyes of Ieue." (2 Chron. 26:4). He prospered in war and in peace until he became famous and exceedingly strong. Yet when he was established "his heart was haughty to his ruin. And he is offending Ieue, his Alueim,\*\* and is entering the temple of Ieue to fume on the altar of incense. Yet going in after him is Azariah, the priest, and

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\*\*"Alueim" is a transliteration of the original Hebrew and means "To-subjectors." This is the plural form which the Authorized Version translates "God." It is first used in Genesis 1:1. It was also used of Moses (Ex. 7:1), and "judges" (Ex. 22:8), who were *subjectors* to the supreme Subjector. It was also used of false gods (Ex. 12:12).

with him eighty valorous priests of Ieue. And they are withstanding Uzziah, the king, and are saying to him: 'Not for you, Uzziah, is it to fume to Ieue, but for the priests who are sons of Aaron, who are hallowed to fume. Forth with you from the sanctuary, for you offend, and no glory will it be to you from Ieue Alueim!' Yet turbulent is Uzziah, and in his hand is a censer for fuming. And, in his turbulence with the priests, then the leprosy rose in his forehead, in the presence of the priests at the altar of incense, in the house of Ieue. And facing him are Azariah, the head priest, and all the priests. And, behold! He is leprous in his forehead! And hustling him are they from the place. And, moreover, he pressed on to go forth, for Ieue touches him. And coming is Uzziah the king to be a leper till the day of his death. And dwelling is he in the lazer house, a leper, for he is severed from the house of Ieue." (2 Chron. 26:16-21).

#### KORAH'S TRESPASS

Uzziah was not the first to presume to take upon himself the functions of the priesthood. Korah and his company, in the wilderness, were swallowed alive by the earth for this same presumption (Num. 16:31-33). Ieue had kept the sin of these men before His people as a warning. Their copper firepans had been made into stamped foil to overlay the altar, so that the sons of Israel might always see and remember Korah's trespass. These plates were to be a memorial that no one who is not of the seed of Aaron should come near to fume incense before Ieue (Num. 16:37-40).

But, in spite of this solemn warning and example, Uzziah appeared before Ieue. Perhaps he thought that his record for half a hundred years as ruler of Ieue's people gave him the right of access. If that could avail, surely he could come near. Perhaps his private walk, in strict accord with Ieue's law, gave him confidence. If so, that confidence was disastrous.

In this democratic day, few have any true sense of the honor due to dignitaries. And with it has gone the sense of awe due the divine Presence, into which each one must surely come. It is hard for us to see a lifetime of service for Ieue, such as Uzziah's was, suddenly rewarded by loathsome leprosy on account of what may seem to us a trivial offense.

But it was no light matter. His case should be a warning to those who expect to stand unabashed in the presence of the divine Majesty, lacking, indeed, the anointing oil which qualifies for access, but boasting in a life spent in the Subjector's service.

Such were the events which constitute the setting of Isaiah's vision. The action of the vision and the temerity of Isaiah are easily understood when we remember the solemn and awful dread of Ieue which the leprous king and his death compelled.

Ieue, *He* is the Alueim of Israel. He is engaged to her by covenant. He will surely bless her.

#### A VISION OF JUDGMENT

But this vision is concerned with judgment rather than blessing. Ieue's usual place was over the propitiatory shelter (mercy seat), within the sanctuary, behind the curtain. But for this occasion we see Ieue sitting on a throne, high and lifted up. His skirts *fill* the temple.

Before we proceed, let us remind ourselves once again that Ieue is not seated upon the blood-sprinkled propitiatory shelter. If that were His throne at this time, the action of the vision would have been entirely different. As long as the cherubim saw the blood, the sin of Israel was covered, and His wrath could not rest upon His people. But, in the vision, the sin-shelter is gone, and is replaced by a judgment throne. Israel is in the direst danger.

The throne attendants of the divine Majesty vary according to the character which He assumes.

## THE CHERUBIM

Ieue is usually attended by the Cherubim. These beings seem to conform to the scene about them. They are first seen, guarding the way leading to the tree of the living (Gen. 3:24). Next we find them incorporated into the propitiatory shelter (mercy seat) itself—one at either end (Ex. 25:20). They play an important part in one of the visions seen by Ezekiel (Ezek. 10:20). John sees them full of eyes (Rev. 4:8). They have the heads of the lion, the ox, the human being and the vulture, representing the four main divisions of land life.

## THE SERAPHIM

But in this vision the Cherubim are replaced by the "Burning Ones" or Seraphim. Each has six wings; two to cover its feet, two to cover its face and two with which to fly. The Seraphim are mentioned only in Isaiah. The same word is used to characterize the serpents in the wilderness where they are usually called *fiery* (Num. 21:6, 8; Deut. 8:15; Isa. 14:29; 30:6). As the emblem which Moses made (Num. 21:4-9) was of *copper*, which is not necessarily hot, but has the appearance of fire, it is possible that the serpents in the wilderness were called seraphim for the same reason. The appearance of Seraphim in Isaiah's vision and the fact that they covered their faces and feet, and cried, "Holy! Holy! Holy!" suggests severe judgment.

## ANTITYPE IN ACTS

The antitype of the wilderness apostasy is recorded in the book of Acts. As of old, the nation once more despises Ieue and His Prophet, even as their forefathers had done in the wilderness. The cause of dissatisfaction is the same in both cases. His food, which came down from heaven, they loathed. They could not bear the "light" bread. God's spiritual provision was unpalatable. They always clashed with the holy spirit (Acts

7:35-40, 51). And even as Seraphim or "Burning Ones" were active in the wilderness judgment, so now, in Isaiah's vision, the heavenly "Seraphim" are active in the judgment about to be pronounced upon the soulish nation. To appreciate this vision in its clear, spiritual light, we must view it in connection with the time of its final fulfillment as recorded in the book of Acts. Its most minute details will then vibrate with a sympathetic harmony and be suffused with a most prophetic radiance.

From behind the covert of their wings the Seraphim call one to another, "Holy! Holy! Holy! Ieue of hosts! Filled is all the earth with His glory!" The effects of this call unmistakably mark its import. When Ieue first entered His house at Solomon's dedication, His glory was seen as a *cloud*, for He was not clearly manifest (2 Chron. 5:13). But now, the house is filled with *smoke*. Smoke is the after-effect of fire. So we see that Ieue is indeed seen in the character indicated by "Ieue of hosts." His judgment begins in His own house.

But more remarkable than this (and indeed mentioned first) is the interesting statement that "the cubit widths of the thresholds are swaying at the sound of the call." This statement is important to our understanding of the passage, but has been obscured by the rendering "the posts of the door." The word for "posts" is *ammah*, which is consistently rendered "cubit" in two hundred thirty-five instances, "measure" once, and once, in this passage, "post." Three other Hebrew words are translated "post," one of which is here rendered "door." This word, *saph*, is generally changed to "threshold" in the margin. Thus we have "the cubit (widths) of the thresholds" which tells us that the great question of *access* into the presence of the divine Majesty is brought before us.

#### THE SWAYING THRESHOLDS

What ails the threshold? Why are its cubit widths swaying? Why should the call disturb its settled size?

Even as the temple could not contain the great Ieue, so too, it seems, that the majesty and honor to be brought to Him from the whole earth could not enter the ten cubits of the threshold. Israel might easily find entrance there, but how is the complement of the nations to enter? Well may the cubit widths of the threshold sway, and—but we will not anticipate the secret.

This is the effect of the seraphic cry upon the temple in the vision. In its fulfillment, as recorded in the book of Acts, Ieue's spiritual house is brought into judgment and the portals of access are amazingly disturbed and enlarged in order to bring in the glory of the other nations.

#### ISAIAH'S INADEQUACY

But it is not the Seraphim which appall Isaiah, for they themselves cover their faces with a pair of wings before the awe-inspiring majesty of the great Ieue of hosts. Then Isaiah cries: "Alack to me! For stilled am I, for a man of unclean lips am I, and amidst a people of unclean lips am I dwelling, for the King, Ieue of hosts, my eyes have seen!"

In the wilderness apostasy the *words* they spoke against Moses and Ieue brought the seraphic serpents. So now the prophet apprehends that the most dreadful sin which such a God must judge is not of a moral or physical nature, but a spiritual one. Their haughty words against Himself and His Messiah—these sound loudest in His ears. But has Isaiah been guilty in this respect? Has he not already been the mouthpiece of Ieue in reproving the people? How can he, then, be guilty of such impurity as this?

Among men he would never have acknowledged it. But those who try to speak of Him, once they are in His own presence, not only know the plague of their own hearts, but the doleful lack of their highest efforts in His service. Job stoutly defended his own integrity before his friends and not without cause (Job 27:6). But

when he gets a glimpse of Ieue he explains: "By the hearing of the ear I had heard Thee, yet now my eye has seen Thee. Therefore, I am rejecting myself. And I regret on soil and ashes." (Job 42:5, 6).

## IEUE'S REMEDY

And how strange the remedy! Surely nothing but judgment can enter this scene! A temple filled with smoke, and "Burning Ones" glowing with heat is not all. Still hotter is the fire upon the altar. One would think that the Seraph could handle the coals with its hand. But no, it does not dare, but takes the snuffers, and grasping a glowing coal, it flies to the prophet and lays the coal upon his mouth, saying: "Behold! This touches your lips. And withdrawn is your depravity. And for your sin there is a propitiatory shelter." What the Seraphim dare not touch, may be laid upon Isaiah's mouth.

A glowing coal off the altar! The fire that consumed the sacrifice, consumes Isaiah's sins! He was sheltered from it and his depravity was withdrawn. Now the great Ieue of hosts can speak to him without the least danger of destroying him with His words. On the contrary, the prophet becomes confident and forward and bold. When Ieue asks, "Whom shall I send? And who shall go to this nation?" he answers straightway, "Behold me! Send me!"

And He says, "Go to this people and say:

Hear ye to hear, yet you must not be understanding.

And see ye to see, yet you must not be knowing.

Stouten the heart of this people,

And their ears make heavy,

And their eyes make squint.

Lest seeing are they with their eyes,

And with their ears are hearing,

And with their heart are understanding,

And, turning back, then healing is theirs."

## ISAIAH'S MESSAGE

Alas! The message Isaiah is to deliver is no evangel at all, but the very reverse! What direr discipline can be meted out to a people than this? Their physical faculties fail to furnish any spiritual intelligence. Israel's heart is made so callous that, though they may listen and squint, they cannot understand. And they *cannot* repent and return to God's favor. Ever since this vision took place, such has been the condition of the nation of Israel. This was the reason that they rejected their Messiah (Matt. 13:10-15). The situation was the same after the spirit's testimony through the apostles as recorded in the book of Acts (Acts 28:25-28). And so it remains with the chosen nation even today, while the evangel goes forth to the other nations.

## THE CAUSE OF ISRAEL'S DEFECTION

Israel is to be blind and deaf and callous. Hard and stern is this mandate. It behooves us to inquire most carefully into the sin which brings down such fearful displeasure upon Ieue's people. The trouble is connected with their ears and eyes. Yet it is always insisted that they *do* hear and they *do* see.

But they do not understand. Neither do they know.

And this led to further blindness and deafness. They claimed to see, consequently their sin was reckoned against them.

*Lack of spiritual discernment, of spiritual understanding, is the root cause of Israel's defection.* This it was that led their hardened hearts to refuse Messiah's message. This fact urgently claims entrance into the hearts of God's people today. Now, as then, spiritual intelligence is the rarest of all precious things—and the least valued. In God's sight it is the only true wealth. Why should we despise what He esteems so highly?

Evidence abounds which proves their intense zeal for

their ordinances. This is shown by their fanatical insistence on the most minute detail with which their commentaries had burdened the law, and their deep devotion to their own religious sect. But what is all this effort to God? They compassed land and sea in their missionary efforts, but, so long as they could not impart more light than they themselves possessed, their proselyting found no favor with Ieue.

And thus it is today. How rare has true spiritual discernment become! May the solemn lesson of this vision sink deep into the hearts of the saints of God, so that they may place a true estimate upon that which He deems of such priceless value.

#### THE MESSAGE REPEATED

The mere fact that this grave message of Isaiah six is recalled in five different instances\* and the whole passage is recorded three distinct times\*\* is alone sufficient to urge our most earnest attention. No other part of God's Word receives such reiteration. He is usually content to speak *once*. Strict quotations are few. Strictly parallel passages are hard to find. Not indeed, that Christ's message to the Jews is an exact quotation of Isaiah's message. In Isaiah the action is future. In Matthew it is past. Isaiah was told to stouten their hearts, and make heavy their ears, and their eyes make squint. The Lord does not need to do this, for it had been done already. So He witnesses to the fact that their heart *is* stoutened, their ears *are* heavy, their eyes *are* squinting.

#### PERPLEXING PARABLES

WHEN OUR LORD heralded the kingdom at the first, He spoke to all Israel. But it was soon apparent that they were blind and deaf to the *spiritual* import of His words.

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\*Matt. 13:14; Mark 4:12; Luke 8:10; John 12:40; Acts 28:26.

\*\*Isa. 6:9, 10; Matt. 13:14, 15; Acts 28:26, 27.

They rejected Him and He changed His plain proclamation into parabolic teaching, ending His parable with the significant words, "Who has ears to hear, let him hear." When His disciples inquire why He has made this change, He tells them: "To you has it been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of the heavens, yet to those it has not been given. For anyone who has, to him shall be given, and he shall have a superfluity. Yet anyone who has not, that also which he has shall be taken away from him. Therefore in parables am I speaking to them, seeing that, observing, they are not observing, and hearing, they are not hearing, neither are they understanding. And filled up in them is the prophecy of Isaiah..." (Matt. 13:9-14).

#### THE PURPOSE OF PARABLES

It will be difficult for the average "Christian" of today to acknowledge these solemn truths. Parables are popularly thought to be stories intended to *illustrate* the truth, not to *hide* it. They are deemed fit pabulum for the youngest Sunday School infant, instead of too difficult for the understanding of most Bible students. But, to our shame let it be said, the mass of Christians, so-called, are as deaf as Israel ever was.

#### ISRAEL'S "BLIND" GUIDES

Israel's leaders were blind guides of a blind people. On the sabbath day, when they could do nothing, our Lord opened the eyes of the man who was blind from his birth. And He said, "For judgment came I into this world, that those who are not observing may be observing, and those observing may be becoming blind." And some of the Pharisees who were with Him heard these words and said to Him, "Not we also are blind!" He replied, "If you were blind, you would have no sin. Yet now you are saying that 'We are observing.' Your sin, then, is remaining." (John 9:39-41).

## SIGNS ARE SIGNIFICANT

One of the signs of His Messiahship was the fact that He gave sight to the blind. These were more than miracles: they were *signs*, that is, they were significant; they carried a spiritual meaning. Take the case we have just been considering. Why did the Lord mingle His spittle with the cursed earth and anoint the man's eyes with it? This could only, if possible, *increase* his inability to see. The Jews took their stand upon the law, which, like the earth, brought forth the fruits of the curse. He took this law, and, mingling with it the words which proceeded from His own mouth, He made it more heart-searching than ever. But this only increased their blindness. Yet to those who know their blindness He reveals Himself as the True Light, the One "Sent" or "Commissioned" (*Siloam*) for their enlightenment. It was not until the blind man washed in the pool Siloam that he saw (John 9:1-7).

The ministry of our Lord while on the earth is clearly divided into two distinct parts. He *began* by heralding the kingdom of the heavens, but, after it had been rejected, He forbids its further proclamation (Matt. 4:17; 12:16).

## PUBLIC PROCLAMATION OF THE KINGDOM

The public proclamation of the kingdom commenced after His baptism, when God opened the heavens and acknowledged Him as His Son (Matt. 3:16, 17), and continued until this was revealed to Peter and he, too, acknowledged Him to be the Christ, the Son of the living God (Matt. 16:16).

The second part of Messiah's ministry begins at the "transfiguration" when, once again, God bears witness to Him, saying, "This is My Son, the Beloved, in Whom I delight. Hear Him!" (Matt. 17:5). It continued until the centurion and those with him keeping guard at the cross, exclaimed, "Truly this was God's Son!" (Matt. 27:54).

At His baptism He had been empowered by the divine Dove to fulfill the office of *Prophet* (Matt. 3:16). Upon the holy mount, like the priest of old, He was clad in garments of glory and beauty, in view of His *priestly* work in offering up Himself (Matt. 17:1-5). He had come unto His own, and, being rejected, He would go back to the Father.

#### PRIVATE TEACHING OF THE CROSS

The heralding of the kingdom gives place to private teaching concerning the suffering and shame of the cross. The powerful deeds which declared the truth of His claims cease and He directs His disciples to tell no one of the vision which they had seen upon the high mountain until *after* He is roused from among the dead (Matt. 17:9). Not until Pentecost, fifty days after Christ's resurrection, are signs given once more, a demonstration of God's power operating in those who had believed.

#### THE MINISTRY THROUGH THE APOSTLES

Then the ground is once more clear to take up the kingdom of which Daniel and all the prophets had spoken. This kingdom was the subject of His first ministry, of what He *begins* both to do and to teach (Acts 1:1). And this is the subject of His conversations with the chosen apostles during the forty days following His sufferings. It was also, "that which concerns the kingdom of God." (Acts 1:3). Before beginning His first proclamation, the Lord had been baptized by John and by the holy spirit. So He says to them: "John, indeed, baptized you in water, yet you shall be baptized in holy spirit after not many of these days." (Acts 1:5). And later when someone was to be chosen to fill Judas' empty place, the prime qualification was that he had been with the Lord from the baptism of John onward, that is, from the beginning of the heralding of the kingdom (Acts 1:22).

No wonder they ask Him saying, "Lord, art Thou at this time restoring the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts 1:6).

Was Isaiah’s question, “Till when?” to be answered at last? For us, who are meditating on the Divine Secrets, the answer He gave is full of significance. He said to them: “*Not yours is it to know times or eras which the Father placed in His own jurisdiction.*” (Acts 1:7).

To have given them an answer would have involved the revelation of the secret concerning the duration of Israel’s blindness. But this was not to be made known at that time. Had it been known, the events recorded in the book of Acts would never have taken place. The whole action of the book depends upon this ignorance. It is a treatise on the kingdom of God as proclaimed by God’s spirit and its rejection by Israel both in and out of the land. It resumes the *earlier* part of Christ’s own ministry, the things He *began* both to do and teach; in plain words, the heralding of the kingdom. The signs and miracles which had been temporarily dropped are taken up again to confirm the word of those who spoke on His behalf.

#### CHRIST REJECTED BY ISRAEL

The second section of the earthly ministry of our Lord followed His rejection by Israel. It was based upon His sufferings, which were yet future. It ended with His resurrection. So after Israel has once again rejected Him, as detailed in the book of Acts, the present “secret administration” is likewise based upon His death and His resurrection. The nations, like the centurion and those with him, acknowledge Him to be the Son of God.

The question the disciples asked at the beginning is the absorbing topic throughout the whole book of Acts and is not answered until the very last chapter. Then it is made known to the assembled Jews at Rome that the kingdom was postponed while God’s salvation was dispatched to the other nations.

Throughout the book, however, one instance follows another, showing the fulfillment of Isaiah’s words until

there was no remedy. Two main divisions are clearly evident. Peter is prominent in the first, heralding the kingdom in the land. Paul is at the head of the second, heralding the kingdom to Israelites outside the land and to the other nations.

#### PETER AT PENTECOST

The heralding of the kingdom had been inaugurated by the descent of the dove upon our Lord at His baptism and was followed by powerful deeds and miracles in the land of Israel.

This heralding was renewed after His resurrection, by the descent of the holy spirit on the day of Pentecost. It, also, was immediately followed by signs and miracles in the land of Israel. Peter stands up and proclaims the resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth and that He is the Christ, the Son of David, on Whom all hopes of the kingdom are based. The immediate effect was encouraging, but the rulers and the bulk of the nation reject his message. Peter and John are led before the council and charged not to speak in the name of Jesus. The opposition grows. Stephen is dragged before them and is stoned to death, calling upon the name of the Lord Jesus. Herod kills John's brother James, and imprisons Peter, who is set free by divine intervention. Persecution scatters all but the apostles. The bright hopes inspired by Pentecost gradually fade away. The myriads who allied themselves with the apostles take the outward profession, but reject the spirit of grace and go back to the slavery of Sinai. Paul's very life is often in danger at the hands of the "faithful." Finally the apostles, who had held their place at Jerusalem, the city of the great King, are also scattered, and Peter, as an indication of what the nation had come to, dwells in Babylon (1 Pet. 5:13). The kingdom is as far away as in the days of the captivity. But Paul's heralding of the kingdom had a brighter side.

## PAUL AMONG THE NATIONS

When Paul and Barnabas were about to herald the glad tidings to Sergius Paul, Elymas, the "Magician," who understood them (Acts 13:7-12). He was a Jew, named Bar-Jesus, a false prophet, all of which makes him a fitting type of those of Israel, living amongst the other nations, who were indeed of our Lord's kin, but were false mouth-pieces for Ieue. They hated the thought of blessings for the other nations, amongst whom they dwelt; forbidding the apostle to speak to them, and, like Elymas, come under the holy spirit's condemnation. Bar-Jesus' judgment is a perfect picture of that which Isaiah foretold for the nation as a whole. "And now, lo! the hand of the Lord is on you, and you shall be blind, not observing the sun until the appointed time." (Acts 13:11). Does this not correspond to Israel's condition ever since? Yet it is only "until the appointed time"; for they shall yet behold the Sun of Righteousness.

The ministry of our Lord among the people *in the land* had manifested the fulfillment of Isaiah's message in them: the ministry of Paul and Barnabas among the dispersed *outside the land* showed that they too were blind. So it is no wonder that our Lord, after His heralding of the kingdom fails, quotes, or rather restates, Isaiah's message in full, showing its fulfillment in the case of those to whom He spoke. And how fitting that Paul (after having demonstrated time and again that the Jews with whom he came in contact outside the land were just as blind as those living in it) how fitting that he should follow His Lord's example and quote, with perfect exactitude, the restatement of Isaiah which His Master had previously pronounced!

## THE NATIONS WILL HEAR!

Hitherto the other nations had received the word which was dispatched to the sons of *Israel* (Acts 10:36). But now, for the first time, the apostle makes it publicly

known to the Jews themselves that God's salvation was dispatched directly to the other nations and that *they will hear* (Acts 28:28).

What! The nations, who had no advantages whatever, have they ears that can hear? Yes, for such are God's ways; for Isaiah had said on another occasion:

“For they to whom it had not been related concerning Him, see,  
And what they had not heard, they consider.”  
(Isaiah 52:15).

“TILL WHEN?”

But to return to the vision. Ieue has ceased speaking. The awful nature of the message Isaiah was to bear to the people has made its impress upon the prophet. Will Ieue cast away His people completely? That cannot be. So his first thought springs into words: “Till when, Ieue?” And He answers:

“Till the cities should be desolated from having  
no dweller,  
And houses, from having no human.  
And the ground is remaining a desolation,  
And Ieue removes the human afar,  
And much is forsaken within the land.  
Yet still in it is a tenth, for back it turns,  
And it comes to be consumed as a terebinth.  
And as an oak which, when flung down, is a  
monument.  
Among them the holy seed is its monument.”

#### ISRAEL'S SAD HISTORY

“Till when?” is the prophet's earnest inquiry. So Ieue gives him a brief but comprehensive sketch of the ominous future of Isaiah's people, but leaves its length undetermined. Secret things belong to Him alone. A measure of hope is given but only in the midst of recurring desolations. But Ieue closes with the assurance that the situation is not hopeless—Ieue will yet be glorified

through Israel. For when an oak is flung down, there remains in it a monument. So also with Israel. God has chosen and reserved a holy seed from among His people and this assures Isaiah that, some day, Israel will see and will hear and will turn about—and healing will be theirs. But, in the meantime, the sad history of the chosen nation unfolds.

#### DEPORTATION, RETURN, DESTRUCTION

The cities of Judah were laid waste and the inhabitants deported to Babylon. Ieue had sent them word by His prophet Jeremiah to be subject to the king of Babylon, but they did not hearken to His words (Jer. 27:11). And later, when He told those who were left not to fear because of the king of Babylon, they would not listen to this counsel either, but deserted the land and went down to Egypt to die there (Jer. 44:12). But there was a return both to the land, and, in spirit, to Ieue, in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah. It was only for a time, however, and when our Lord appears on the scene He finds them fast ripening for Ieue's indignation. This time they were not carried away, but consumed within the land itself, indeed, in the very city of Jerusalem. Those in the surrounding area had sought refuge in the holy city, only to meet their doom there when Titus, with his Roman legions, demolished it about 70 A.D.

That even this was to be the end of their blind career is not hinted, neither is there any further interval mentioned. That Israel's blindness was to endure during the present administration was a secret which, though in perfect accord with the vision, could never be gleaned from its words.

The unsettled dimensions of the threshold and the insignificance of the temple compared to Ieue's greatness might lead us to look for some change in the portals of access to God's presence and expect a divine revelation overshadowing the temple system. The very fact that a definite answer to Isaiah's question was not forthcoming

might arouse inquiry (as indeed it did) as to the time which must elapse before Israel's enlightenment. But such symptoms as these were dumb and never could reveal the secret in their day.

But now it is no longer hid.

THE GOD OF ALL

God has come forth as God of *all* the nations. The way of access has been immeasurably widened. The duration of Israel's blindness has been fixed. Even before the public repudiation of Israel, Paul reveals the secret to the Roman saints:

“For I am not willing for you to be ignorant of this secret, brethren, lest you may be passing for prudent among yourselves, that callousness, in part, on Israel has come, *until the complement of the nations may be entering*. And thus all Israel shall be saved, according as it is written,

Arriving out of Zion shall be the Rescuer.

He will be turning away irreverence from Jacob.

And this is My covenant with them

Whenever I should be eliminating their sins.”

(Romans 11:25-27)

## EXHORTATION TO PEACE (ROMANS 5:1-11).

Being, then, justified by faith, we may be having peace toward God, through our Lord, Jesus Christ, through Whom we have the access also, by faith, into this grace in which we stand, and we may be glorying in expectation of the glory of God.

Yet not only so, but we may be glorying also in afflictions, having perceived that affliction is producing endurance, yet endurance testedness, yet testedness expectation. Now expectation is not mortifying, seeing that the love of God has been poured out in our hearts through the holy spirit which is being given to us.

For Christ, while we are still infirm, still in accord with the era, for the sake of the irreverent, died. For hardly for the sake of a just man will anyone be dying: for, for the sake of a good man, perhaps someone may even be daring to die, yet God is commending this love of His to us, seeing that, while we are still sinners, Christ died for our sakes. Much rather, then, being now justified in His blood, we shall be saved from indignation, through Him.

For if, being enemies, we were conciliated to God through the death of His Son, much rather, being conciliated, we shall be saved in His life. Yet not only so, but we are glorying also in God, through our Lord, Jesus Christ, through Whom we now obtained the conciliation.

## AN EXHORTATION TO PEACE

GOD IS GRACIOUS. Our justification is the result of the free outflow of His favor. The chosen channel is *faith*. And why faith? There is a fitness in the fact that man must retract the slander which first caused the breach between him and his Creator. It was unbelief, mistrust, that caused his downfall. It is the first and foremost sin, the cord that binds all other sins to him.

### FAITH ACCORDS WITH GRACE

But what potency is there in faith to grant us peace and access into grace? Is He not Truth and are not all His words most pure? Unbelief makes Him a liar and deserves the judgment of a slanderer. But will the Judge pronounce us "just" merely because we withdraw the insult? No, faith, of itself, has no merit.

But it is of faith "*that it may accord with grace.*" (Rom. 4:16). Discover, if you can, a way by which God's bounteous blessings may flow forth to guilty man. Remove each hindrance, every hedge or intervening barrier, pave all with love and arch the whole with grace and what way can there be that meets all of these requirements? Not another one but that which He has chosen—FAITH.

Righteousness, then, is out of faith and this agrees with grace. It is all a gift from God. How the very thought unveils His heart and kindles a responsive flame in ours! Faith cannot tarnish grace, but rather it conspires to make the blessing all God's own, cutting out all of man's faulty efforts.

## WHAT IS FAITH?

And what is faith? Is it a settled confidence that God will do what we desire? The certainty that He will bend His will to acknowledge ours? This certainly is faith—faith in *ourselves*.. Self-confidence has long arrayed itself in gospel garb and played the part of Faith. But faith in God despises self and leans alone on Him—not on our thoughts of Him or on His works—but on His steadfast Word. Fixed firm upon the Word of God, faith has a fearless, steadfast stand. Faith elsewhere placed will totter to its fall. The very throne of God is not more firmly founded than His Word, and we believe Him true.

## FAITH RIGHTEOUSNESS

Because we believe Him, He reckons us righteous in His sight. How blessed to be righteous! Yet how much more blessed still to have it as a gift from God. The merest token which speaks the love of some dear friend is transmuted into a priceless treasure in our eyes. His great gift—itself so precious—should magnify the love that prompted it.

Our God has drawn us with the cords of grace. Shall we not follow after Him? And shall we not bend to hear His voice as He unveils still further the yearning of His heart towards us?

## PEACE TOWARD GOD

“Being, then, justified by faith, we may be having peace toward God...” Let us not miss the marvelous favor here unfolded by making “peace toward God” a mere consequence of justification.

Does the accused criminal, acquitted though he be, straightway find himself upon the judge's list of friends, the object of his favors? No indeed, for justification leads to no such favors.

## THE GRACE WHICH ESTABLISHES

Nor is justification by itself the grace which establishes

us in settled confidence before God. Peace does that. Justification flows from that which God has *done*; what He *is*, is the basis of peace. We point back to the deliverance wrought by Christ Jesus as the ground of our justification. We look up to the Son of God, pinnacled in highest glory, beyond the reach of death, and to God Himself, Whose Image He is, and find in Him the living, loving Source of peace.

#### JUSTIFICATION MUST PRECEDE PEACE

This peace would be impossible without our previous justification before God, but it is a favor immeasurably beyond it. Many of the saints have never known the stability, the solid satisfaction, the exultant joy, which justification by itself cannot produce, but which comes to those who use the "Way" God has provided—Christ Jesus—not only to deal with their sins, but as the road leading to His very presence, giving admission to this far greater grace—the Reconciliation. God's hand has revealed His heart, and He draws us to Himself.

Nor need we fear to respond. Christ Jesus is the Passport by Whom we may approach. We stand secure in Him. For it is through Him "we have the access also, by faith, into this grace in which we stand."

#### OUR EXPECTATION

And what a prospect lies before us! The "glory of God" is our goal. Once we read our sentence thus: "For all sinned and are *wanting* of the glory of God." (Rom. 3:23). Yet now it has become our boast in Him. What that glory comprises we may learn as we contemplate the only Man Who never sank below its lofty standard. As high and spotless as the snow-capped mountain peak; as lowly and sweet as the wild forget-me-not; all this we were not, and it was our condemnation; all this we shall be, and shall we not exult? This is our "expectation," our joy; this reaches far beyond the "righteousness" of any human court.

## A PATH OF PAIN AND PEACE

Such is our expectation. But what of the path that lies between us and our goal? It is set with trials that oppress; afflictions and distresses that may dim our eyes with tears and blur the engaging vision. Can exultation find a place in such a scene as this? We ask our hearts, by sickness straitened, driven by distress, sinking in a sea of sorrows, and not a sign of His hand to help; and find its only answer in a doubt: "Doth God know?" Are not all these tokens of His displeasure, His indignation, His wrath?

Our rebel heart denies that there is peace. Our traitor heart would breed sedition in the very citadel of Love. O, how it swells and heaves our bosom with tempestuous waves of fear and pain, distrust and unbelief! And is there one whose eyes have scanned these lines, who has not harbored these? And is there one, who, musing in the shadowed hour, has not been galled by chains of dark distrust?

Only One can calm us, and He rises as He did on the Sea of Galilee, and lo! the tempest flees before His face! (Mark 4:37-40).

Be silent, be still!

He has made peace. Let us, then, be at peace.

And let us exult, not only in that future bliss, in that enchanting glory, but even in the afflictions of this present hour. So take the trial, plant it in the love of God, and see it spread its roots of patient endurance and rear its stalwart trunk of testedness and bear its pleasant fruit, expectation.

## THE HOLY SPIRIT

God's love has been poured out in our hearts through the holy spirit which is being given to us (Rom. 5:5). Here is the spring of all true happiness.

It is the way of love to give. But God's spiritual blessings cannot be entertained except by His own spirit.

Our spirits can grasp the things pertaining to humanity, but divine affairs lie beyond that sphere. And so, first of all, God gives us His spirit, preliminary to His further blessings. Thus we are enabled to perceive that which is being graciously given to us by God (1 Cor. 2:11, 12).

This is the channel through which His love has found entrance into our hearts. Only thus can we rejoice in trials, afflictions and distresses. Apart from its balmy strength they seem far more than we can bear. When the issue stands in doubt, the dread of future ill breeds death. But when we rest assured that His almighty power is guided by a heart whose every pulse beats thoughts of love to us, then we can bear with patience every test. And as we endure the storms in this, *His* strength, we become established, like the enduring oak whose sturdy trunk has drawn its strength from adverse winds. And so, stripped of that which pleases us below, our eyes turn upward and we rejoice in *expectation*. Not only that sorrows will then cease, and sighing flee away, but that we shall yet be all that we desire; yes, all that He desires, so that His love will find even in us a fit recompense and rest. O, to be like Him! to be with Him! We will satiate our hearts with Him.

#### MAN'S "PROGRESS"

Among men self-help receives encouragement and praise. And he who will not help himself need scarcely look for help from others. God's way with His creatures is the converse of this. It was when mankind had proven its own infirmity and helplessness that God provided power through His mighty Christ, the Saviour of all mankind.

Since the day Adam sinned man has been industriously employed to better his own condition. His one great aim is happiness—*apart from God*. He devises instruments of music to soothe his shattered senses; he drinks

the cup of pleasure to its bitter dregs; he cultivates his mind and makes himself gods; he tries the round of governments from despotism to democracy. But every device to uplift himself has proven an added weight to real progress. Much of what we laud today was worn to shreds by those who went before us. Rome was once a republic, and her laws are still the standard upon which our codes are founded.

Greece had fountains of intelligence to which the learned of our own day still return.

Israel had both a law and a literature which were divine; and besides had the only religion God has ever given mankind in their natural state.

But with all of these mankind has not attained its object. It is infirm. Sufficient opportunity has been given to prove beyond a doubt that mankind neither had nor ever would have gained strength enough to extricate itself from the slough into which it has fallen.

Since the death of Christ two more opportunities have been given mankind. Christ's advent and the strength and hope imparted by His death and resurrection injected new life into the corrupting mass. But as the truth was lost, mankind plunged into the "Dark Ages."

The only thing that rescued the race from its dismal plight in any measurable degree was the Word of God as proclaimed by the heralds of the Reformation.

And now that men enjoy the blessings which have followed in its wake, they seem most anxious to throw overboard the Word that saved them and which is their only hope. Soon they will find a man—their messiah (and Satan's too)—who will bring in the "golden age" they dream about. But their dream will be exceedingly short. In the midst of peace they are called upon to muster the most imposing armament this world has ever seen in order to stamp out the last vestige of God's Name still left upon the earth.

Then comes the Christ of God, Who, by a word,

destroys the horrid host. Then He brings in what men have been seeking—righteousness and peace and joy—and He supplies the power which they lacked, by virtue of His death.

## IRREVERENT MEN

Before His death and after it, to the very last, men are irreverent. That is, they want happiness, but refuse to tolerate any “interference” on God’s part. They cast Him out of their plans, though they readily follow and co-operate with Satan in his schemes to better the lot of mankind. But, though they refuse Christ, Whom God has given power and authority to bless them to the full, and though they had fully proven their own inability and infirmity, yet even thus Christ dies for them, laying the foundation of eonian happiness. The weakness of that death is stronger far than the combined efforts of man and Satan. “For Christ, while we are still infirm, still in accord with the era, for the sake of the *irreverent*, died.” (Rom. 5:6).

## CHRIST CAN!

Christ, the Messiah, or the Anointed One, is the title of our Lord which denotes His spiritual endowment and capacity to carry out God’s purposes.

What men cannot do, *Christ can!*

The various offices which He holds, such as Prophet and Priest and King, all depend upon this anointing, or Messiahship. By virtue of it He will yet be Ruler of the Universe.

But when God speaks of Him as His Son, we think immediately of His most holy spirit. When He speaks of Him as His Christ, the emphasis is upon His spirit, as well, but rather as connected with the *Man* of His counsels. He is the *Man* of transcendent spiritual capacity.

It will be helpful to keep His personal name, Jesus, by which He was known among men, His titles, which

spring from His Messiahship, and His appellations, which describe His relationships to God and man, all in their distinctly separate place.

What God *does* we learn through His Christ.

What God *is* we learn through His Son.

#### GOD COMMENDS HIS LOVE TO US

How constricted is the human heart! A merely righteous man would never move us. He may be just and upright in his dealings with his fellowmen; but none of them would think of making any sacrifice for such a one. Still, some *have* braved death for one whose goodness called forth active sympathy.

But in God's sight there is none worthy, not one good, no, nor even just (Rom. 3:10, 11). Were He to copy man, His love would never find an outlet. The distinctive and excellent quality of His love is this: that it makes its greatest sacrifice for those who least deserve it. Not for the good, not for the just (for there were none of these), but for the *sinner*, Christ died. This it is that commends God's love to us.

Such was His way with us while we were still sinners. But now that Christ's death has secured our justification, His blood before and on the throne of God speaks with untiring tongue the unceasing and abiding merits of that death.

#### THE BLOOD OF CHRIST

The blood is for the eyes of God. "When I see the blood, I pass over you." (Ex. 12:13).

Abel's blood had cried for vengeance; and Cain, his murderer, was doomed to spend his days far from the face of God, accursed from the very ground on which he trod. Christ's death also drew down a curse, but not upon his murderers: He bore the curse Himself! The blood He shed speaks better than that of Abel. "Vengeance" was the one unvarying cry of Abel's blood, but "Grace" is the refrain the blood of Christ calls forth.

And its power will never cease. Its unabated energy seems to gather strength the more it is expended. Time never can destroy its vigor, for when the eons have revealed its potent power to purify and bless, that death, the blood that speaks of it, will still abide; the firm foundation of that perfect bliss and pledge of its unending stay.

#### THE DIVINE LOGIC

This alone should be enough to establish our hearts before Him. But no, our hard human heart knows nothing of such grace. It reasons thus: "If He has shown me favor and I return it not in piety and good deeds He will thrust such an ingrate from Him." And so He would, were He such a one as we.

Away with such false reasonings! The divine logic drives such darkness from our minds. God reasons thus: "If divine love wrought so mightily on my behalf when I was still a sinner, how much more, now that I am justified, shall I be saved from God's indignation through Christ?"

He will not do less for the righteous than for the unrighteous. Will He provide justification at such infinite cost and then desert the object of His love? The time must indeed come, and may soon be here, when God will visit the earth with fearful indignation and blight those who are blighting the earth (Rev. 11:18). But He can never find it in His heart to pour His indignation upon one to whom He has given His own righteousness.

Helpless and sinning, we have found in Christ relief and righteousness. But deeper and more desperate was our case than even this, as seen in our strained relationship to God.

#### ENEMIES OF GOD

God counted man His enemy. Helplessness alone might call for pity; sin's desert is death, but enmity draws down the thunderbolts of war. How terrible to have the Almighty arrayed against us! Well might we fear and

say, like Saul of old, when David spared his life: "If a man find his enemy, will he let him go well away?" (1 Sam. 24:19). And if the Mighty Al\*, the Supreme Subjector, gird on His armor, who can stand before Him?

God was arrayed against the race. His justice and holiness absolutely required that this be so. Aught else would have sullied His holy Name. In the case of Israel, and the rare instances of favor to an alien, the sacrificial knife alone could clear a bloody path into His presence.

But now that the cross is past, God's justice can no longer be called into question. His holiness is put beyond denial. Apart from the death of God's Son the enmity would yet remain, but now God is conciliated, and it has been accomplished without polluting the purity of His great Name.

#### CONCILIATE OR RECONCILE

In the Authorized Version of Romans 5:10 we read: "For if, when we were enemies, we were *reconciled* to God..." The Greek word which is translated "reconciled" is *katalla'ssō* which, very literally translated, means DOWN-CHANGE. However, it becomes evident that *katallassō* expresses *one-sided* "conciliation" rather than a *two-sided* "reconciliation" when we study its usage in the inspired original. The popular versions conceal this important fact, since they fail to distinguish *katallassō* from *apokatallassō*, which *does* signify a *mutual* conciliation; a *reconciliation*. A single occurrence of *katallassō* (conciliate) will suffice to show that this Greek word expresses a one-sided amity only and is not to be confused with reconcile, which is mutual. In 2 Corinthians 5:19 Paul writes: "God was in Christ, conciliating (*katallassō*) the world to Himself." That the world is not *reconciled* to God should be self-evident. Yet that God is at peace or conciliated to the world and is not

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\*Al is the *singular* form of the Hebrew *Alueim* (or Elohim) and means SUBJECTOR, although most translations render it simply "God," or "El," as in Immanu-el.

reckoning their offenses to them is a glorious truth which is essential to our understanding of the evangel for today. Thus, with conciliation effected, God is beseeching the world, through His ambassadors, "For Christ's sake be conciliated (*katallassō*) to God." (2 Cor. 5:20). Those who respond to this plea, who believe the evangel of peace, are reconciled to God, since peace is thereby made mutual. Just from these two occurrences we can see how important this distinction is to a proper understanding of the Conciliation.

#### THE CONFUSION COMPOUNDED

The King James Version, by rendering *katallagê* (conciliation) "atonement" in Romans 5:11, has confused conciliation with the "atonement" so often mentioned in connection with the Levitical offerings. But that is a completely separate matter having to do with propitiation, that is, a shelter from the judgment due to sin.

Conciliation and propitiation are decidedly distinct truths. Propitiation has to do with *sins*; conciliation with *offenses*. The former provides a shelter from Divine indignation; the latter establishes peace.

Propitiation was secured to Israel by the blood sprinkled on the propitiatory shelter (King James Version, "Mercy Seat"). Yet God was *not* conciliated to them or any other nation. And in the future, when the present Conciliation withdraws and Israel is once more before Him, then again there will be a propitiatory shelter—not for Israel alone, but also for the other nations (1 John 2:2).

#### MAN'S ANTAGONISTIC ATTITUDE

Man's attitude toward God has not changed, even in the face of all His favor. Because a few accept the Conciliation, we may not conclude that mankind has changed its front. Even when God was man's enemy, His favor flowed to a few, especially in Israel. But the

few were not the clue to His main attitude towards mankind in general.

So we may conclude that, so far as the mass of mankind is concerned, no apparent change has been effected. They have not softened toward God. The cross means nothing to their stubborn hearts and darkened minds.

But, on the other hand, when we look above, it is as though the sun rose for the very first time after the darkness of Golgotha when God conciliated the world to Himself.

#### THE GOD OF OLD

God has withdrawn Himself from mankind, lest He should break forth on them when His indignation was kindled but a little. At Sinai's mount, in spite of all their cleanliness and holy fear and awe, He bade them stand afar, lest fire from His presence devour them. But, at that time, mankind had not yet reached the full maturity of enmity. Even as the Canaanites were not destroyed until the cup of their iniquity was overfull, so God waits until man's cup should overflow, before His hand takes up the sword of vengeance.

#### MAN'S TREATMENT OF GOD'S SON

When the full time came God sent His Son (Gal. 4:4). The fate of all depended upon their treatment of His Beloved One. God might overlook the wrong his servants had endured, and all the hatred men had shown to them, for they but imperfectly displayed His heart. But now One came Whose physical frame veiled a perfect likeness of the Deity; One by Whom the Father could display to men the very essence of His gracious Self. Would He not melt their stubborn hearts and win them by His love?

O, how His grace stirred all the bitter, hateful depths of enmity and made them boil with impious rage! They could not rest until they had dragged Him to the cross; till they had exhausted all their wrath upon His head.

Concentrated here we see the enmity of man toward God. His Son, the unceasing and delightful source of His purest joy, the effulgence of His glory; His Son is rejected, despised, cast out and crucified!

“CHRIST” AND “THE SON”

The *Son* of God, though the same Person as Christ, presents Him in a distinct, exalted light.

Christ is the Man Who can. He is the power of God, His strong right arm. His anointing fits Him to *do* things.

The Son of God speaks not so much of God's Executive, but rather, of His Image. What God *is* shines forth in the Son. Dwelling in the bosom of the Father, He unfolds His Father's affections toward His creatures.

Let us distinguish between the various glories of our Lord, or we shall lose very much indeed. We have been considering the work of Christ; His might when we were helpless; His death when we were sinners, delivering us not only from the natural effects of sin, but also from God's indignation on account of it. We are safe because His work has an abiding value, which is figured by the blood.

And this has proved God's love to us. Justification is the portal by which we may enter into an acquaintance with God Himself through His Son.

ESTRANGEMENT

As the Son of God, His death does not furnish either strength or righteousness, but supplies the long lost love link which was left behind in the gloomy retreat from Eden. Adam's "fall" has many aspects, but its direst phase was the *estrangement* made between God and His creatures, so that He withdrew from his companionship and expelled Adam from the garden and all the delights His love had planted there.

To provide a "shelter" for Adam and his wife, God bathes His sword in an innocent victim's blood and thus

makes tunics of skin (Gen. 3:21). That sword cannot reconcile; it may only keep the way of the tree of the living until it finds a sheath in the bosom of God's Son.

THE "WAY" IS OPEN

But that way is now open. It leads, not merely to a paradise, as Eden was, with God Himself as man's Companion, but into the heights where the ascended God was first offended and where the light of His loving favor shines as the sun, in His shadowless strength.

By all means let us exult in our justification through the death of Christ and the security sealed by His blood. But this is only the means to a glorious end. If we stop here we fail to reach God's purpose in it all.

We were conciliated to God through the death of His Son. This speaks, not of our weakness, nor our sins, nor anything of ourselves. It tells us of God's side in that wondrous work, which was wrought on the cross.

Men hated Him, they hated Him, with all their hearts they hated Him. And that which maddened them the most was that "He makes himself son of God." (John 19:7). "Away! Away! Crucify him!" they screamed.

Surely now is man's iniquity full blown and now shall Vengeance bathe its sword in blood. Deep darkness comes, but darkness turns to light again, and all seems as before. What has God done? Can He pass by an outrage such as this, and done upon His Son? The light of Nature, with sealed lips, is dumb; but from the lips of Him Who is the Light, we learn that, with the darkness, judgment, too, has passed away.

"Eloi! Eloi! Lema sabachthani?" "My God! My God! Why didst *Thou* forsake Me?"

Here would we take our shoes from off our feet and with bowed heads repeat His words until our dull hearts are filled to fullness with His praise. Why did God forsake *Him* and leave His *enemies* unharmed? Why did darkness cover Him and light return to them? Why

should His sword awake against His Holy One and never touch the murderous crew? And why should the arrows of God's quiver reach His heart and none be left for those who nailed Him there? And more than all, why should He send His murderers a message of forgiveness and an embassy of peace? And why should He be conciliated to those whose rich deserts were wrath?

Such love as this is far too bright for mortal gaze. But, though the sun's beams are blinding bright so that we cannot gaze upon its glory, we may enjoy its light and life, and bask in its bounteous blessings.

We know that, not only did God forbear dealing with man's offenses then, but, most blessed to relate, He, by that death, has conciliated the world to Himself.

#### SAFE IN THE SON

All the virtue of *Christ's* death abides in the *blood*. Not so with the death of the *Son*. We should not speak of blood in relation to the spiritual separation from God which constituted the death of the Son. No nails, nor spears, could touch the life of the Son of God. He gave the spirit up Himself (John 19:30). This is what His Father had charged Him to do. And so, in place of the blood to plead the value of that death, the Son Himself, alive forevermore, beyond Death's reach, is the assurance of the love-life to which it is the introduction. He is the living love-link which binds us with bonds unbreakable to the Father's heart.

Such was the affection shown us when we were still enemies. But now that His love has subdued our stubborn hearts, we may enter into settled and enduring peace. How little need we fear for future welfare! If such rich favor is dealt out to *enemies*, what shall be the portion of His *friends*!

Suppose the confederate powers of darkness, the realms of Satan and the lesser dignitaries of His heavenly hosts, suppose the armaments of the Occident and the

Orient, suppose that the very demons, too, were arrayed against the feeblest child that nestles in His bosom? Could they touch a single hair of His beloved's head?

#### GLORIOUS DISTINCTIONS

O that we may grasp these precious, these glorious distinctions. We will not exult a whit less in the dying of Christ for sinners, gracing them with strength and righteousness when we discover that the death of God's Son introduces us to the nearer and dearer sphere of God's affections, reconciling God's enemies to Himself. Do we rob Christ's blood of aught of its abiding value when we point beyond it to the living Son at God's right hand? The blood spells safety; but the life illumines love. There has not been enough stress laid upon Christ's blood—but alas! the life of the Son has almost been forgotten and with it the truth of which it speaks.

Let us preach Christ crucified for sinners, but let us not forget to implore God's enemies in view of the death of His Son! Let us set forth God's righteousness which is secured for us by Christ's death, but let us not ignore the Conciliation which flows from the death of His Beloved.

Let us point to the blood and banish every fear! But let us also disclose the living, loving Son, whose *life* is pledged to all who know the *peace* His death provides.

Christ for sinners; God's Son for enemies! Christ for righteousness; God's Son for reconciliation! The blood of Christ for safety; the life of God's Son for love! Such are God's glorious distinctions.

#### THE KINGDOM OF THE SON

There is a remarkable parallel between the relation which the Kingdom of the Son of God sustains to the Kingdom of Christ and the truth here set forth. The throne of the Son is for the eon of the eon (singular twice) (Heb. 1:8). That is, it not only follows the reign of Christ in point of time, but flows from it as a moral

consequence. The Kingdom of Christ will bring in righteousness for a thousand years, but the throne of the Son will assure the reconciliation of a thousand generations.

#### EXULT IN GOD

Let us charge our hearts again and say: "There is peace. God Himself has made peace. He did it through the death of His Son." Before that death God put barriers between Himself and mankind. Yes, He once shut all the nations, except Israel, from His presence altogether. But now every barrier has been removed. Conciliation may be heralded and all may receive it.

We can easily exult at the bright prospect before us. And grace can constrain us to exult even now, in the afflictions of the present hour. But let us get beyond both pain and expectation and find in God, the Reconciler, our highest exultation. His was the heart that purposed all; His the love that labored. Through His beloved Son we have learned to know Him.

What a God is our God! He has marvelously magnified Himself. His ways are not our ways, nor His thoughts our thoughts. He is established forever, and we may be established by a realization of His favor.

#### THE RECONCILIATION ESTABLISHES

Our appeal is to those who have been justified. Multitudes have known their sins put away; some have understood that they are justified, but how few have accepted the Conciliation! How few are *certain* of God's attitude toward them! If they sin, they fancy He wears a frown; if they are cold, He seems indifferent. Their thoughts are centered in themselves and they judge Him by their own feelings.

They are not *established!*

To find anything in ourselves on which to rest would defeat the one great purpose of evil and the deliverance of which sin is but a necessary forerunner.

In God, and in Him alone, can mortal man find rest and satisfaction and delight. The grace by which we may be established is the Reconciliation which He has wrought.

#### CORRECTLY CUTTING THE WORD OF TRUTH

The widespread hunger for a better and more constant experience has given rise to a variety of systems of belief, all purporting to be founded on the "Bible." And so they are. Some have seized upon those passages which describe Israel's condition in the "regeneration" when they actually will not sin, and "appropriated" these to themselves. And with commendable enthusiasm they refuse to acknowledge the undoubted facts of their experience, but pit against them a so-called "faith." But they do not "correctly cut," or partition the Word of truth (2 Tim. 2:15), applying, to themselves, God's words given exclusively to Israel and coloring other passages with this error.

Then comes the inevitable introspection. They watch their own actions and the motions of their own hearts. The discovery is made that all is not as perfect as it might be. This will usually be followed by the toning down of God's thoughts as to sin. The result is the lowering of God's holiness, and the exaltation of a supposed human sinlessness, leading to a boast in themselves, but not in God.

#### RECEIVE THE CONCILIATION

Had we nothing better to offer, it would be cruel to speak thus. But we *have*! It is not merely "in the Bible," but it is God's Word suited to His present purpose and intended by Him to establish those who have been justified by faith, during this present administration of grace.

It is quite possible, nay, it seems well nigh universal nowadays, to have a sense of "salvation" and miss the enjoyment of justification; and it is quite possible that

justification by faith is held, and the Conciliation is not received. Sins are indeed put away and destiny settled by faith in the blood, but there is a great lack of that settled peace which can come only by getting a grasp of God's present attitude of grace.

Immediately following the conclusion of the argument on faith-righteousness in the first four chapters of the Roman epistle, comes an exhortation to all *who have been justified* to enter into "peace." "We may be having peace toward God." So too, immediately after a sinner is justified it behooves him to consider and accept the Conciliation.

#### JUSTIFICATION RESTORED

The Reformation restored, in a measure, the truth of justification by faith. So powerfully did this mighty doctrine grip Martin Luther, that he repudiated whatever *seemed* to contradict it, even in the Scriptures. He did not "rightly divide" the Word of truth (2 Tim. 2:15). But he did see the truth of justification by faith clearly enough to acknowledge James' conflict with it. Being unable to account for this, he was inclined to set James' epistle aside, calling it "an epistle of straw."

But the epistle written by James, like all of the divine Record, is perfect in its place. A Canadian dime circulates freely in Canada; in the United States its very likeness to a ten-cent piece demands that it be sent to its proper place, where it can pass for its face value. Let us not undervalue these divine Records, but let us not seek to pass them in a foreign sphere.

James' epistle, out of its place, can only confuse and do harm. It was never intended for the nations, but for the twelve tribes of Israel in their national, physical standing, with special reference to the opening of the day of the Lord in the millenium (Jas. 1:1).

At the Reformation, only the first four chapters of Romans were recovered. Next in order was the Conciliation in the fifth chapter, through which alone we can

intelligently enter the sixth, the seventh and the eighth chapters, with their marvelous unfoldings.

THE RECONCILIATION REVEALS GOD'S LOVE

Justification has to do with sin, wrongdoing or mistakes. Its happiest scenes are laid in the court room where the great Justifier justifies those who are of the faith of Jesus (Rom. 3:26).

However, the Reconciliation reaches far deeper. Love, not justice, is its theme. This could not be entertained until the question of righteousness had been set at rest.

As we have seen, Adam's act was not only wrong and an express breach of God's command: It was an *offense*. It reflected upon God's care and affection for His creatures. It as much as said that He was withholding some good things, lest they become His rivals.

Nor has the heart of humanity been softened by exile from the garden of Eden. Even religion, though of God's devising, but kindles this enmity into fiercer flame. Which of the prophets were not maltreated even by the people God called His own? The touchstone is the Son. His neighbors in Nazareth would have hurled Him over the brow of the mountain on which their city had been built (Luke 4:29). Time after time the rulers would have killed Him had they dared. And, though they could not take His life, He laid it down Himself when God bade Him do it.

Men are not the enemies of religion. They would sacrifice everything to the "god of this eon." (2 Cor. 4:4). But they are the enemies of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

For such it was He gave His Son. Mark well the appellation. Not Christ, but *His Son*. Christ can cope with sin; He will tread God's enemies beneath His feet in the day of God's indignation. But in this deeper realm of the affections, God must part with His own beloved Son, even for His bitterest enemies.

THIS IS THE ROCK ON WHICH THE CONCILIATION RESTS.

**THE CONCILIATION OF THE WORLD**  
(ROMANS 5:12-21)

Therefore, even as through one man sin entered into the world, and through sin death, and thus death passed through into all mankind, on which all sinned—for until law sin was in the world, yet sin is not being taken into account when there is no law, nevertheless death reigns from Adam unto Moses, over those also who do not sin in the likeness of the transgression of Adam, who is a type of Him Who is about to be.

But not as the offense, thus also the grace. For if, by the offense of the one, the many died, much rather the grace of God and the gratuity in grace, which is of the One Man, Jesus Christ, to the many superabounds.

And not as through one act of sinning, is the gratuity. For, indeed, the judgment is out of one into condemnation, yet the grace is out of many offenses into a just award. For if, by the offense of the one, death reigns through the one, much rather, those obtaining the superabundance of grace and the gratuity of righteousness shall be reigning in life through the One, Jesus Christ.

Consequently, then, as it was through one offense for all mankind for condemnation, thus also it is through one just award for all mankind for life's justifying. For even as, through the disobedience of the one man, the many were constituted sinners, thus also, through the obedience of the One, the many shall be constituted just.

Yet law came in by the way, that the offense should be increasing. Yet where sin increases, grace super-exceeds, that, even as Sin reigns in death, thus Grace also should be reigning through righteousness, for life eonian, through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

## THE CONCILIATION OF THE WORLD

THE ONLY, AND WISE GOD—Such is the ascription that ascends from the heart of the apostle Paul in his post-script found at the end of the epistle to the Romans. His fervent desire that they should be established is transformed into praise for Him Who alone has the power to do so. “Now to Him Who is able to establish you in accord with my evangel, and the heralding of Christ Jesus in accord with the revelation of a secret hushed in times eonian, yet manifested now through prophetic scriptures besides, according to the injunction of the eonian God being made known to all nations for faith-obedience—to the only, and wise God, through Christ Jesus, be glory for the eons of the eons. Amen!” (Rom. 16:25-27).

To this same God, Who has the monopoly on all wisdom and Who alone has the ability to establish His saints in the truth—to Him we appeal. We also desire, with the apostle, that the saints may be established, grounded, settled, unmovable amidst the storm which seems about to break.

But how is it to be done? Innumerable remedies have already been proposed, and we dare not add another to the list. So we will rely upon *God's Word*. *There* is light and power and blessing, and *there alone*. And so we proceed, with limitless confidence in the means which God Himself has proposed to effect His purpose. “My evangel” and “the heralding of Christ Jesus in accord with the revelation of a secret”—These are the

two distinct and separate supports which can uphold the believer in every circumstance and at all times.

#### PAUL'S DISTINCTIVE MESSAGE

The latter only—"the heralding of Christ Jesus in accord with the revelation of a secret"—is the subject of our present meditation. The former, which the apostle calls "my evangel," in contrast to the ministry of the other apostles, was no secret. This is clearly shown in the opening lines of his epistle to the Romans. "Paul, a slave of Christ Jesus, a called apostle, *severed* for the evangel of God (which He promises before through His prophets in the holy scriptures), concerning His Son ... Jesus Christ, our Lord ..." (Rom. 1:1-4).

Paul was *not* sent out in *fellowship* with the rest of the apostles. In the historical record in the book of Acts we read that the holy spirit *severed* Paul and Barnabas for a special and distinct work (Acts 13:1, 2). Here, once more, in writing to the Romans, he reminds them of his severance. His letter to the Galatians is very emphatic on this point. "But, on the contrary, perceiving that I (Paul) have been entrusted with the evangel of the *Uncircumcision*, according as Peter of the *Circumcision* (for He Who operates in Peter for the apostleship of the *Circumcision* operates in me also for the nations), and, knowing the grace which is being given to me, James and Cephas and John, who are supposed to be pillars, give to me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, that we, indeed, are to be for the nations, yet they for the circumcision ..." (Gal. 2:7-9).

#### THE CALL OF SAUL-PAUL

Even the call of Saul of Tarsus, the enemy of God who later brought the message of conciliation, provides a clear indication of his distinctive place. We remember that entrance into the kingdom was conditioned upon repentance and baptism (Acts 2:38). Only so could

anyone hope to escape the fiery judgments which are to clear the scene in the day of the Lord. How striking then is the call of Saul, the most menacing *persecutor* of those who had believed in Jesus. As the "foremost of sinners" he could have no place in the glorious "kingdom of the heavens," for by the terms of Peter's discourse, Saul's only portion could be extermination from among the people (Acts 3:23). Yet instead of this Saul is shown divine favor beyond the highest hopes of even the devout in Israel. His call serves as a *pattern*, not of those who believed before him, but of those who are "about to be believing." (1 Tim. 1:13-16). It introduces a new principle in God's dealings. God, in the past, had shown mercy and compassion and even grace. But such grace as was shown this enemy of God deserves a distinct and unique place. It is the foundation of the "gospel of God." (Rom. 1:1).

This evangel must be kept distinct from the heralding of the kingdom by the twelve apostles. Neither repentance nor lawkeeping nor ceremonials are attached to it. Since it is the evangel of the *grace* of God, it could not be withheld from the other nations.

#### THE SPHERE OF THE EVANGEL OF GOD

Paul was severed for the evangel of God . . . concerning His Son (Rom. 1:1-3). While the twelve apostles heralded the Christ as the Son of David (Acts 2:30), Paul proclaimed Him as the Son of God. Paul unveils the Son (Gal. 1:16).

But to herald Him as the Son of God demanded a change, both in the character of the message and its extent. God is the Subjector or Placer of *all* the nations, so He must not be confined to Israel alone (Rom. 3:29). The kingdom of the Son (Col. 1:14) is a *spiritual* dominion stretching far beyond the bounds of the land of Israel as given to the Son of David. So the evangel of *God* goes out to *all* the nations.

## 60 The Kingdom Evangel Within the Land

The doctrine connected with this ministry is fully set forth in the first four chapters of the epistle to the Romans. Abraham is the great figure brought forward for consideration. Justification by faith, through grace, apart from law or works of any kind—such is the burden of Paul's message.

It was a spiritual counterpart, comparable, in a sense, to that ministry which will be extended to the nations in the day of the Lord, as witnessed by John's Account and his epistles. "To the Jew first" will be the order of that day with the nations occupying a secondary place (Rom. 1:16).

### THE KINGDOM EVANGEL

Yet during the initial stage of Paul's personal heralding of his evangel, the terrestrial kingdom was still being maintained to Israel by the apostles of our Lord.

But Israel became "a wayward generation... sons with no faithfulness in them." (Deut. 32:20). The cross had revealed the alienation of their hearts. Still God lingered over them. The sin against the Son of Mankind is forgiven. The kingdom is once more heralded by Peter and the eleven. "Repent, then," said he, "and turn about for the erasure of your sins, so that the seasons of refreshing should be coming from the face of the Lord, and He should dispatch the One fixed upon before for you, Christ Jesus, Whom heaven must indeed receive until the times of the restoration of all which God speaks through the mouth of His holy prophets who are from the eon." (Acts 3:19-21).

The heralding was confirmed by miracles and signs, done by the power of the holy spirit. But the representatives of the nation of Israel, in council assembled, both once and again opposed the testimony of the spirit. Yet, with much patience, God lingers until not only Jerusalem, but all of Judea and Samaria, and as far as the limits of the land, have heard the evangel of the kingdom.

## THE DISPERSED OF ISRAEL HEAR

But the dispersed of Israel, among the nations, were not to be judged for the failure of those in the land. Paul himself, in his journeys among the nations, always spoke to the Jews first. This course nearly cost him his life on several occasions. Now that he has completed the evangel of the Christ from Jerusalem even as far as Illyricum (Rom. 15:19), one fact is evident: The Jews among the nations are no more willing to receive their Messiah than their rulers in Jerusalem. Thus all of Israel, both in and out of the land, have been given the opportunity to repent.

## THE CALLOUSNESS OF ISRAEL

With this fact in view Paul writes to the Romans regarding Israel's apostasy, saying, "as it is written, God gives them a spirit of stupor, eyes not to be observing, and ears not to be hearing, till this very day." (Rom. 11:8). And again, "For I am not willing for you to be ignorant of this secret, brethren, lest you may be passing for prudent among yourselves, that callousness, in part, on Israel has come, until the complement of the nations may be entering." (Rom. 11:25, 26).

## GRACE TO THE NATIONS

Now the circumstances and the condition of affairs are changed. Israel is no longer a factor for the time being. Now the way is cleared for the Conciliation, the *secret* of the evangel, to be revealed.

The kingdom on earth is concerned with the throne of *David*. The evangel of God reverts still further to the faith of *Abraham*. But the grace we are considering in the fifth chapter of Romans, leads our thoughts back even further and deals with *Adam* and his one offense. And though not the theme of our present meditation, the Secret Administration (Eph. 3:9) antedates all earthly rule and faith and sin and concerns us with

*Christ* Himself, in Whom we were chosen before the disruption\* of the world (Eph. 1:4).

In harmony with this, the present Secret Administration was concealed from the eons in God (Eph. 3:9), while the Conciliation was shadowed forth from the type we are about to consider, yet any expression of it was "hushed" in times eonian (Romans 16:25, 26). Now, at last, the type, and its dark silhouette, is unfolded. The type and its shadow need to be clearly in view before we can consider their resemblances and contrasts.

The key to the whole matter lies in the word *one* which is repeated a dozen times in this short passage (Rom. 5:12-19). All depends upon *one* act of *one* man. And the emphasis is laid upon that lamentable aspect of sin which we call an *offense*. It was this which led to the estrangement between Adam and his Subjector.

#### FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD

The loveliest of Eden's lovely scenes was not the beautiful garden with its pleasant trees, nor the living creatures in meek subjection to Adam's gentle rule, nor even in the loving companionship of the helper given to Adam, as his complement. In that primeval innocence these were all perfect in their way and very delightful to behold. But the most engaging vision, and the very climax of them all, was when Ieue Alueim came, in the windy part of the day, to enjoy the companionship of the human pair whom He had created.

What greater honor, what greater joy, could Adam crave than to hear His voice, to be admitted to intimacy with His thoughts, to be the companion of his Maker? He it was Who had made all in that fair scene and

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\*disruption of the world. The Authorized Version translates this term "foundation." But this is required for another Greek word. Hence this term may refer to the great cataclysm mentioned in Genesis 1:2 when the earth *became* a chaos and vacant.

provided the goodly fruits for Adam's delectation. Nor did God leave him alone in it, but watched over him to anticipate his every need. When the trees and the creatures were found inadequate to fill a lack in Adam's heart, He made the woman to satisfy his affection. In all this God showed His love for Adam.

#### SATAN'S INSINUATION—ADAM'S SIN

But in an evil hour, the serpent insinuated that Ieue was not really desirous of their good, but jealous lest they become as He, knowing good and evil. The fiery arrow was not aimed at God's power or His wisdom alone. It was aimed at His affections, at His very heart. The woman hearkened to the insinuation, and the man hearkened to the woman—thus was Ieue's loving kindness trampled underfoot.

Adam's act has various aspects. It questioned the wisdom of God and destroyed His works. It questioned His justice and assailed His character. It questioned His love and wounded His affections. It refused the authority of God.

It was a *sin*; it was a *transgression*; it was an *offense*; it was *disobedience*.

As a sin it threw the grand machinery of the universe out of gear, so that it grinds itself to pieces. And, with the ruin, it brings the groan and travail under which creation labors still, and turns all to corruption. It wrecks God's beauteous cosmogony into fuel for the universal conflagration (2 Pet. 3:12).

As a transgression it brought down the curse of a righteous Subjector.

But, worse than sin, and sorer than transgression, was the offense which ached God's heart, the estrangement between Himself and the creature upon whom His affection had been so freely lavished.

Yet the aspect of disobedience is the most comprehensive of all, for it was a revolt against loving, as well

as righteous authority. Assuming independence, the subject denies the Subjector. In disobedience we see sin linked to transgression, offering offense to God. It denied both the righteousness and the love of God.

#### IEUE'S PROVISION

For Adam's sin and for his transgression Ieue Alueim provided a covering. The first blood earth's startled soil ever drank was shed in that primeval paradise. And Ieue Himself slew an inoffensive beast to provide a covering for the guilty pair (Gen. 3:21). Fit picture of the blood of His holy Lamb, which does not merely cover sin and transgression, but puts it quite away!

#### THE BREACH REMAINS

This much was done for Adam. But the breach was not healed. Confidence was not restored. Adam was still estranged. To prevent the mischief from taking irradicable root, Adam was driven from the garden. Cherubim were stationed at the eastern side and a flaming sword, turning itself to keep the way of the tree of the living (Gen. 3:24).

Does *this* look like reconciliation? By no means! And in Adam's descendants, except a favored few, the breach became wider and wider, until they were destroyed by the flood. Noah and his family alone came through that judgment. But his descendants, in their turn, run counter to God's thoughts and are scattered far and wide. Abraham and the patriarchs find favor with Ieue, and in them He chooses a nation for Himself. But so far from this being a reconciliation, the partiality shown to one nation only widened the breach between God and the rest of mankind. And though He did dwell with Israel, it was behind thick curtains, with access limited and dangerous. His very dwelling, which He had them make for Him, was full of proofs that He was a distant Deity. But their sins and transgressions became unbear-

able, so the Glory leaves the temple tenantless. The "God of the heavens" now becomes His name.

#### GOD SENDS HIS SON TO ISRAEL

Yet once more God approaches man, this time in His only Son. However, He is not sent to all mankind but to Israel's seed, to whom the promises were made. This shows that the other nations were still estranged. And it is not long before it is clear to all that Israel, also, is a stranger to Ieue, the God she boasts of as her own special Deity.

#### MAN CRUCIFIES THE CHRIST

And then comes the crowning proof of man's utter alienation and bitter enmity towards God and all that savors of Himself. His own beloved Son, Whom He deems worthy of the highest place this universe affords, they deny the right to live: They gibbet Him, in Roman style, upon a stake, amidst condemned criminals.

That *something* was then done to stem the tide of righteous wrath against Adam's guilty race seems manifest, otherwise the judgment day might have been dismissed, lest it delay their instant doom.

But for a time it only operates to give the guilty nation one more opportunity to refuse His favor. This they do and the estrangement seems complete. The only nation with whom He shared His thoughts has turned against Him!

The law God gave to Israel only magnified their sin. It could not make them just. Until the law came, sin was done in darkness. The law's searching rays laid open to view the hideous corruption of men's hearts. Sin, spurred on by the law, produced in man all manner of sin (Rom. 7:8).

#### SIN SWAYED EVEN BEFORE LAW'S ADVENT

But prior to Moses, Adam's posterity was not given commandments, hence could not break His law. They

could not be called "transgressors." None the less, Sin swayed over their hearts, urging them to do those things which were displeasing to their Subjector. Enoch testified to their ungodliness and warned of the coming judgment about to overtake those who had irreverently spoken against Him (Jude 1:15). In God's absence they did things they would not have dared to do had He been present with them.

Dark indeed was this period, extending to Moses' day, marked by the judgment of the flood, the dispersion of Babel, the judgments of Egypt. Can such a dismal scene mirror the glorious Conciliation? Yes. So it does! And the more we ponder it, the more we marvel at the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of our God, Who can clothe such dark outlines with such effulgent glory.

#### THE COMPARISON MADE

Let us meditate for a time upon the type as it is developed in this chapter. Even a fleeting glance will show that sin's reach was universal; every human being was affected by it. Is the Conciliation universal also? As the best of our English versions mar the exquisite poise and balance of this comparison as it stands in the inspired original, we will call to our aid a concordant translation, arranging the lines so as to clearly display the corresponding features.

#### ADAM'S ACT—CHRIST'S ACT (Rom. 5:18)

consequently, then,

as it was

through one offense

for all mankind

for condemnation,

thus also it is

through one just award

for all mankind

for life's justifying.

Sin fixes its fangs firmly on every one of Adam's sons. There is no escape for anyone. Sin is not evil theoretical, but actual and practical. It is not presented as a matter of choice. It is powerful and sovereign. The

grand proof of this is death. Death entered through sin and claims every single son of Adam. These universal results have come through a single offense.

#### LIFE'S JUSTIFYING

For the present, at least, the *acceptance* of the Conciliation is not universal. But Adam's offense did not merely make it *possible* for men to sin and merit condemnation, it rather made it *impossible* for them to do otherwise. And we dare not refuse to believe that the work of Christ is "THUS ALSO." So that it is beyond denial that Christ's one righteous act is the basis upon which all humanity will yet be freed from every effect of Adam's offense. Truly, God locks all up together in stubbornness, that He should be merciful to *all* (Rom. 11:32). And we may well ask, upon what other grounds could God justify the inclusion of all under sin? In order that He may condemn them? Never! But in order that He might create conditions in which He can reveal His love to them.

It is possible to conceive of the offense as the result of several acts of disobedience. It is possible to conceive of its taking effect in Adam's posterity only upon their repetition of a like offense. But these suppositions are not true. On the one hand it was a *single* act. On the other it had a *universal* effect. *Thus also* with the work of Christ on the cross! It was a single act, not His life-long *service*, but His *death*. And its effect is not based upon a repetition of a like act by each participant, but is as universal as in the type. Just as Adam's one offense affected all mankind so all will share in the gracious benefits which Christ's death provides. The difficulties and objections to this truth will be considered later, when dealing with the reconciliation of the universe.

It seems passing strange that men would wish to discount the work of Christ and stop His conquest before the citadel of sin. But it is still more distressing to find

them branding as traitors to the Word of truth those who believe God's record concerning the perfection and omnipotence of that work.

The teachings of interminable sin, of estrangement irreconcilable between God and man, of endless torment, of a vindictive God—all these, shuddering, flee before these verities like foul vapors before the ascending sun.

*Christ's work has no limits, either in power or extent!* It restores far more than sin has taken away! It vitally affects all humans who were mortally affected by Adam's sin.

ADAM AND CHRIST (Rom. 5:19)

For even as,	thus also,
through the disobedience	through the obedience
of the one man,	of the One,
the many	the many
were constituted	shall be constituted
sinner,	just.

This statement is the explanation of the previous one, and accordingly, it is introduced by the logical conjunction, *for*. Hitherto the emphasis has been upon the *single act* of Adam and the resulting condemnation; and on the *single act* of Christ and the resulting justification of life as these affect all mankind. Now the contrast is not between two *acts*, but between two single *human beings*, Adam and Christ. One constitutes many sinners, and the Other constitutes many just.

"THE MANY"

The Greek, *hoi polloi*, is literally "the many." To English ears this suggests the greater part, or the majority. But that this is not the thought conveyed by the phrase in the Greek is evident from other occurrences. It is used of the body (Rom. 12:5) and the bread (1 Cor. 10:17). It is not a *majority* of the members which make up the body, but *all* the members. Yet it is "*the*

*many*" members which make up the *one* body. The contrast is not between *all* the members and *many*, but between "*the many*" and "*one*." Just so in the fifth chapter of Romans. The contrast is not with the "all mankind" of the previous verse. Just as the *many* members means *all* the members, which make up the one body, so here "*the many*" includes all of those mentioned in the previous verse. The many are constituted sinners through the disobedience of the one man. The many will be constituted just through the obedience of the One, Christ Jesus. The disobedience of the one not only constituted him a sinner, but it included many others. Just so the obedience of One constitutes, not only Him, but many others just.

#### HOW MANY?

We can easily test this conclusion. Adam's disobedience constituted "the many" sinners. How many? Is there any human being (except Jesus Christ) who is not included in "the many"? Are not *all* constituted sinners? Is not this the clear testimony of the Scriptures? "Not one is just—not even one." (Ecc. 7:20, Rom. 3:10). The contrast, then, is between one and many.

One man was the cause of all our woe: and One Man is the means of all our weal. A *single act* of disobedience on Adam's part constituted many sinners. A *single act* of obedience on the part of Christ will yet constitute many just. Through Adam, sin reaches all. Through Christ, righteousness will yet reach all.

#### THE DESTINY OF MANKIND IS ASSURED

The destiny of mankind does not depend upon the individual conduct of each one. *All* are sinners. *All* deserve to be sentenced. *None* deserve to be justified. And all are absolutely helpless. All who acknowledge descent from Adam must acknowledge also, that through his disobedience, they are sinners. Stubborn facts crowd

in on every side to bear witness that cannot be gainsaid—sorrow, sickness, death—and a heart that cannot cease from sin.

But what of that?

If Adam alone is to blame for this, then Christ alone must be acclaimed for the future perfection. Just so. What encouragement there is in this!

Thus, while, in its universal aspect, the antitype is *just as* the type, and the work of Christ co-extensive with the ruin wrought by Adam, in its vigor and virtue the reconciliation overwhelms the estrangement, producing a precious burden of fruit for all the toil and travail attending the offense. Here is not *restoration* merely, with no addition to the seed that was sown, but *reconciliation*—a hundredfold harvest.

#### THE ACCEPTANCE OF THE CONCILIATION

In its universal application, type and antitype balanced perfectly. We dealt with the reconciliation itself as the effect of the death of God's *Son*. It is as far-reaching as Adam's offense. We will now deal with the *acceptance* of this favor on the part of humanity, and consider only those who *receive* the Conciliation. The effect of such an acceptance is not limited to the weak outlines of the type. Let us consider the points in which it excels.

#### SUPERABOUNDING GRACE (Rom. 5:15)

But not as the offense,	_____	thus also the grace.
For if, by the offense of the one, the many died,		much rather the grace of God and the gratuity in grace, which is of the One man, Jesus Christ, to the many superabounds.

Let us suppose for a moment that the favor shown corresponds exactly to the type. Then it would just recover from the effects of the offense, and we would have just what Adam had in innocence, with the tree of the knowledge of good and evil untasted, its fruit prohibited and progress impossible. Righteousness we would not have, for Adam stood under a prohibitory law; holiness we could not appreciate, for it cannot shine except in the darkness of sin. And all the precious fruit of the love of God, which provided for our justification at the cost of the blood of Christ—all these would be lost.

But no! We have infinitely more than mere recovery from the effects of the one offense. We are not under a precept as was Adam, liable to transgress at the first assault of the Adversary. Instead we are justified apart from our own acts altogether. Whatever we have done or may do does not affect our justification, for it is as immutable as the One Who gave it to us. In fact, it is His own righteousness (Rom. 3:22, Phil. 3:9). Indict those whom God has justified and the righteousness of God Himself is called into question.

#### WE KNOW HIM!

But there are minor chords in this grand harmony. Better than His gifts is the knowledge that we have *Him*. We know God as Adam never could, even if he had communed with Him in innocence through all the days since then. God's offended heart demanded death, but now that He is conciliated, His favor flows in such redundant measure that it takes us infinitely beyond whatever we may have lost through Adam's one offense.

There is another count in which the gift far transcends the sin.

ONE SIN = CONDEMNATION—MANY OFFENSES = JUST AWARD  
(Rom. 5:16)

And not as through  
one act of sinning,

is the gratuity.

For, indeed,	yet
the judgment	the grace
is out of one	is out of many offenses
into condemnation,	into a just award.

A single offense on Adam's part sufficed to bring in the sentence of condemnation. God did not wait to find the average tenor of his life, or whether he would repeat the offense. A single act—then judgment has its session. God Himself is Judge, the guilty man confesses his sin and the sentence is pronounced against him (Gen. 3: 8-19).

If such summary justice was served out for a single sin, what must the multitude of man's flagrant offenses call for? Is the gift of righteousness sufficient to recover from only one offense, and thus fulfill the type? Far be the thought! That would leave us in as bad a case as ever, for we all offend in many things. The favor shown to us cares nothing for the number of offenses. Nay, grace rather glories in their multitude and provides a verdict of "not guilty" for everyone whose cause it pleads (Rom. 5:20). Paul, the *foremost* of sinners, was granted the high privilege of becoming the greatest exponent and chief example of God's grace (1 Tim. 1:14-16).

And still another consideration remains, in which the favor shown throws the type completely in the shade.

#### DEATH AND LIFE (Rom. 5:17)

For if,	much rather,
by the offense of the one,	those obtaining the superabundance of grace and the gratuity of righteousness,
death	in life
reigns	shall be reigning
through the one,	through the One,
[Adam]	Jesus Christ.

Death entered through the gates left open by Sin, and usurped God's throne.

## DYING MAN

It was not death in the sense that it is known among men. That could never *reign*. But, instead of the mild acquiescence to his Subjector which Adam had shown before his offense, men now refused to obey Him altogether. Their conduct, instead of being based upon His presence, in fear of His displeasure, was founded upon His absence, taking advantage of the fact that He did not come upon the scene of each offense and judge it on the spot, as He had done in Adam's case, but set a future day in which all would be judged at once. Thus they were ruled by the fact that He was not present to interfere, and gave full swing to the unbridled desires of their own hearts. Death thus usurped the sceptre God alone should hold.

## REIGNING IN LIFE

If we could set this right, then what would we have? Death must be dethroned. God must be enthroned. That would satisfy the type. But we have more than this by far. They were merely Death's *subjects*. But we are not only *subjects* of our God, but are the *objects* of His unstinted favor, the recipients of His best gifts, and honored with a place in His dominions far above the rank of subjects. *We are called upon to reign* (Rom. 5:17).

Such are the particulars in which the estrangement falls short as a type of the Conciliation. The favor shown infinitely surpasses the offense; the deliverance is not merely from *one sin*, but from *many offenses*. It does not turn us back to innocence, but grants us righteousness. The reign of Death is but a dim counterpart of the glorious reign of those who accept His transcendent grace.

## TYPE AND ANTITYPE

To sum up: If type and antitype balanced perfectly, the truth would be thus:

**Many die = Many live**

**One sin into condemnation = Justification from one sin**

**Death reigns = Life reigns**

But such is not the case. The type falls far short of figuring the full truth. This may be shown thus:

**Many die = God's grace and gratuity  
superabound to many**

**One sin into condemnation = Many offenses into a just  
award**

**Death reigns = The recipients of the super-  
abundance of grace and the  
gratuity of righteousness  
reign in life.**

We repeat: In its universal aspect, the antitype is *just as* the type, and the work of Christ co-extensive with the ruin wrought by Adam, yet in its vigor and virtue, the reconciliation overwhelms the estrangement, producing a precious burden of fruit to God for all the toil and travail attending the offense.

#### GOD'S GOAL

And here we find ourselves at the very heart of the whole matter. Some of us may have been saturated with the thought that Christ's death falls far short of even restoring to God what He had lost; that the Divine adventure has been a losing venture! But, as we learn a little of God's wisdom and power and love, and drink more deeply of His Word, we may perhaps conclude that, after all, He may restore all to pristine perfection. But suppose He did? What reward is that for the cross on Golgotha and the patient passion of the eons? Why should we be crushed beneath His chariot wheel, only to find ourselves restored? Who would break down a building only to restore it to its former state? Who would go on a journey only that he may return to his native land? Who, in health, would be tortured that he may be healed? Yet the world has been wrecked,

Christ has journeyed from afar and has been bruised beneath sin's burden.

Was all this for naught?

No! A thousand times, no! The *absence* of sin and transgression are negative blessings, which would not even restore all as it was originally. But far, far more delicious than this is the fruit of sin's travail—the joyous, the exultant *reconciliation*. The affectionate sweetness which can be tasted only after estrangement—this is the nectar which will banish all the dregs which it has been our lot to drink.

#### SIN PREPARES FOR GRACE

Death was but the delegate of Sin, whose sway was not broken by the law's advent. But the law shed its light upon the scene and what once was merely sin became a transgression and an offense. But this did not hinder Sin in the least. It turned the law into an ally, and, through its death-dealing commands, established itself still more firmly upon the throne.

The law could not dethrone Sin, because it could not banish Death.

#### THE REIGN OF GRACE

But a mighty Conqueror has come upon the scene, and Sin has been vanquished! Death has been defeated!

And what is this Conqueror's name?

*Grace!*

Sin is no longer on the throne! His despotism has passed away!

Grace reigns now with undisputed sway.

Shall we still acknowledge the dethroned despot when such a king adorns the throne?

#### GRACE ENDS ENMITY

As Sin robbed men of God's presence and blessing, so Grace restores them to His smile. To enjoy His favor and the gifts He gives is life—eonian life. The cherubim and the flaming sword, which kept the way to the tree of

the living, no longer bar the way. The eons may come and the eons may go, but no one can change His mind towards those who are the objects of His unmingled favor.

And all this bounty and blessing is as free to all as is sin. Everyone will acknowledge that Adam's offense has made it very simple to sin. It need not be laborious, or expensive, or difficult. And it is not a whit more difficult to profit by Christ's one just act.

#### FREE TO LIVE TO GOD

Grace reigns! What, then, shall we declare? That we may be persisting in sin that grace should be increasing? (Rom. 6:1). Emancipation from the tyranny of Sin by means of death to Sin and enslavement to God in resurrection is the answer. Sin has no jurisdiction over us, for we are not subjects of Law, but subjects of Grace (Rom. 6:14).

What then? Should we be sinning, seeing that we are not under law, but under grace? (Rom. 6:15). But here we find ourselves beyond the Law's jurisdiction, for the Law cannot reach beyond death into the resurrection life we now enjoy.

#### THE LAW CONDEMNED

The law of Moses promised life to those who *kept* it. But the "spirit's law" emancipates all under the law of sin and death by giving life in Christ Jesus (Rom. 8:2). Sinai's law was the sword of Sin and Death. The spirit's law of life in Christ Jesus is the only way in which its just exactions may be met and Death defeated.

The law condemned. Grace conveys us beyond the possibility of condemnation (Rom. 8:1). No such thing as an adverse decision is possible in our case, for this is precluded by the faith of Jesus Christ. There can be no "claims of Justice."

#### NOW NOTHING SEPARATES

The law separated. But now that Grace reigns, we

are persuaded that neither death nor life, nor messengers, nor sovereignties, nor the present, nor what is impending, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus, our Lord (Rom. 8:38, 39).

*This is RECONCILIATION: free, full and final!*

## THE NATIONS GRAFTED IN (ROMANS 11:1-24)

I am saying, then: Does not God thrust away His people? May it not be coming to that! For I also am an Israelite, out of Abraham's seed, Benjamin's tribe. God does not thrust away His people whom He foreknew.

Or have you not perceived in Elijah what the scripture is saying, as he is pleading with God against Israel? Lord, Thy prophets they kill, Thine altars they dig down, and I was left alone, and they are seeking my soul. But what is that which apprises saying to him? I left for Myself seven thousand men who do not bow the knee to the image of Baal. Thus, then, in the current era also, there has come to be a remnant according to the choice of grace. Now if it is in grace, it is no longer out of works, else the grace is coming to be no longer grace. Now, if it is out of works, it is no longer grace, else the work is no longer work.

What then? What Israel is seeking for, this she did not encounter, yet the chosen encountered it. Now the rest were calloused, even as it is written, God gives them a spirit of stupor, eyes not to be observing, and ears not to be hearing, till this very day.

And David is saying,

Let their table become a trap and a mesh,  
And a snare and a repayment to them:  
Darkened be their eyes, not to be observing,  
And their backs bow together continually.

I am saying, then, "Do they not trip that they should be falling?" May it not be coming to that! But in their offense is salvation to the nations, to provoke them to jealousy.

Now if their offense is the world's riches and their discomfiture the nations' riches, how much rather that which fills them! Now to you am I saying, to the nations, inasmuch as, indeed, then, I am the apostle of the nations, I am glorifying my dispensation, if somehow I should be provoking those of my flesh to jealousy and should be saving some of them. For if their casting away is the conciliation of the world, what will the taking back be if not life from among the dead?

Now if the firstfruit is holy, the kneading is also; and if the root is holy, the boughs are also. Now if some of the boughs are broken out, yet you, being a wild olive, are grafted among them, and became joint participant of the root and fatness of the olive, be not vaunting over the boughs. Yet if you are vaunting, you are not bearing the root, but the root you.

You will be declaring, then, "Boughs are broken out that I may be grafted in." Ideally! By unbelief are they broken out, yet you stand in faith. Be not haughty, but fear. For if God spares not the natural boughs, neither will He be sparing you! Perceive, then, the kindness and severity of God! On those, indeed, who are falling, severity, yet on you, God's kindness, if you should be persisting in the kindness: else you also will be hewn out. Now they also, if they should not be persisting in unbelief, will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again. For if you were hewn out of an olive wild by nature, and, beside nature, are grafted into a cultivated olive tree, how much rather shall these, who are in accord with nature, be grafted into their own olive tree!

## THE NATIONS GRAFTED IN

IN THE divine summary of the Roman epistle there are two controlling themes. These are called "my evangel" and "a secret." The latter is enlarged upon, but the former, "my evangel," is merely mentioned (Rom. 16: 25-27).

If we recall how the Roman epistle opens, the reason for this will become clear, for there Paul's special service, as it differed from that of "the twelve," is set forth at length (Rom. 1:1-7).

What difference is there between *that* "good-news," termed "the evangel of God," and *this* secret?

The "evangel of God" was promised before "through His prophets in the holy scriptures." (Rom. 1:2). But those writings will be searched in vain for any trace of the *secret*, which God "hushed" during the eonian times past, when those prophets had lived. Even Paul himself, during the ministry then about completed (Acts 19:21; Rom. 15:19, 25) had not proclaimed this secret by word of mouth, for it is said to be "manifested *now*" through his prophetic *writings* (scriptures) (Rom. 16:26). The eonian God issued the injunction to herald it to all the nations for the obedience of faith. This epistle itself and the second epistle to the Corinthians, also written at this juncture, are examples of Paul's "prophetic scriptures." Here we have a two-fold key to unlock the secret, and to distinguish it from the "evangel of God" which Paul calls "my evangel."

## THE EVANGEL OF GOD

Soon after Paul was severed for his evangel he stood up in the synagogue at Pisidian Antioch and delivered a sample sermon which may well stand as an index to the doctrine which he made known during this, his itinerant ministry (Acts 13:13-41). One most salient point is justification by faith, for lawbreakers, including those of the nations as well as the Jews (verses 38, 39). Our Lord is presented as the Son of God (verse 33), but His relationship, by physical ties, to David is also stressed (verses 34-37). This is also evident in second Timothy 2:8 as well as Romans 1:3.

This description of Paul's message given at Pisidian Antioch will also suffice for the first four chapters of the Roman epistle. Justification by faith, apart from the law, is the absorbing topic. Abraham's justification before being circumcised opens the door of faith to the nations. Nevertheless, our Lord is still the Seed of David, and the Jew is still first (Rom. 1:3 and 1:16). This clearly shows that the first four chapters do *not* contain a *secret*, hitherto unrevealed.

## THE SECRET OF THE CONCILIATION

But, beginning at chapter five, a *change* comes over the face of the epistle.

We leave the court room and the Judge's righteous bench and enter the presence of the Reconciler, seated upon His throne of grace.

Abraham and Israel's narrow pale fade from view as we go back and learn that Adam's one offense and its awful consequences to the whole human race is the type, in reverse, as it were, of that most marvelous grace—The Conciliation.

## "HUSHED" UNTIL "NOW"

Where, in all the sacred scrolls, could be found a hint of such a thing? Whoever dreamed that so black a

page could silhouette such wondrous glory? The type was there, it is true, yet surely the secret was successfully "hushed in times eonian."

In Isaiah's vision (Isaiah 6), a gleam of its glory seemed to pierce the gloom of Israel's dark defection. The prophet did not see the glory involved in the vision, but wished the duration of his people's blindness to be as short as possible. When the Lord was about to leave His disciples, they asked Him, "Lord, art Thou at this time restoring the kingdom to Israel?" To have answered their question directly would have involved the disclosure of this secret. But He, in closest harmony with His God, "hushed" all inquiries of this sort. So He answers, "Not yours is it to know times or eras which the Father placed in His own jurisdiction." (Acts 1:6, 7).

#### PAUL AS "PRIEST"

The apostle Paul, during his early journeys, went about in the character of a priest (Rom. 15:16). A priest is appointed for men in divine affairs. He stands between man and God. He enters God's presence for them. But those who have access by virtue of the Conciliation need no priest, nor indeed, will they tolerate anything between them and their God, with Whom they are reconciled. Even Israel's priesthood will vanish in the new earth when God once more tabernacles with mankind (Rev. 21:22).

The evangel of God was heralded to the nations *by word of mouth*. But the secret of the Conciliation was unfolded by *written* communications; prophetic scriptures, corresponding with its spiritual character (Rom. 16:26). It takes the form of an "injunction of the eonian God," and is heralded to all nations, by ambassadors of peace (2 Cor. 5:18-21).

#### CONCILIATION AND THE SECRET ADMINISTRATION

Before proceeding to consider the national aspect of the Conciliation, as brought before us in the text which

heads this chapter, let us define its relationship to the present secret administration, disclosed in the third chapter of Ephesians. The fact that this secret was made public some years *before* the secret (that, "in spirit, the nations are to be *joint* enjoyers [with believing Jews] of an allotment, and a *joint* body, and *joint* partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus") as revealed in Ephesians 3:6, is enough to distinguish the two secrets. But the Conciliation did not affect Israel's prior place. It was still "to the Jew first." This is parallel to the circumstances in the last eon, where the nations on the new earth will be reconciled, God Himself tabernacling with them (Rev. 21:3), yet Israel in the holy city, the new Jerusalem, will remain the seat of all earthly government. The nations will gladly acknowledge her sway, even when her priestly offices are no longer needed and no temple exists, for God Himself will be their Temple (Rev. 21:22). But the secret administration ignores all such privileges. The nations are placed on the same plane with Israel in that marvelous celestial favor (Eph. 3:6). A *celestial* destiny is vital in this secret administration, for, on the earth, Israel can have no equal. This is why the celestial side of yet another secret, the secret of Christ (Eph. 3:4), which is to "head up *all* in the Christ" (Eph. 1:10), was not made known before, for the heavens themselves would be a dreary place with Christ limited to the earth.

The third item which characterizes this present secret administration (that the nations should be "joint partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus"), is founded upon the Conciliation.

Let us go back, then, to the National aspect of this wondrous truth, as revealed in the text which heads this chapter.

#### THE NATIONAL ASPECT OF THE CONCILIATION

God is sovereign. Even the reign of Sin could not subvert His purpose. If lawlessness itself must bend

beneath His iron will, how much more will grace serve willingly! The cross has made it possible and fitting that He should pour out, unrestrained, the inexhaustible treasures of His grace. Peace is proclaimed to all. Provision has been made for all. The efforts and the will of man are all opposed to God, and can only lead him to his doom. But let our hearts delight in this, *that God is sovereign*, and in His wisdom seasons all His acts with grace.

All had been done to make us His long before we knew Him. Nevertheless, many of His own spend years in the service of Satan before He calls them to Himself. His grace is not unbridled, but obeys His wise commands. Every blessing God bestows is based on the death of Christ, endured on Golgotha. By virtue of its power, all mankind will yet join in singing Conciliation's song, and new heavens as well as a new earth will display the many-sided glories that, as yet, lie dormant in its folds. Each blessing waits its proper season.

#### THE CONCILIATION CONCEALED

And so it was with the Conciliation. It was accomplished on the cross when the Son of God laid down His life, but *it did not take immediate effect*. First God will magnify His grace to Israel. He proclaims to them anew the Messiah they had rejected and crucified.

Full forty days Messiah lingers with His own, speaking of the things concerning the Kingdom of God. How natural that they should ask the questions which Isaiah and all the prophets entertained: "Till when?" "At this time?" (Acts 1:6). They did not know that they were trespassing upon God's secret things. The era which they were about to enter must first run many years before this question could be answered. Almost all commentaries covering the book of Acts proceed to explain it upon the assumption that this secret was well known instead of being positively concealed. That an era, in which the "complement of the nations" was to

be gathered in, should intervene, was not only unknown to them, but unknowable. God hid it from them. Even when they asked the Lord point blank about it, He refused to divulge this secret. And the book of Acts can never be properly understood apart from a recognition of this ignorance.

The book of Acts knows nothing of the Conciliation. Excuses and explanations abound whenever God, in grace, reaches out beyond the narrow pale of Judaism. It is not until after its various ministries have *failed* or *ceased* that we read, "... to the nations was dispatched this salvation of God, and they will hear." (Acts 28:28).

This gives rise to three important questions:

- (1) Does not God thrust away His people?
- (2) For how long will Israel be set aside?
- (3) What special blessings have come to the other nations through the Conciliation?

#### ISRAEL, AS A NATION, IS SET ASIDE

From what Paul had just finished stating in chapter 10 it would *seem* that God was through with His ancient and beloved people and was thrusting them away. "May it not be coming to that!" cries the apostle. The apostasy of Israel is only in *part*, and its term is *temporary*. Yet the Conciliation could not commence until Israel, *as a nation*, was "cast away" (Rom. 11:15). God dealt with Israel, *as a nation*, quite apart from any personal ties which may have existed between Him and the chosen remnant which He always kept for Himself (Rom. 11:5). So also in His dealings with the other nations. *As nations*, they are dealt with, quite apart from the true believers in their midst (Rom. 11:16-24).

#### "TILL WHEN?"

The question dealing with the duration of Israel's callousness is fully answered by the little word "until." Israel's callousness is limited to the period of the present

ingathering of believers from among the nations (Rom. 11:25).

The last question concerning the blessings which have come to the nations as a result of the Conciliation may be best answered by considering *the lesson of the trees*.

#### THE LESSON OF THE TREES

The Kingdom of God is "righteousness and peace and joy in holy spirit." (Rom. 14:17). Though it does not consist of food and drink, the very physical sustenance of that day will form an index of its spiritual characteristics. In most exquisite symbolism it is known as a day when the sons of Israel shall sit under their own vine and their own fig tree (Mic. 4:4). This will doubtless be true as to fact, but the fig tree will also be the protection of a righteous government; the vine, the spiritual cheer which Messiah brings.

#### THE "VINE"

In the eightieth Psalm we are told how God brought a vine out of Egypt, and cast out the nations, and planted it. The remainder of the Psalm describes its growth and desolation. Ieue, through the prophet Jeremiah, laments, saying, "Yet I planted you a yellow muscat, all of it a reliable seed, then how are you turned to Me into a degenerate foreign vine?" (Jer. 2:21).

Jotham, in his parable of the trees, which is most interesting in this connection, tells us that the function of the vine is to *cheer* both God (Alueim) and man (Judg. 9:13). We know that God found but little joy in Israel.

So, when the Messiah came, He could say: "I am the *true Grapevine*." And of His disciples he could add, "You are the branches." And of the others, "If anyone should not be remaining in Me, he was cast out as a branch and is withered. And they are gathering them, and into the fire are they casting them, and he is being

burned." (John 15:1, 5, 6). How true a prophecy of that unbelieving nation!

The parable of the evil farmers shows how little return Israel gave to Ieue for His bounty (Matt. 21:33-41). But, from His own, our Lord gathered much joy in the days of His earthly ministry. When He was about to leave them He told them that He would not drink henceforth of the product of the grape vine, till He drinks it new in His Father's kingdom (Matt. 26:29).

In that day the regenerate nation will bring forth the fruits of the vineyard. Then, at Ieue's marriage feast, His law will be transformed into brimming cheer, just as the water was in Cana of Galilee (John 2:6-10).

Some among the nations, not heeding the word which Jesus spoke to His disciples, that He would abstain from wine until that day have thought themselves fit to take Israel's place as the vine. But we are certain that He has not tasted of the vintage which they offer Him.

#### THE "FIG TREE"

Within the vineyard of Israel, God had planted a *fig tree*. As we have already mentioned, the fig tree pictures the protection of a righteous government, and political blessedness. But, when our Lord came, He found no fruit on it. Three years He looked for the sweetness and good produce Israel should have yielded to their God (Luke 13:6-9). Instead of real righteousness, He found only leaves, the same covering Adam had tried before God clothed him with the tunic of skin (Gen. 3:7, 21).

How touching and sad are the scenes we find clustered around our Lord's final entry into Jerusalem! Each step, each incident, pictures forth a moral truth. The day was fast approaching when the remainder of Daniel's prophecy concerning Messiah (Christ), the Governor, must be fulfilled. The sixty-nine sevens had been fulfilled just prior to Christ's birth. Four hundred

and eighty-three years had elapsed since the word to return and to build Jerusalem had gone forth (Dan. 9:25). That "era" had been *fulfilled* (Mark 1:15). Yet Daniel had further stated: "And *after* the sixty-two sevens (plus the seven sevens for the rebuilding, equaling sixty-nine sevens), Christ shall be cut off, and there is no adjudication for Him..." (Dan. 9:26). During the interval between the sixty-ninth heptad (seven year period) and the seventieth, Christ was to be "cut off," not receiving any of the earthly glories which belong to Him as Israel's Messiah. It is just prior to His being "cut off" that we find Him offering Himself for the last time to the apostate nation as their King.

#### THE "WILD FIG"

A wild fig tree, Rome, ruled over Israel. Zaccheus, a Jew, a chief tribute collector for the imperial Roman government, desired to see Jesus. He climbed into a "fig mulberry" or wild fig tree, thus harmonizing his physical environment with his true moral condition. His high station above his fellows was by means of the office he held at the hands of the oppressors of his people. And so the Lord's first words to him were, "Hurry! Descend..." (Luke 19:4, 5). Office in a hostile kingdom ill suits the occasion when the true King comes.

#### THE CURSING OF THE FIG TREE

In those last days He comes to Bethphage, which, in Hebrew, means "the home-of-the-green-fig." But unripe figs are quite unpalatable and cannot satisfy His hunger. He goes to Jerusalem and returns to Bethany ("home-of-the-humble"). When He goes towards Jerusalem the next morning He is still unsatisfied, for He is yet hungry. A fig tree hangs over the way. According to the divine law, a tithe of its fruit was His. But, far from claiming His due as the great Lawgiver, He takes the place of the poor and alien, and gleaned among its branches.

But He found nothing except *leaves!* No *fruit* to satisfy His hunger. And so He says, "No longer, by any means, may fruit be coming of you for the eon." And the fig tree withered instantly (Matt. 21:19).

In order to better appreciate the significance of this event we must learn some of the characteristics of the fig tree in Palestine. Generally speaking, the fruit of the fig tree appears about the middle of February, nearly a month before the leaves sprout. The fruit shoots are without flowers and, as we have said, are prior to the leaf growth. This budding occurs during what we might call spring, for when its leaves are sprouting out, then summer is near (Matt. 24:32). However, these dates all vary somewhat due to local conditions; the climate, soil, and amount of shelter provided.

We only mention, in passing, the "firstfruit" of the fig tree (Hos. 9:10), which is an early crop, few in number, usually gathered around June. Also there is the "green fig" (Song of Solomon 2:13) or unripened fig, which remains throughout the winter. This, as noted before, is included in the meaning of Bethphage (Home-green-fig).

The cursing of the fig tree occurred during the week prior to the Passover. This sets the date somewhere at the end of March or the beginning of April, a time of year when it would be most unusual for a fig tree, near Jerusalem, to be in leaf. Yet if the tree displays its precociousness by having leaves so early, it would also be expected to have fruit, although, admittedly, "it was *not* the season of figs." (Mark 11:13). Some influence had put the tree into leaf. Yet the appearance was false, for there was no fruit for the delectation of the Lord. He found "nothing but leaves."

It is this false exhibition of leaves, indicating ripened fruit, which is significant. The fig tree is a figure of the government of the state; the protection of a righteous ruling power; political blessedness. But Israel did

*not* rule itself; they were the subjects of Rome. There was no "fruit" for Ieue.

Despite this position, Israel endeavored to *act* as though they did possess the edible fruit! They usurped the place of authority and pressed their charges against Jesus, binding Him and taking Him before Pilate. Apart from the pressure of the leaders of Israel, Rome, as represented by Pilate, would not have crucified the Lord Jesus. Israel acted as though they ruled!

There was no fruit, only leaves, yet the false impression which the leaves gave, pictured what had taken place in Israel. Since the reality was lacking, the false appearance must be eliminated.

And so the Lord's curse descends, and the fig tree is withered from the roots, "for the eon." (Matt. 21:19). *Not* "forever"! For, although Israel, as a nation, became withered and fruitless, yes, even without leaves (for they could not cover their unrighteousness); though they had no national standing left, the day seems not far distant when Ieue will set up His righteous rule and the fig tree of Israel will bear an abundant harvest.

The other nations, with all their talk of civic and national righteousness, will never displace Ieue's fig tree, Israel. They are wild and their fruit is so inferior as to be worthless to Ieue.

If national *righteousness* and national *joy* are figured by the fruit of the fig and the vine, what figures *peace*, the remaining characteristic of God's kingdom?

#### THE "OLIVE TREE"

Peace is symbolized by the *olive tree*. Since the dove came back to Noah with an olive leaf, the olive branch has been a symbol of judgment accomplished. Such is the lesson of its leaves, but its fruit is far more precious still. The oil of the olive is the source of divine illumination. The only light by which Ieue's glories might be seen in the tabernacle or the temple was furnished by

the oil of the olive berry. The oil is eminently the symbol of His spirit. It was used for anointing, and typified the spirit which He poured upon those whom He anointed and in unstinted measure upon His Anointed, Jesus, *the* Messiah (Messiah means Anointed in Hebrew).

This gives the olive pre-eminence among the trees: indeed it was their first choice for king (Judg. 9:8). The righteousness of the fig tree is good and pleasant for man, but what does it profit God if men are righteous? As the true vine is the Messiah Himself, God and man both may rejoice in Him. And God and man both are glorified by the spirit of which olive oil is the symbol. And that is the great issue in Romans chapter eleven—God's glory. *National righteousness and national joy are not in view and are not attained.* But, by the olive tree, God's name has been greatly magnified among the nations.

#### ISRAEL—THE OLIVE TREE

Before the Conciliation, the figure of the olive tree was confined to Israel. And, even yet, they are the root and trunk and some of the branches. All divine light came through them. Our Lord could say to His disciples, "You are the light of the world" (Matt. 5:14). To the Jew was entrusted the oracles of God (Rom. 3:2). The source and strength of divine revelation is the sacred writings which were their special treasure.

#### THE "WILD BOUGHS" GRAFTED IN

The other nations can never be pictured by a cultivated olive tree. They are "wild." The berries of the wild olive, or oleaster, yield no light-giving oil. But God has grafted wild boughs into the cultivated olive tree in place of some of the branches which were broken out (Rom. 11:16-24).

To graft a branch from a wild *fig* tree into a good stem would be ruinous to both. Our Lord expects nothing from the wild fig tree. Neither can you graft a wild

grape into a good vine and obtain fine vintage. It is equally impossible for the nations to take Israel's place and produce grapes fit for pressing. But, strange to say, God has been able to graft the wild olive boughs into the cultivated olive tree and get berries bearing the precious oil.

No patriarchs or prophets or apostles are raised up from among the nations. The root and trunk of the olive tree remain the same. But, while a few of the branches remain, the great bulk are wild grafts. A few of Israel's sons are enlightened by God's spirit and publicly uphold His Word. But, apart from these few notable exceptions, God is using other nations to spread abroad the knowledge of Himself. All the philosophies of Egypt and Greece and India cannot supply a single ray of light. It is only as the nations leave their own wild fancies and uphold the enlightening verities of that Book which was once the exclusive boast of Israel, that they can draw the true unction from the root of the cultivated olive tree.

Thus we see that the righteous government of this earth, as figured by the fig tree, was never transferred to any other nation. Every new attempt at rule lands mankind one step further from the benevolent despotism which this earth will yet enjoy under the reign of Israel and Israel's Messiah. Neither has the cheer of that millennial day come true as yet. But one great boon has come to the nations. God no longer treats them as His enemies, but entrusts them with His most precious gift—the divine oracles. The light has left Israel and dwells with aliens. *The nations are God's testimony in the earth.*

#### EARTH BLESSED THROUGH ISRAEL

Viewed from the standpoint of the *individual* who believes God, this present day of grace immeasurably surpasses the coming Kingdom on the earth. But this is not the proper viewpoint in Romans eleven. We are

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considering *nations*, as such, not individuals. In this light we can see that, if Israel's *offense* brought such riches to the world as comes through the Conciliation, how much greater shall be this earth's blessing when Israel is *blessed!*

*Earthly, physical* blessing is given to, and through, that nation. It is useless to look for such blessings apart from them. The Conciliation leads to transcendent *spiritual* blessings, but it does not promise temporal terrestrial prosperity. It imparts a power to turn trials into occasions of rejoicing, but does not avoid or remove them from us. Israel will not exult in trials in that day, for then trials will be a token of divine displeasure. They may be a sign of His favor now.

So, then, we see that, though the Conciliation was effected when God's Son entered death, it could not become effective until Israel was set aside. We find that it established *peace* between God and the nations, but did not bring about the righteousness and joy of Millennial days, which can come only through Israel. The nations, viewed as a whole, are entrusted with His Word, so long as they uphold that Word and shed its light abroad.

### THE NATIONS "STAND IN FAITH"

For a time Grace holds the scepter and the nations sustain God's testimony in the earth.

"You stand in faith." (Rom. 11:20). If we desire to know the position of the nations at the present time as regards the Conciliation, all we need to investigate is their attitude toward the Word of God. So long as they believe God, all is well. But if they refuse to believe Him, then they are about to be hewn out of the olive tree and lose the place of privilege which they have held so long.

### FAITH FALTERS

A cursory review of the course of Christendom will show it to be but a series of apostasies, with a few feeble

returns to the truth. But never has there been such complete apostasy as at the present time, even in the very bodies which owe their rise to a return to God's Word.

Sound teaching is no longer tolerated. Teachers seek to please the crowds while the life-giving truths of God's grace are covered and condemned. Men prefer myths to God's marvelous message. We must, therefore, herald the *word*, stand by *it*, opportunely, inopportunely, expose, rebuke, entreat, with all patience and teaching (2 Tim. 4:2-4). We need always to be reminded that the greatest danger to those who love God's Word lies, not in the carping critic, not from those who live on their emotions, for these do not exert nearly so great an influence as those *defenders of the faith* who are honestly endeavoring to oppose what they deem error.

#### GOD'S WORD—OUR ONLY GUIDE

Where, then, is there safety? Safety lies only in such a recognition of the prevalent apostasy as will lead us to pass by *all* human authority and supposition and tradition and found all our faith upon the facts of the Word.

Nor do we exclude ourselves from the list of those who should not be followed. We are human as the rest. But we hope that all who read these lines may be able to grant us this one grace—the highest compliment that we can crave—that the burden of our message is a return to God's Word; and that the facts as they occur in the original are truthfully and impartially presented for the consideration of our readers. Apart from these facts there is no possible return to His Word; no possible escape from participation in the prevailing apostasy.

#### THE CLOSING DAYS OF THE CONCILIATION

To conclude, the main drift of the many diverse movements of modern times has been *away* from the

Word of God. Movement after movement has been made toward the recovery of the truth, but, like the receding tide, the oncoming waves flow back faster than they come, and leave the faith stranded and forsaken.

Christ was crucified in the midst of God's chosen people and the faith is being crucified in the midst of its professed friends. *The Conciliation has well-nigh run its course. The time seems near for the faithless nations to be cut out of the olive tree!*

## THE PREVIOUS COMMISSIONS

A COUNTRY may best be recognized by describing the surrounding territory. So also the administration of the Conciliation may best be grasped by first defining the administrations which come before and after it. To do this we will consider the various commissions given before and after the Conciliation was made known, both by our Lord to His disciples while here on the earth, and to Paul from His heavenly glory. First we will ponder the commissions given by our Lord while still on the earth.

### THE FIRST KINGDOM COMMISSION

Jesus, the Messiah, began His earthly ministry alone. Right after John the baptist was imprisoned, He began to herald, saying, "Repent! for near is the kingdom of the heavens!" (Matt. 4:12, 17). This evangel or "good-news" concerning the kingdom was accompanied by His teaching in the synagogues and the curing of every disease and debility among the people. Even those obsessed by demons and mentally deranged were restored (Matt. 4:23-25).

Having acquired a great following, Jesus ascends into the mountain and delivers the Code of the Kingdom, or the laws which are to form its constitution (the so-called "Sermon on the Mount," Matt. 5:1-7:29).

## HARVEST WORKERS

Again Jesus continues His ministry alone. But when He perceives the throngs, they arouse His pity for they were bothered and tossed like shepherdless sheep. Then He said to His disciples, "The harvest, indeed, is vast, yet the workers are few. Beseech, then, the Lord of the harvest, so that He would be ejecting workers into His harvest." (Matt. 9:37, 38). Then He calls His twelve disciples to Him and gives them authority over unclean spirits so as to be casting them out and to be curing every disease and every debility. The twelve *disciples* of verse one become the twelve *apostles* (commissioned-ones) of verse two (Matt. 10:1, 2).

## THE COMMISSION GIVEN

These twelve Jesus commissions, charging them, saying,

"Into a road of the nations you should not pass forth, and into a city of the Samaritans you should not be entering. Yet be going rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Now, going, herald, saying that 'Near is the kingdom of the heavens!' The infirm be curing, the dead be rousing, lepers be cleansing, demons be casting out. Gratuitously you got: gratuitously be giving." (Matt. 10:5-8).

## ITS ADMINISTRATION

Concerning the administration of the First Kingdom Commission, the twelve apostles were told:

"Now before governors and kings also shall you be led on My account, for a testimony to them and to the nations. . . . And you shall be hated by all because of My name. Now he who endures to the consummation, he shall be saved. Now, whenever they may be persecuting you in this city, flee into a different one, for, verily, I am saying to you, Under no circumstances should you be finishing the cities of Israel till the Son of Mankind may be coming. . . . You should not be inferring that I came to be casting peace on the earth. I did not come to be casting peace, but a sword. . . . He who is receiving you is receiving Me. . . ." (Matt. 10:18, 22, 23, 34, 40)

Here we have the First Kingdom Commission and its administration. As an answer to the prayer for workers

in the harvest field, the twelve disciples are commissioned and sent forth to reap. The straying sheep of Israel's fold are the *exclusive* objects of this evangel. Later on we read that this evangel of the kingdom shall also be heralded in the whole inhabited earth for a *testimony* to all the nations (not as "good-news," but as a *warning*, as we read in the second psalm) and then shall its consummation be seen in the lightning flash of the presence of the Son of Mankind (Matt. 10:18; 24:14, 27).

#### THE GLORY THRONE JUDGMENT

Sitting upon the throne of His glory the Son of Mankind will judge the other nations *according to their treatment of His heralds*, who had warned them of His iron rod. The surest way to obtain eonian life in that day will be to shield and help His brethren, the faithful of Israel (Matt. 25:31-46).

#### THE COMMISSION NOT COMPLETED

Although the entire range of the kingdom proclamation is thus set forth, it does not run the uninterrupted course which the text may seem to suggest. The nation of Israel rejected the heralding, they thought the King was merely John the baptist revived, or one of the prophets (Matt. 16:14), and so He shut the door leading into the kingdom and locked it. As He was to be absent when its proclamation was renewed, He gave the keys to Peter. *Then He cautions the disciples that they may be saying to no one that He is the Christ* (Matt. 16:20). Even though a glimpse of the kingdom was given to Peter and James and his brother John on the mount of \*transformation, He directed them saying, *tell no one of the vision till the Son of Mankind may be roused from among the dead* (Matt. 17:9).

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\*Authorized Version mistranslates this "transfiguration."

## PETER AT PENTECOST

This is the first interruption in the heralding of the kingdom of the heavens. Its cause lies in the rejection of Messiah's personal ministry. It extended from His transformation on the mount until Pentecost. Then Peter stands up and unlocks the closed door with the keys committed to him. Not many days later he tells them:

"Repent, then, and turn about for the erasure of your sins, so that seasons of refreshing should be coming from the face of the Lord, and He should dispatch the One fixed upon before for you, Christ Jesus, Whom heaven must indeed receive until the times of restoration of all which God speaks through the mouth of His holy prophets who are from the eon."  
(Acts 3:19-21)

But, as a nation, they did not repent. The entire assembly of their chief representatives murdered Stephen, saying as the Lord had foretold in His parable, "We do not want this man to reign over us." (Luke 19:14; Acts 7:1-60).

## THE CALL OF SAUL

This was followed by the call of Saul, through whom the message was carried to the Jews dispersed among the other nations and, in conjunction with Luke's commission and his own special message, to the nations themselves. Peter himself was taught through a vision that all in every nation who are fearing God and acting righteously are acceptable to Him (Acts 10:34, 35). He carried the evangel to the God-fearing proselytes of the nations who lived in the land of Israel. The course of the twelve apostles continued to be based on this commission. In the midst of all their persecution they maintained their session in Jerusalem, the city of the great King. Here they were sustained by divine power. Peter, though imprisoned, was delivered by a miracle (Acts 12:1-17).

## THE JEWS IN THE DISPERSION

Meanwhile, Saul, who is also Paul, was completing the heralding to the Jews among the nations outside of the land. It became clear that Israel, as a nation, was apostate. Like father, like son. Their ancestors came to Kadesh Barnea, an eleven days' journey, but they did not enter the land because of unbelief. They were thrust back into the wilderness for forty long years, that they might learn the evil of their own hearts. Just so had Israel been on the very borders of the kingdom—they tasted of its fruit, the powers of the coming eon—but they did not enter because of unbelief, and again spent forty years, until the destruction of Jerusalem by Roman legions in 70 A.D., in fruitless wilderness wanderings.

Peter, writing to them in their dispersion, assures them that the kingdom, as foreshown on the mount of transformation, was no myth, but exhorts them to confirm their calling and choice for thus an entrance into the kingdom will be richly supplied (2 Pet. 1:11, 16-19).

## THE COMMISSION FULLY CARRIED OUT

During the time of Jacob's trouble under the fifth seal, we find that the Lord's words concerning the affliction of His witnesses, spoken centuries before, will indeed be true. They are to be hated and hounded to death and their blood will cry for vengeance (Rev. 6:9, 10). By means of the one hundred and forty-four thousand, an innumerable multitude will come safely through the great affliction (Rev. 7:4, 9, 14).

And when the seventh messenger trumpets, the consummation of which the Lord had spoken is reached: for the heavens declare, "The kingdom of this world became our Lord's and His Christ's and He shall be reigning for the eons of the eons." (Rev. 11:15). It breaks in

pieces and consumes all of the kingdoms of the earth. In this way the kingdom of the heavens, foretold by Daniel the prophet, will be set up (Dan. 2:44). The First Kingdom Commission given to the twelve apostles will be thus finally fulfilled.

#### THE SECOND KINGDOM COMMISSION

"Now the eleven disciples went into Galilee, into the mountain where Jesus arranges with them. And, perceiving Him, they worship Him, yet they hesitate. And, approaching, Jesus speaks to them saying, "Given to Me was all authority in heaven and on the earth. Going, then, disciple all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the holy spirit, teaching them to be keeping all, whatever I direct you. And lo! I am with you all the days till the conclusion of the eon! Amen!" (Matt. 28:16-20).

Some have affirmed that Matthew's account was originally written in Hebrew. Be that as it may, we must acknowledge that the idiom is more strongly Semitic than any other of the Greek originals except, perhaps, the book of the Unveiling (Revelation). We must not consider the language from our Anglo-Saxon viewpoint, but understand it as though we, too, were Jews, like the eleven disciples to whom this commission was given.

Perhaps the most striking difference between Hebrew and modern languages lies in the expression of *time*. To us this is vital and clearly defined. However, the Hebrew verb really distinguishes between completeness and incompleteness, rather than time. The future work of Ieue (which literally means Will-be-ing-was) is no problem for the future to solve; it is already as true as any fact. He calls what is not as if it were (Rom. 4:18). This is why we read: "Given to Me was all authority," although it is not until the seventh messenger trumpets that the kingdom of the world becomes our Lord's and His Christ's (Rev. 11:15).

Examples of this exquisite method of expressing the stability of God's counsels abound in the Hebrew prophets. Familiar to nearly everyone are the passages: "Surely He hath borne our griefs" or, more accurately translated, "Surely our illnesses has He borne" (Isa. 53:4) and "Fallen is Babylon!" (Isa. 21:9). How much more vivid than the mere assertion "He *will* bear" or "Fall *shall* Babylon"! Feeling is truer than fact in these matters.

This same disregard of English grammar is seen later on. We would have said "I *will* be with you," where we read "I *am* with you." (Matt. 28:20).

#### ACTIONS SPEAK LOUDER THAN WORDS

But is there any test of these conclusions? How can we know whether they understood our Lord to mean the future day of His power, or, as Christendom has assumed, the present period of His absence? The answer to this important question lies in the *actions* of the apostles. Did they heed this commission in their ministry which followed? We find no hint in the book of Acts or the epistles of Peter, James or John that they ever fulfilled or intended to fulfill this commission at that time. They did not go to the nations as such. They did not baptize in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the holy spirit. They seem to have given no heed to this commission whatsoever.

But did not the apostles "preach the gospel"? They surely did. Yet the commission we are considering has *not a single word about any evangel in it. There is nothing about salvation, repentance, faith, resurrection, or ascension.* The reason for this will appear later.

We often miss much by not heeding the *setting* of God's precious gems. Let us notice, then, the circumstances in which this commission was given. First of

all, it is found at the close of Matthew's account, which is concerned primarily with the King and the kingdom of which Daniel spoke, which shall destroy the world powers and rule over all the nations. The King's lineage is traced from David and Abraham (Matt. 1:1-16). Soon after the Lord commences His ministry He lays down the laws of the kingdom in His first sermon on the mount (Matt. 5:1-7:29). This is the code which will be in force when the kingdom is set up.

As this Second Kingdom Commission is given on a *mountain*, let us note the significance of such a setting in other passages. The first time it occurs is most helpful in grasping its force. In chapter four, verse eight, we read "Again the Adversary takes Him along into a very high *mountain*, and is showing Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. And he said to Him, 'I will be giving all these to you, if ever, falling down, you should be worshipping me.'"

Here we see the enemy actually offering Him the very position which was rightfully His, from God, as is clear from the commission we are considering. Both scenes are laid on a mountain, an eminence on the earth. Thus in Matthew *physical elevation* pictures *royal exaltation*. This thought is carried out consistently throughout the entire narrative. The laws of the kingdom were not promulgated in the lowly plain, but on the mountain top (Matt. 5:1). It is not the teaching of the despised Nazarene, but the powerful pronouncements of the great King. The transformation, in which a foreglimpse of this coming kingdom is given, is seen on a high mountain (Matt. 17:1). Faith, as tiny as a kernel of mustard, would have moved mountains, that is, would have rid them of Rome's sovereignty (Matt. 17:20). Towards the end of His ministry He comes to them as Daniel and

Zechariah had foretold, presenting Himself to them as their King. After they refuse Him He speaks of Israel, God's ruling nation, under the figure of a mountain. Not only is the fig tree, which figured their national polity, withered away, but the nation of Israel is to be scattered among the other nations as if a mountain were cast into the sea (Matt. 21:18-21). Its commanding eminence is completely submerged in that condition. Is not this a true picture of Israel until its recent immergeance? The second sermon on the mount is also concerned with His kingdom and with its final triumph (Matt. 24:3). Once again we find Him on the mount of Olives, and He makes the appointment to meet His disciples on the mountain in Galilee, where the Second Kingdom Commission was given. His death and resurrection intervene. Surely from all this it is clear that here we have another picture of that coming kingdom.

#### THE FIRST COMMISSION

To the twelve apostles Christ had said, "Into a road of the nations you should not pass forth, and into a city of the Samaritans you should not be entering. Yet be going rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Now, going, herald, saying that 'Near is the kingdom of the heavens!'" (Matt. 10:5-7). The entire context should be read to understand this commission. It is for Israel in the future as well as in the past. It is to be carried on in His absence in the midst of persecution. They will not have completed it when the Son of Mankind comes again (Matt. 10:23).

#### THE CLOSING COMMISSION CONTRASTED

How different is this closing commission! The disciples are not sent to *Israel* at all, but to the *nations*. The mountain itself is in "Galilee of the nations" (Matt. 4:

15). His exaltation over all the nations is in point. No evangel is sent out. No persecution is predicted. Obedience seems unquestioned. He is with them through it all.

Then they will be the light of the world. It speaks of that glorious time of which Isaiah tells us:

"Light up! Light up, Jerusalem! For come has your light,  
And the glory of Ieue over you is radiant.

For behold! The darkness is covering the earth,

And murkiness the folkstems,

Yet, over you, radiant is Ieue,

And His glory over you is appearing.

And the nations will go to your light,

And kings to the brightness of your radiance."

(Isaiah 60:1-3, C.V.)

Then shall "the Lord's Christ" indeed be exalted in the earth and high above all the nations. Then shall the law go forth from Jerusalem and all the ends of the earth shall be subject to the great King. How fitting that Matthew's account, which traces the history of the rejection of the kingdom, also contains commissions which provide not only for its administration to Israel but also for its world-wide supremacy over the other nations! Their Messiah will yet be "King of kings"!

#### DISCIPLE ALL NATIONS

This commission provides for the teaching of the nations. The work of a school teacher is two-fold. It consists of preserving order and imparting knowledge; it includes discipline as well as instruction. Both of these aspects are seen in the passage before us. The phrase "*teach* all nations," as in the Authorized Version, is more accurately rendered, "*disciple* all the nations."

To *disciple* all nations means more than simply to teach them. In fact, part of the teaching will be subvenient to the second phase of discipling, that of discipline;

for they will be taught to be "keeping all" whatever the King directs. This shows the ascendancy of the Jewish disciples over the nations in the coming "day of the Lord." They will be set over each of the nations, not only teaching them the knowledge of Ieue, but also preserving order, directing conduct, exercising the authority which was given to their great King and upon which their commission is based. They will be Messiah's representatives to the other nations.

#### DISCIPLES, NOT APOSTLES

It is important to note that this commission is given to "the eleven *disciples*," not the twelve apostles (Matt. 28:16). The apostles have their own place over the twelve tribes (Matt. 19:28), while other disciples will be set over the rest of the nations.

#### A THREE-FOLD BAPTISM FORMULA

Another important consideration: the special formula which will be used in the baptism of that day is never met with elsewhere. Until that time the great point about baptism is identification with the *rejected* One. The formula used has varied according to the relation sustained by its subject to Him. Jews used "Jesus Christ" (Acts 2:38), Samaritans and those of the nations used "Lord Jesus" (Acts 8:14-17; 19:5). But in that future day He will not be the rejected One, hence these formulas fail, giving place to the invocation, "the Father, the Son and the holy spirit."

#### SOME CONCLUDING CONSIDERATIONS

The First Kingdom Commission, once the kingdom had been rejected, was to be fulfilled during His *absence*. It terminates with His *coming*. But this Second Kingdom Commission begins with His *presence* and exaltation and is to be carried on while He is *with* them, to the

very close of that yet future eon. At the end of that eon, some of the nations will throw off the allegiance which this commission had enforced, and join Satan's insurrection and march against the holy city itself. Here the disciples discover the truth of His promise to be with them, for He does not parley with the rebels, but fire descends from God out of heaven and devours them in a moment (Rev. 20:7-9). Thus, not a day passes in that glorious eon which will lack tokens of His presence, and especially so in the dreadful crisis at its close.

### THE CREATION COMMISSION

The resurrection of the Son of God has a wider range of beneficence than we are accustomed to consider. God's glory demands that not only mankind who sinned and marred His glorious creation, but every part of that creation itself shall be restored to Him in more than pristine perfection. Mankind has many characteristics in common with the lower creatures and is linked to them by the possession of a body made alive by a spirit, resulting in a living soul. The soul is in the blood (Lev. 17:11, where the Authorized Version unfortunately mistranslates soul "life"). With this in mind we quote the Creation Commission.

“Now subsequently, at their lying back at table, He was manifested to the eleven and He reproaches their unbelief and hardheartedness, seeing that they believe not those who gaze on Him having been roused from among the dead. And He said to them, ‘Go into all the world, herald the evangel to the entire creation. He who believes and is baptized shall be saved, yet he who disbelieves shall be condemned. Now these signs shall fully follow in those who believe: In My name they shall be casting out demons; they will be speaking in new languages; they will be picking up serpents; and if they should be drinking anything deadly, it should under no circumstances be harming them; they will be placing hands on those who are ailing, and ideally will they be having it.’

“The Lord, indeed, then, after speaking with them, was taken up into heaven and is seated at the right hand of

God. Now they, coming away, herald everywhere, the Lord working together with them and confirming the word by the signs following them up.” (Mark 16:14-20).

#### FOCUSES ON THE PHYSICAL

As we consider this commission we note the absence of almost everything which might be termed *spiritual* and the large place given the *physical* creation. It was given while they were satisfying their hunger, it was to be heralded to the entire creation (not mankind alone) and the signs all had reference to bodily blessing.

The hindrances to perfect physical bliss may be stated under five heads. To remove these hindrances, (1) the power of demons to obsess the human body must be abolished, (2) The companionship between the lower creatures and mankind must be restored, (3) the venom of serpents and the poisonous elements must be rendered harmless, (4) The present tendency to disease and (5) death must be abolished.

#### THE ENTIRE CREATION

The removal of all of these is not only provided for in Christ's sacrifice, but assured by His resurrection. This is the reason why He did not simply tell them to go to every "nation" or all "men" but, using a word of special emphasis, He tells them to go into *all the world* and herald the evangel of His resurrection to the *entire creation*. Man is not the only creature on the earth. He is not the only one to be blessed by the resurrection. The lower creatures have suffered with man in his plight. They have come in for a share of the corruption and bondage and death which is his due, and theirs only because they were made subject to him.

#### CREATION FREED FROM CORRUPTION

Let us rejoice, then, that these who suffer on our account, they also shall obtain deliverance, by the same

power which delivers our mortal bodies. Paul tells us that the creation has a premonition of God's unveiling of His sons. We also note that the creation was subjected to vanity, not voluntarily, but because of Him Who subjects it, in expectation that the creation itself, also, shall be freed from the slavery of corruption into the glorious freedom of the children of God (Rom. 8: 19-21).

#### NEW LANGUAGES

But, you say, how could the evangel be heralded to the lower creation? How could they be reached? Let us consider a possibility.

Among the signs which were to accompany the heralding was that of speaking "new languages." The word "new" here can hardly refer to foreign languages, such as were spoken at Pentecost (Acts 2:4), or the gift of languages which the Corinthians possessed (1 Cor. 12: 28). These languages were not recent or novel or new in this sense. The Arabic spoken at Pentecost was probably older than the Greek in which the later Scriptures are written. This word "new" denotes that which is different from what already exists; that which is previously unheard of. But what would be the use of a mere babel of sounds to spread the tidings of His resurrection? What *significance* (a *sign* always *means* something) can be attached to it?

#### ADAM AND THE ANIMALS

In the beginning, before Adam sinned, he was on intimate terms with the animals about him. The very fact that they were all brought before him, with a view to finding a complement for him, as well as the naming of them, shows that there was mutual understanding (Gen. 2:20). When the serpent *spoke* to the woman, it did not seem to surprise her. If the animals could not

converse with human beings, and Satan gave one of them such a miraculous power, this very fact might have spoiled his whole scheme by putting the woman on her guard. But she evidently saw nothing out of the ordinary in the serpent's speech and entered into the conversation quite at her ease.

Here, then, we can see a need for "new" languages, and here, too, the need is met. It is heralded to them as an evangel, for they, too, like mankind, will reap the benefits of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Not that they are held accountable, as is mankind, or enter into the blessing reserved for man alone. Yet Isaiah 11:6-9 shows clearly that the animal creation will profit by the work of the cross. Romans 8:19-22 is equally clear that the creation has a present premonition (an intuitive opinion) of a future deliverance from the slavery of corruption.

#### CHRIST'S RESURRECTION UNIVERSALLY PROCLAIMED

The thought that the resurrection of God's Son is heralded to other creatures is not confined to this passage alone. The messengers that sinned in Noah's day have heard that He is Lord, even in their jail (1 Pet. 3:19; 2 Pet. 2:4). He is exalted above all and His lordship has received a suitable proclamation in every corner of the universe. Messengers, both elect and rebellious, demons, wicked spirits, men, birds, beasts—all have heard that He is Lord, to the glory of God, His Father.

#### WICKED SPIRITS SUBJECTED

Demons seem to have a great desire to dwell in the human body, and to use its members to carry out their own behests. And, rather than be disembodied, they will live in the foul frame of a hog (Luke 8:32). The creation never will be right until the liberty of the

demons is finally taken from them, as it will be when great Babylon is destroyed and becomes their dwelling place and the *jail* of every unclean spirit (Rev. 18:2). In the meanwhile, this evangel of His resurrection furnished the needed power to compel the demons to withdraw to their proper place.

#### POISONS POWERLESS

Venom and poison were harmless to those who had this ministry. The serpents' power to harm was nullified as it will be in the future millennial bliss. When Paul was wrecked on the island of Melita a viper fastened on his hand. He twitched it into the fire and suffered nothing evil, even though the natives expected him to fall dead any minute (Acts 28:3-6). The fire is the place for the serpent. He has had his say with man. He is not innocent, like the rest (Gen. 3:14). On this same island Paul healed the father of Publius and many others (Acts 28:8).

Paul had many ministries. That he had a prominent part in the proclamation of Mark's Creation Commission is abundantly evident from his marvelous experiences as recorded in the book of Acts and, as we have noted, especially on the island of Melita, just before coming to Rome (Acts 28:1-9).

#### CREATION COMMISSION CARRIED OUT

We suggest that this explains our text. We believe that they *did go everywhere*, and the signs *did follow* as Christ had promised. Therefore, this ministry is not waiting for fulfillment. There is no place where it did not reach.

If we err not, the commission given by the Lord at the end of Mark's account is the only one which has been fully carried out. The work which He charged them to do has been done and needs no repetition.

## THE COMMISSION FOR MANKIND

Matthew, a government official, tells of the King and gives the two Kingdom Commissions, outlining both domestic and foreign policies.

Mark, the attendant of Paul and Barnabas, tells us of God's Servant, and gives us the Creation Commission, which was proclaimed to the entire creation.

Luke, the beloved physician, of Gentile origin, tells of the sympathetic *Man*. He gives us the Commission for Mankind, including all of Adam's erring progeny. This commission is wider in its range than the two Kingdom Commissions found in Matthew's account. The First Kingdom Commission is exclusively for Israel; the second concerns the nations. Luke, writing to Theophilus, a man of the nations, traces our Lord's lineage clear back to Adam, and deals with mankind as a whole, including both Israel and the nations under the common charge that all are *sinners*. Mark, on the other hand, includes *more* than mankind in his Creation Commission.

## DISTINCTIONS

These distinctions give character to the blessings and judgments which follow in their wake. Under the First Kingdom Commission an entrance into the kingdom is the portion of the Israelite who endures until the coming of the Son of Mankind (Matt. 10:22, 23). The rebels will perish. The nation which shelters the faithful Jew is given an allotment in the kingdom. The nation which persecutes them is sent away into eonian chastening. Their judgment is national, and is not based upon the individual sins of each citizen. Righteousness or justice will be attributed to that nation which *acknowledges Ieue's people* and acts accordingly (Matt. 25:31-46). The Second Kingdom Commission goes forth with power and tolerates no opposition. At its crisis, when

Satan makes his final assault, its force is seen in his instant destruction along with those whom he has deceived.

The blessings borne by the Creation Commission are almost exclusively physical and directed to earth's restoration. Though we believe its proclamation has been fulfilled, its fruition awaits the unveiling of the sons of God (Rom. 8:19).

#### CHRIST'S SUFFERING FOR SINS

Let us note that in these commissions, *sins* and the *sufferings* of Christ on account of them, are not even mentioned.

The First Kingdom Commission was given long before He suffered and *its proclamation was immediately stopped when He began to foretell His sufferings*. True, the establishment of the kingdom, like all else, is based upon His sacrifice, but His coming in great power must precede the setting up of the kingdom.

The Second Kingdom Commission is an embassy to the nations and is based upon the fulfillment of the first commission and the political supremacy of Israel.

Mark's Creation Commission is founded upon the resurrection of Jesus Christ. It covers not only sinners, but also the lower creation which we cannot charge with sin, but only with bearing man's burden without his guilt.

#### THE COMMISSION GIVEN

But Luke's Commission for Mankind deals with the *pardon of sins*. When this commission was given, the apostles, terrified by His appearance among them, were assured by their Lord that He was not a spirit, but that it was He, Himself. They fail to take it in, being overjoyed, yet He opens their mind to understand the Scriptures, upon which He bases His charge:

“Thus it is written, and thus must the Christ be suffering and rise from among the dead the third day, and there is to be heralded in His name repentance for the pardon of sins, to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. Now you shall be witnesses of these things. And lo! I am delegating the promise of My Father on you. Now you be seated in the city of Jerusalem till you should be putting on power from on high.” (Luke 24:46-49).

The basis of this commission, as we have already observed, is the *suffering* of Christ. It was foretold in the early scriptures. Peter refers to this when speaking to Cornelius: “To this One are all the prophets testifying: everyone who is believing in Him is to obtain the pardon of sins through His name.” (Acts 10:43). It was not in force until Pentecost, when they were baptized with holy spirit, empowering them for its proclamation. The record in Acts gives us the course of this commission.

The “Acts of the Apostles” is in reality a treatise on the kingdom as heralded in the power of the holy spirit by the apostles. While it is a continuation of Luke’s former treatise, it also records the administration of the First Kingdom Commission and the Creation Commission. Peter, to whom the keys of the kingdom were committed during the Lord’s absence, unlocks the door to the Jews on the day of Pentecost and later to the nations also. Baptism was included in its proclamation, from Mark’s Commission, as well as repentance from Luke’s Commission for Mankind.

#### PETER ON PENTECOST

Repentance and pardon were to be heralded first at Jerusalem (Luke 24:47; Acts 2:38), to spread to Judea and Samaria (Acts 1:8, 8:1), and then to the limits of the land. First, then, we hear it proclaimed in the holy city on the day of Pentecost. Peter said to the sons of Israel: “Repent and be baptized each of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the pardon of your sins...”

(Acts 2:38). The words concerning baptism belong to Mark's Commission. The words concerning the "gratuity of the holy spirit," which we have omitted, refer to a *promise* contained in none of the commissions. Thus throughout the book of Acts we find various commissions heralded in the same breath, and only an exact knowledge of each will enable us to determine the basis of each statement.

#### THE CASE OF CORNELIUS

There is no record in the book of Acts that Peter ever went outside the land of Israel in his proclamation of pardon. Jerusalem at Pentecost and the Cæsarean proselyte Cornelius are the model cases given us of his ministry. Cornelius' case is especially in point. The Kingdom Commission could not be used there so Christ is proclaimed as *Lord of all* (Acts 10:36), and Judge of both the dead and the living, and on this ground it is said, "To this One are all the prophets testifying: everyone who is believing in Him is to obtain the pardon of sins through His name." (Acts 10:43).

#### PAUL OFFERS PARDON

Paul was appointed to carry this message to the nations. Although his later commissions recalled its exercise, at the beginning he was sent to the nations "...to open their eyes, to turn them about from darkness to light and from the authority of Satan to God, for them to get a pardon of sins and an allotment among those who have been hallowed by faith that is in Me." (Acts 26:18).

His address at Pisidian Antioch gives us a sample of how this was carried out. First he heralded it to the Jews in the synagogue saying, "Let it be known to you, then, men, brethren, that through this One is being announced to you the pardon of sins..." The faithful

benignities of David were secured to them by the resurrection of Jesus (Acts 13:34, 38).

But Ieue had told Isaiah,

"A slight thing is it for you to become My servant,  
To raise up the tribes of Jacob,  
And the dispersed of Israel to restore.  
Behold! I give you also for a light of the nations,  
To become My salvation unto the ends of the earth."  
(Isaiah 49:6)

Thus the nations had these things made known to them, that their sins also might be pardoned.

#### PAUL PREPARES FOR JUSTIFICATION

This is the very first of Paul's addresses of which we have any record after his severance from the other apostles, as recorded in Acts 13:2. Besides carrying out Luke's Commission to Mankind, Paul gives his brethren the first hint that we have of *justification*. Not at all in the fullness or clearness which it afterwards attained as set forth in Romans, for this would not be fitting in a historical account such as the book of Acts. We must expect to find it there only as it relates to the earthly kingdom. Thus we read, "...and from all from which you could not be justified in the law of Moses, in this One everyone who is believing is being justified." (Acts 13:39).

Here the law was not actually set aside. But the impotency of the law is hinted at in those things in which justification is introduced.

#### AUTHORITY TO PARDON

It is important to note that in every instance *pardon* is connected with *rule*. It is the function of the *executive*. Christ is heralded as *King* or *Ruler*, or God's *authority* is brought forward first as a basis of any pardon that may be offered. This is why the Pardon Parable is given us in Matthew's account, though it is

joined to Luke's in spirit by the somewhat strange characterization "A man, a king..." (Matt. 18:23).

#### THE PARDON PARABLE

The question of the pardon of sins between brethren comes up, and authority is given to the apostles to bind and loose on earth. Two agreed on earth shall have their requests granted. Two or three gathered in His Name can act with His authority. Peter asks whether the limit of pardon should be extended to seven times? This brings to the Lord's mind the course of the kingdom in connection with the heralding of pardon. So He gives an illustration:

"Therefore likened was the kingdom of the heavens to a man, a king, who wants to settle accounts with his slaves. Now, at his beginning to settle, one debtor was brought to him who owed ten thousand talents. Now, at his not having wherewith to pay, the lord orders him to be disposed of, and his wife and children and all, whatever he has, and payment to be made. Falling down, then, that slave worshiped him, saying, 'Lord, be patient with me, and I will pay you all!' Now, having compassion, the lord of that slave dismisses him, and remits his loan.

"Yet, coming out, that slave found one of his fellow slaves, who owed him a hundred denarii, and, holding him, he choked him, saying, 'Pay, if you are owing anything!' Falling down, then, his fellow slave entreated him, saying, 'Be patient with me, and I will pay you all!' Yet he would not, but, coming away, he casts him into jail, till he may pay what is owing.

"Then his fellow slaves, perceiving what is occurring, were tremendously sorry, and, coming, elucidate to their lord all that is occurring.

"Then his lord, calling him to him, is saying to him, 'Wicked slave! That entire debt I remit to you, since you entreat me. Was it not binding on you also to be merciful to your fellow slave, as I also am merciful to you?' And, being indignant, his lord gives him up to the tormentors till he may pay all that he is owing to him."

(Matt. 18:23-35)

#### AN INTERPRETATION

Surely the Jerusalem sinners who were guilty of His death were the ones who owed the ten thousand talents.

But upon the condition of repentance they were forgiven.

The nations became Israel's debtors through receiving of their spiritual things. But what was the attitude of these pious Jews towards the nations? Paul tells the Thessalonians that they "...kill the Lord Jesus as well as the prophets, and banish us, and are not pleasing to God, and are contrary to all men, *forbidding us to speak to the nations* that they may be saved, to fill up their sins always. *Yet the indignation outstrips to them to a consummation.*" (1 Thess. 2:15, 16).

It is significant that "*tens of thousands*" of the Jews believed yet all were zealous for the law and did their utmost to murder Paul simply because he proclaimed pardon to the other nations (Acts 21:20 and 22:21, 22).

They had received the pardon offered to them through the apostles, but like the slave in the parable, averted wrath visits them for their attitude toward their fellow debtor. The destruction of Jerusalem began their punishment and for the past nineteen centuries they have been in the hands of the tormentors. They were once enlightened, and had tasted of the celestial gratuity at Pentecost and became partakers of holy spirit, besides the ideal declaration of God and the powerful deeds of the impending eon, but they fell aside. These things came through repentance, but repentance became no longer possible (Heb. 6:4-6).

The King had taught them to pray the kingdom prayer, "Thy kingdom come...remit to us our debts, *as we remit those of our debtors.*" And He adds, "...if you should be forgiving men their offenses, you also will your heavenly Father be forgiving. Yet if you should not be forgiving men their offenses, neither will your Father be forgiving your offenses." (Matt. 6:9-15). The

pardon they obtained was probational; its continuance depended upon their attitude towards others.

#### THE COMMISSION'S COURSE

Thus we have traced the course of the proclamation of the Commission for Mankind. Beginning at Jerusalem, depending upon the session there of the delegates of the great King, spreading to Samaria and the other nations, it finally becomes inoperative with the defection of Jerusalem and the casting aside of Israel and the earthly authority vested in the twelve apostles.

#### PETER'S KINGDOM COMMISSION

The Lord's heralding of the kingdom failed. The King indeed came, but the people failed to recognize Him. After the kingdom had been refused, Jesus told His disciples the *secrets* concerning it, while to the throngs He spoke in parables (Matt. 13:10-11). And now He asks His disciples, "Who are men saying the Son of Mankind is?" Turning from the unsatisfactory answer, He says to them,

"Now you, who are you saying that I am?" Now, answering, Simon Peter said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Now, answering, Jesus said to him, "Happy are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood does not reveal it to you, but My Father Who is in the heavens. Now I, also, am saying to you that you are Peter, and on this rock will I be building My ecclesia, and the gates of the unseen shall not be prevailing against it. I will be giving you the keys of the kingdom of the heavens, and whatsoever you should be binding on the earth shall be binding in the heavens, and whatsoever you should be loosing on the earth shall be loose in the heavens." (Matt. 16:15-19).

#### THE KEYS OF THE KINGDOM

The gates into the kingdom had been swung wide open by the Lord, but who would enter? The powers of darkness seem to have successfully hid the "Light" and the basic truth of His Messiahship was obscured by dark-

ness. Yet this rock, which was to form the foundation of His ecclesia, was firmly established even if few could perceive it in the growing gloom. Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. This fact is the firm foundation upon which the kingdom will yet be fixed. The acknowledgement of this by Peter fitted him to carry the keys of the kingdom. The possession of a city's keys and a place at the city's gate denotes authority and rule in the ancient east. So too with Simon Peter. His commission includes more than merely the unlocking of the gates. He was given authority to bind and to loose. His acts were to be ratified in the heavens. This is also true of the actions of the Jewish ecclesia (Matt. 18:18).

#### THE GATES OF THE UNSEEN SHALL NOT PREVAIL

As further proof that the gates of the unseen would not prevail against His ecclesia, the Lord unveils its glories to the three chosen apostles upon the mount (Matt. 17:1-5). There Simon Peter had the prophetic word more confirmed and was a spectator of His magnificence (2 Pet. 1:16-20). But upon coming down from the mount, the vision is sealed, the gates into the kingdom are locked, until the Son of Mankind may be roused from among the dead (Matt. 17:9).

#### PETER AT PENTECOST

Then, on the day of pentecost, Peter uses the keys which had been entrusted to him, and he proclaims to all the house of Israel that "God makes Him Lord as well as Christ—this Jesus Whom you crucify!" (Acts 2:36). It was upon this rock that the ecclesia at pentecost was built. Thus he opened the gates with the keys entrusted to him by his Lord and many of the Jews entered.

#### PETER AND THE PROSELYTE

But *all* who are to enter the kingdom must be admitted

by Peter. So he is sent for by Cornelius, a devout and God fearing man (Acts 10:2). The powers of the kingdom do not reach the proselyte until Peter brings his message. Later he says to the apostles and elders "... God chooses among you, that through *my* mouth the nations are to hear the word of the evangel and believe." (Acts 15:7).

But that ministry, like his Lord's, fails. The gates into the kingdom are once again swung shut by Isaiah's solemn message (Compare Matt. 13:14 with Acts 28:26). How then are the gates to be opened again, now that Peter is no longer here? His epistles point to the means of entrance. Indeed, in his second letter he instructs the dispersed Jews how an entrance may be supplied *richly* into the eonian kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ (2 Pet. 1:11). Thus Simon Bar-Jonah was the foremost of the twelve apostles, and unlocked, and will yet unlock, the gates into the kingdom for the people of Ieue.

#### "YOU ARE PETER"

How refreshing to the weary heart of the Lord was this confession from His impetuous disciple! Flesh and blood could not give this insight. The Father must have revealed it to him through His spirit. And so the Lord christens him "Peter" anew, in recognition of this spiritual kinship which was revealed.

#### THE DIVINE DOVE

Simon's father's name was John (John 1:42). When the Lord first met him He surnamed him, in Hebrew, Cephas, which, when translated into Greek, is Peter. But now He calls him "Simon Bar-Jonah," or Simon, *son of a Dove*. The divine dove, that precious embodiment of the holy spirit which had descended upon the

Lord at the beginning of His ministry, is present again, seeing that Simon is now to be given his commission (Luke 3:21, 22).

Now that the rock upon which the Kingdom is to rest had been revealed to Simon, and he, by his confession, had become identified with it, and, in spite of the way things looked at the time, the gates of the unseen were not to prevail against it, it is most fitting that the keys to unlock the gates of the kingdom be committed to him. So, while the Lord locks the gates into the kingdom, at the same time He promises the keys to Peter.

#### PETER'S SHEPHERD COMMISSION

The Chief Shepherd was about to leave the flock. When He came, He had found them "bothered and tossed as if sheep having no shepherd." (Matt. 9:36). But His own sheep had heard His voice. He called them by name, and they followed Him. He was the ideal Shepherd, the true David, for He laid down His soul for the sake of the sheep (John 10:14,15). Thus was the prophecy fulfilled:

Sword! Rouse against My Shepherd  
And against the Master, Who is My Companion,  
Averting is leue of hosts.  
Smite the Shepherd, and scattering is the flock.  
(Zech. 13:7, Matt. 26:31)

But now the little flocklet, to which He had promised the kingdom (Luke 12:32), has been gathered together again and one must be chosen to tend and feed it in the wilderness journey which lies just ahead. And whom does He choose for such a task? *We* would have picked out the most faithful and steady hand to hold the shepherd's staff. *We* might lean upon a human arm. But the Lord makes a better choice. *Human* strength is only weakness in such a service. To teach His shepherd this

he must be tried, so as to learn the vanity of his own heart.

#### IMPETUOUS PETER

"And if all shall be snared in Thee, I will never be snared," was the proud boast of Peter. But his Lord knew him far better than he knew himself. Yet Peter insisted "And if ever I must be dying with Thee, I will under no circumstances be renouncing Thee." (Matt. 26:33-35). How his soul must have melted when, after denying his Master thrice, Peter heard the cock crow, and the Lord, in the midst of all His suffering, turned and looked upon him (Luke 22:61). Oh, the power of that look!

And Peter went out and lamented bitterly.

#### THE LESSON LEARNED

It was here that Peter learned that great lesson which he later taught the sheep: "God is resisting the proud, yet is giving grace to the humble. Be humbled, then, under the mighty hand of God, that He should be exalting you in season, tossing your entire worry on Him, for He is caring concerning you." (1 Pet. 5:6,7).

Those bitter tears were very precious in the Lord's sight. With what exquisite tenderness He sends His resurrection message to "His disciples *and to Peter*"! (Mark 16:7).

#### THE FAILING FISHERMAN

Yet love has still one more lesson. Peter goes fishing. Six others go with him. But the Lord had called them *from* fishing for fishes, saying "*From now on* you shall be catching men...!" (Luke 5:10). So they fish all night and catch nothing. How searching, then, was the question from a Man on the shore, "Little children, have you no viands [i.e., things to eat]?" (John 21:5).

Peter and the others doubtless thought themselves

good fishermen, but they had to answer "No!" The Man on the shore orders them to cast the net on the right parts of the ship, and lo! they were not strong enough to draw in the net for the multitude of fishes! There were a hundred and fifty-three, which may allude to the number of those who were blessed during the Lord's earthly ministry, of which we have any record. Or the night of futile fishing may correspond to the time typified in Israel's yearly calendar by the period between the festival of Unleavened Bread and the festival of Trumpets; a period of about one hundred and fifty-three days. It may be that the number of fish caught is an allusion to this. This would show that while the past labors of the twelve apostles seem to have netted nothing, yet when He appears in the future, there will be an abundant "catch."

"It is the Lord!" cries John. Simon Peter girds on his overcoat and swims to shore in his eagerness to reach his Master. Then he helps the others land the fish. But the Lord already has a lunch spread on the shore, thus showing His care and provision for them. The meal is all ready and cooked. They do not do anything to provide it. And now that Peter's hunger is appeased, the Lord commissions him to satisfy the hunger of His flock.

#### THE FIRST CHARGE

"... Are you loving Me more than these (disciples)?" How small Peter's boast of loyalty, even to death, now seems! To the other disciples he had shown himself a coward, denying his Lord with swearing and curses. He cannot prove his affection to them. But he knew that his heart was an open book to his Lord. Still he refuses to boast that he *loves* Him more than his fellow disciples, hiding behind a weaker word, denoting the

attractive force of friendship. He answers, "Yes, Lord, *Thou* art aware that I am *fond* of Thee!"

This appeal of indwelling love in all its timid weakness, brings forth the first charge:

"*Graze My Lambkins.*" The lambkins may not have strength to stand temptation. They may fail, as Simon had failed, when the floods break over them. Yet one thing is true of them all, they have an affection for the Lord. And so He would have the disciples who knew their own weakness nourish the weakness of such into strength.

#### THE SECOND CHARGE

Simon had not only renounced his Lord thrice, but had just led His disciples astray on a fishing expedition and would have starved them with his skill as a fisherman. The net full of fishes, one hundred and fifty-three, which came at the Lord's bidding, could not fail to impress Simon with the fact that no fishing could prosper except the Lord give the word. And the number of fishes may well have been a reminder to Peter that he was to "fish" only for *men*.

How truly this accords with the second charge: "Are you loving Me?" "Yes, Lord, *Thou* art aware that I am fond of Thee."

"*Shepherd My Sheep.*"

#### THE THIRD CHARGE

And a third time the Lord appeals to his affection, this time taking up the term with which Simon had answered His previous questions. "Simon of John, are you fond of Me?" "Lord, *Thou* art aware of all things! *Thou knowest* that I am fond of Thee."

Much stronger is Simon's protest here than what he had said before. He leaves the ground that the Lord was aware of his fondness, as he may have displayed it from

time to time, for the deeper insight, the personal acquaintance, the knowledge that the Lord had of his inmost being. “Thou *knowest*,” he says, “that I am fond of Thee.” And upon this mature ground he is charged:

“*Graze My little Sheep.* Verily, verily, I am saying to you, when you were younger you girded yourself and walked where you would, yet whenever you may be growing decrepit, you will stretch out your hands, and another shall be girding you and carrying you where you would not.’ Now this He said, signifying by what death he will be glorifying God. And, saying this, He is saying to him, ‘Follow Me!’ ”

PETER’S BOAST MADE GOOD

Simon had girded his overcoat about him and had jumped overboard when he heard it was the Lord, such was his desire to be with Him. Now the Lord reveals to him that He does indeed know him. Peter’s protestations of fondness were not lost upon Him. Even the boast that he would follow Him to death would be made good, for he would not only succeed the Lord in the heralding of the kingdom, in shepherding the sheep, but also in the manner of his death. Surely to him He could say as to no one else: “Follow Me!” In his second epistle Peter tells those who had obtained like precious faith: “. . . my tabernacle is to be put off swiftly according as our Lord, Jesus Christ, also makes evident to me.” (2 Pet. 1:14).

THE COMMISSION CARRIED OUT

Thus this commission was to be carried out during the Lord’s absence and does not extend to His coming as does John’s personal commission (John 21:22-24).

THE TWO COMMISSIONS RELATED

Though quite distinct from Peter’s Kingdom commis-

sion, these charges are most intimately associated with it. Of old, Ieue led forth His people like sheep, and guided them in the wilderness like a flock (Psa. 78:52). He was their Shepherd (Psa. 23:1, 80:1). They were the sheep of His pasture (Psa. 79:13) and the flock of His hand (Psa. 95:7, 100:3). But like sheep they had gone astray; they had turned every one to his own way (Isa. 53, Jer. 50:6, Ezek. 34:1-31). The false shepherds had spoiled them. When the ideal Shepherd came, He told His apostles not to go to the nations but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel (Matt. 10:6). Peter reminds them of this when he writes, "For you were as straying sheep, but now you turned back to the Shepherd and Supervisor of your souls." (1 Pet. 2:25).

"NOT OF THIS FOLD"

Jesus was heralding the kingdom as for the "sheep" only. Thus we read, "Do not fear, little flocklet, for it delights your Father to give *you* the kingdom." (Luke 12:32). The "sheep" of the future kingdom on the earth will be Israelites only. Even the term "straying sheep" refers to the Israelite outside the land, dispersed among the nations. It is these who "turn back to the Shepherd" (1 Pet. 2:25). This is further indicated in the words of the Lord: "And other sheep have I which are not of this fold (i.e., the "straying sheep" were not of the "fold" of Israel). Those I must be leading, and they will be hearing My voice, and there will be one flock, one Shepherd." (John 10:16).

The "fold" is Israel, with her wall of ordinances. The flock is those of Israel who hear His voice and follow the Shepherd out of the fold. Some of the dispersion among the nations were reached by Peter's epistles and so were taken into the one "flock" and followed the Shepherd with the other sheep in the land.

Paul's use of the term "flocklet," when speaking in Miletus (Acts 20:28), seems to have a very general reference, without specific connection to the Lord's words in John 10. Along with his use of "flocklet," Paul associates the term "shepherding" with the "ecclesia of God." This latter designation has a very wide application, being used in the early days when Paul was still termed "Saul". (See 1 Cor. 15:9; Gal. 1:13). These terms are used here as figures, perfectly suited to give vividness and warning as to the "wolves" who would enter, not sparing the flocklet, after Paul made his final departure.

#### THE SHEEP AND THE KIDS

And finally, when the kingdom is set up, and all nations are gathered before the Son of Mankind, He will divide the nations as a shepherd does the sheep and the kids. The sheep represent those nations who have succored His brethren in their sore distress. Such nations are to enjoy an allotment in the kingdom, along with His brethren, the Israelites.

The figure of sheep is used in this judging of the nations because it will result in some nations receiving an immediate close association with Israel. The treatment of Christ's brethren by such nations has, in reality, been an unwitting anticipation of the future, and so such nations will not require the shepherding of the iron club (Rev. 2:27; 12:5). But those nations which have ill-treated the Jew are not granted this blessing; they forfeit their place in the kingdom and are sent away into eonian chastening (Matt. 25:31-46).

#### THE STAFF OF THE GREAT SHEPHERD

And chief among His millennial glories will be His iron club, which is none other than the staff of the Great Shepherd of the sheep. Before that great day, Peter, by

his epistles, grazes the lambkins, tends and feeds the sheep, preparing the little flock for the kingdom which will surely be their portion.

### JOHN'S COMMISSION

Peter, in spirit and experience, *follows* his Lord, not only in the manner of his death but in the spirit of his epistles. They dwell upon Christ's sufferings and are written to those enduring trial.

#### JOHN "REMAINS"

In contrast to this is John's ministry as recorded in his writings. Eonian, death defying *life* is the burden of his account of our Lord's ministry. His epistles leap forward and concern those especially who abide until the coming of Christ and His glory. This is the key to their interpretation.

But, especially in the revelation which John receives on the island of Patmos, when he reviews the grand scenes attending the unveiling of Jesus Christ, then in a very real sense does he *remain* until his Lord's coming. John saw these things and heard them. They were as real to him as though he were in flesh as well as in spirit.

This is the meaning of the incident found at the end of John's account:

Now, Peter, being turned about, is observing the disciple whom Jesus loved following, who leans back also on His chest at the dinner and said to Him, "Lord, who is it who is giving Thee up?" Peter, then, perceiving this one, is saying to Jesus, "Lord, yet what of this man?" Jesus is saying to him, "If I should be wanting him to be remaining till I am coming, what is it to you? You be following Me!" This word, then, came out to the brethren, that that disciple is not dying. Now Jesus did not say to him that he is not dying, but "If I should be wanting him to be remaining till I am coming, what is it to you?" (John 21:20-23)

The rumor that John was not to die is denied, but nevertheless the puzzling statement is repeated. "If I should be wanting him to be remaining till I am coming . . ." can only mean that, in spirit, this was to be the case, though in fact he would die like other men.

#### THE PLACE OF JOHN

It seems fairly certain that John's "gospel" was not written until Paul had finished his career. Paul probably never saw it, nor did those who received his ministry. Why, then, should it be deemed absolutely necessary in these days, in many cases replacing and discounting Paul's teaching? A correct cutting of the word of truth will acknowledge John's writings, but will also leave them in the place they claim for themselves. John was a minister of the Circumcision (Gal. 2:9) and always refers to the nations as outside the scope of his ministry. As much of his ministry has its fullest application in the yet future day of the Lord when the other nations will be blessed through faithful Israel, he often speaks of worldwide blessing; but always, as it will be in that future day, Israel's prior place is acknowledged. He opens his first epistle by insisting upon a physical relationship to Christ (1 John 1:1, 2). The waiving of such a relationship is the very foundation of the present Conciliation. According to Paul, "even if we *have known* Christ according to *flesh*, nevertheless *now* we know Him so *no longer*" (2 Cor. 5:16).

#### JOHN INSTEAD OF PAUL

Much confusion has resulted from making John, instead of Paul, the exponent of present truth. The grand fact of the new *creation* (2 Cor. 5:17) has been well nigh eclipsed by the teaching of the "new *birth*," which describes Israel's regeneration (John 3:7). The "new

birth" is specifically referred to as "terrestrial" (John 3:12) while the blessings for us, included in the new creation, are "celestial" (Eph. 1:3). "Seeing the kingdom of God" (Perceiving the kingdom of God) has been twisted to mean an entrance into heaven, and, as a result, the earthly kingdom has been lost sight of and replaced by "heaven." Getting nothing from those of the nations (3 John 7) has been changed into "getting nothing from the unsaved," thus obscuring the fact that John received nothing from the nations, whereas Paul not only received from them for himself, but brought their bounty to the starving saints in Jerusalem (Rom. 15:26, 27).

In those days it was clearly understood that John was not to minister to the nations. When Paul went to Jerusalem, James, Cephas and *John*, who were supposed to be pillars, gave to Paul and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, by the terms of which Paul and Barnabas were to go to the nations, *but John* and those with him *to the Circumcision* (Gal. 2:9).

### PAUL'S FOUR MINISTRIES

Paul's ministry differs from that of the twelve apostles in a number of important points. They received definite commissions from the Lord while He was still on the earth. These commissions guided them for the entire course of their ministry. But Paul received his commissions from heaven, not all at once, but in gradual installments. This is clear from his initial commission as he recounts it before King Agrippa. He is to be "a deputy and a witness both of what you have perceived *and that in which I will be seen by you . . .*" (Acts 26:16).

As a consequence of this, Paul's ministry falls into four distinct periods:

I. Saul heralds Jesus as the Son of God (Acts 9:1-30, see verse 20).

II. Saul is severed by the holy spirit: Paul preaches Justification (Acts 13:1-19:20, see verse 21).

III. Paul no longer knows Christ according to the flesh: teaches the Conciliation (2 Cor. 5:16-21), (Acts 19:21-28:28).

IV. The dispensation of the Secret Administration committed to Paul (Eph. 3:1-9).

These periods do not supercede one another on a dead level, but each ministry includes the former, yet adds to its display of grace and glory. The heralding of Jesus to the Jews as the Son of God prepared the way to preach justification to the other nations. Justification in turn, provided the basis for the message of peace, the Conciliation. All of these together formed the foundation on which the dispensation of the present Secret Administration rests.

The grace shown to the nations now would be impossible apart from the fact that God is conciliated to the world. This favor flows from justification. And these all depend upon Christ's glory as the Son of God.

#### FROM GLORY TO GLORY

Paul's ministry went "from glory to *glory*" (2 Cor. 3:18). Moses' ministry went from glory to *gloom*. Moses did not put a covering on his face to hide the glory. The sons of Israel saw that glory (Ex. 34:30). He put the veil on to hide the fact that it was a *fading* glory, a glory that was being nullified (2 Cor. 3:13). It vanished, just as the administration of the law did in practice. It came in voice and lightnings and fire, but it ended in dealing out death. Not so with Paul's ministry. It began in grace and gathered *more* grace and glory as it progressed. It has a glory that *remains* (2 Cor. 3:11).

So great was the glory of Saul's first sight of the Lord that he was blinded by its brightness (Acts 9:8). Here he gets his initial commission, to which we have already referred. This ministry never enters his epistles, so we

must gather its gist from his personal utterances as recorded in the book of Acts.

It was like that of the twelve apostles, in that it also included repentance and pardon, but unlike their commissions, it was to be proclaimed to the nations, to whom Saul was particularly sent (Acts 26:16-20). Similar to this is the account we have of this ministry in the city of Damascus (Acts 9:20-22). He proved that Jesus was the Christ, but also preached Him as the Son of God.

#### THE SECOND PERIOD

After his call on the road to Damascus, the next great landmark in the life of Saul was his *severance*, by the holy spirit (together with Barnabas) to a special work (Acts 13:2). Then, in accord with his new ministry, Saul becomes Paul. He stands and delivers a sermon in Pisidian Antioch which adds much luster to his message, for there he first broaches the grand doctrine of justification by faith (Acts 13:14-41, see verse 39).

True, it is only a side issue, as it were, mentioned in connection with the pardon he had previously proclaimed. But the germ was there and it found its full expression in the first four chapters of his Roman letter. Its gracious character is seen when, being rejected by the Jews, it is freely heralded to the idolaters, and whoever were set for life eonian believed (Acts 13:48).

This ministry is often referred to by Paul as "my evangel." It continued until he had "completed the evangel of the Christ" from Jerusalem and around unto Illyricum (Rom. 15:19). It covers Paul's itineracy among the nations, including the establishment of ecclesias in Galatia, Thessalonica, Corinth and Ephesus. The epistles to the Thessalonians were written during this period, as well as that to the Galatians and the first epistle to the Corinthians, but the second Corinthian letter and that to the Romans was not penned until its conclusion. They mark the crisis between this period and the next. This part of Paul's ministry is most significantly

concluded with the words: "Thus mightily the word of the Lord grows and was strong. Now, as these things were fulfilled . . ." (Acts 19:20, 21).

#### THE THIRD PERIOD

"As these things were fulfilled" introduces us to Paul's decision to visit Jerusalem and Rome. The latter connects this crisis with his letter to the Romans (Rom. 15:22-25). His visit to Jerusalem gives us a graphic picture of the character of his new ministry, the Conciliation. By this ministry, every barrier between God and the nations is effectually removed. Yet, when Trophimus, an Ephesian, is in Jerusalem, he is denied all access into the courts of Ieue, and the mere suggestion that he has dared to draw nigh, throws the entire city into an uproar (Acts 21:27-32).

At this point it is well to note the distinctive character of the blessings for the nations, which is developed through Paul's ministry. According to the prophets, all blessing for the nations must flow through Israel. Their blessing is always "*with* His people" (Rom. 15:10). And hitherto, in spite of the fact that Israel was becoming apostate, blessing had been "to the Jew first" and the nations were participating in "their spiritual things" (Rom. 15:27). However, it was becoming more and more evident that blessing is not dependent upon Israel's national salvation. Conciliation is not based on their blessing, but on their "casting away" (Rom. 11:15).

In fact, Paul's ministry waxes as Israel's wanes. Its glories grow brighter in the gathering gloom.

Israel's ascendancy over the other nations had two distinct aspects: it was political and it was religious. Both were assumed by the apostles of the Circumcision when they sent a decree for the ecclesias among the nations to obey (Acts 15:19-29).

But when Israel failed utterly as the priest nation, so that, instead of bringing the nations to God, they

drive them away, then God opens up a *spiritual* way of access to Himself which eclipses the tardy and cumbrous approach which Israel knew.

In the eon to come, blessing for the nations will be in proportion to Israel's superior bliss. Now, however, Israel's *failure* provides the field for God's *grace* to act towards the hated aliens. Paul's third ministry is fully set forth in the fifth to eighth, as well as the eleventh chapters of the epistle to the Romans. Its burden is peace. In it God beseeches men to lay aside all enmity and accept the Conciliation He has effected through the death of His Son.

#### PAUL'S PROPHETIC WRITINGS

It was made known after Paul's itinerant ministry, being set forth in his *prophetic writings*. Being based on Israel's "casting away," rather than her restoration, it was entirely new—a secret unknown to the prophets or the twelve apostles (Rom. 16:25, 26).

During the three previous periods Israel still had its standing before God. The book of Acts still traced the affairs of the kingdom as heralded in the power of the spirit. Israel was not finally set aside until Paul, as a prisoner, is in Rome. There Isaiah's solemn message is sounded in their ears for the last time. All are to know that the salvation of God was dispatched directly to the nations, and they will hear (Acts 28:26-28). Not until this crisis was it possible to reveal the last and more excellent ministry of the great apostle of the nations. Hitherto blessing had been always, in some way, subordinate to Israel. If nothing new had been done, then the nations would be in a sad situation, for, according to the prophets, their only channel of blessing had been choked off. But God had already done something new. He had already revealed the secret which effectually disposed of Israel's religious reign and now the grandest glory of all greets the gloom which gathers around Israel's national grave. The scope of blessing is changed

from the terrestrial realm to the celestial (Eph. 1:3). Whatever God may do, even in grace, cannot go counter to His revealed counsel for His chosen nation. On earth political supremacy must be reserved for His earthly people. But in the celestials no such restrictions reign.

There He may lavish the glories of His grace without infringing in the least upon Israel's special prerogatives. And so a secret is made known—the secret of Christ—which places Him in the highest place among the celestials, even as He shall be upon the earth. And this secret it is which underlies Paul's final ministry. Spiritual blessing among the celestials becomes the portion of those who receive this message (Eph. 1:3). Jewish privileges disappear. The nations are not discriminated against in this supernal glory, but are blessed equally with those who believe out of God's chosen nation. They are made *joint* enjoyers of this allotment, members of a joint body and joint partakers of all that, and more, which, in his previous ministries, Paul could only portion out to them as dependents of the chosen nation (Eph. 3:1-11).

Thus, during Paul's four ministries, two forces have been at work. One has dragged Israel down into the dust, the other has raised the nations to the place of blessing and the believers among them to the supreme pitch of power and glory.

The way to such a height has been gradual. At least four distinct steps mark the ascent to this pinnacle of grace until at last we find ourselves at the very zenith of revelation. This is found in Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians, epistles written after the apostle was imprisoned at Rome. They contain the truth of all truth for us. They are the touchstone of all doctrine for the present. They are the limit of glory beyond which there can be no more.

In the last days of this administration it is of principal importance that we get a firm grasp of Paul's ministries and of their relationship one to another. From first to

last, they contain truth for the present time. His very call forms a pattern for all those who were about to believe (1 Tim. 1:16). It was an exhibition of transcendent grace outside the land of Israel and it came from heaven. Thus his ministries begin and end with three striking characteristics—grace, celestial grace, shown in an alien land.

The first two periods of Paul's ministries have much in common, and so have the last two. The first are itinerant. The heralding is by word of mouth. Israel's prior place is acknowledged. After the great crisis, when he no longer knows Christ according to the flesh, Israel no longer gets priority. The apostle spends his time in prison and writes rather than speaks.

The first two are in accord with Israel's blessing in the day of the Lord and the nations are granted a place such as will be accorded them in that day. But in the last two, two great secrets are made known—the Conciliation and the Secret Administration—which give the nations a standing not dependent upon Israel at all.

From this it follows that Paul's earlier ministries needed modification to accord with the present truth. His message of repentance was not committed to writing, and his utterances in the book of Acts are clearly intended to conform to the kingdom on which that book is a treatise.

*But after he was severed*, there is a marked change. Then he begins to bring in truth which, though applicable to the kingdom in its future manifestation, is distinctly truth for the present administration. Justification is not restated in the prison epistles (Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians), but it is implied in such passages as Ephesians 4:24, Philippians 1:11 and 3:6-9.

During this period, too, he receives the glorious truth of the Lord's coming and our deliverance from impending indignation. He received this *from the Lord*. It is manifestly not from the other apostles, for they never

preached any such thing. This truth does not appear in the book of Acts, as it is not in line with its subject. It was revealed to the Thessalonians (1 Thess. 4:16, 17), and is referred to in the prison epistles in Ephesians 1:12, Philippians 3:20 and Colossians 1:5.

“Which you hear before in the word of truth of the evangel...” (Col. 1:5) indicates that the apostle is reminding the Colossians of this truth which he had previously preached during his itinerant ministry. This is in thorough accord with his explanation of the “mystery” (or secret) found in Ephesians 3:6, 7 that “the nations are to be... joint partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus, through the evangel of which *I became the dispenser...*”

To put a comma after “gospel” (evangel), so that we have the apostle telling the Ephesians that he actually *was* a dispenser of the evangel is needless. He had been among them for years heralding the “good news.” When he had made it known to them, however, he had to tell them that their share in its blessing was subordinate to Israel, but now that provision is removed and they may share them equally with the believers called out of the chosen nation.

These blessings are not nullified by the latest revelation: they are only modified to conform to its burden, that all blessing is now equally for all believers, both out of the Jews and the nations.

But these early truths are not only confirmed to them, not only are they shared by the nations equally with Israel, but they are transformed from glory to glory (2 Cor. 3:18).

The “Lord” shall descend from heaven, we read in Thessalonians (1 Thess. 4:16). This was His title with regard to the nations then (Acts 10:36). There is nothing said concerning our bodies. We shall “always be together with the Lord,” does not necessarily guarantee a celestial allotment. But to the Corinthians comes an

added glory, for they are told of the change of the bodies of the saints from soulish to spiritual, from a soilish to a celestial (1 Cor. 15:44-53). "Always together with the Lord" and a spiritual body are strong symptoms of the impending truth, but it is not until Philippians is penned that all the glory of this marvelous truth bursts forth (Phil. 3:20, 21).

There we are not *with* Him, but *like* Him! There our spiritual bodies inhabit their celestial home. There He is not only our Lord, but our *Saviour* and *Christ*.

#### PAUL'S "MY EVANGEL"

Paul closes his letter to the Romans with an invocation to "Him Who is able to establish you in accord with *my* evangel, *and* the heralding of Christ Jesus in accord with the revelation of a secret..." (Rom. 16:25).

#### PAUL SEVERED

Here he distinguishes between his evangel and the revelation of a secret. In the opening statement of the epistle we are informed that he was *severed* for the evangel of God, concerning His Son (Rom. 1:1-3.) That this is a distinct message from that proclaimed by the other apostles is evident, for he was *severed for it*. Even in the book of Acts, where this is less definite than Paul's epistles indicate, we have the record of this severance and are confirmed in this by the fact that in that book he is the only one who sets forth Christ as the Son of God (Acts 9:20) and who proclaims the evangel of God. This is entirely absent from the preaching of the twelve apostles at that time.

#### THE THREE OCCURRENCES

Three times Paul speaks of "my" evangel (Rom. 2:16; 16:25; 2 Tim. 2:8.) Once, as we have seen, he speaks of his evangel as one of the foundations upon which the saints were to be established. In the other two instances he speaks of things which are in accord with

it, which are associated with it in a marked manner. These are the judgment of humanity (Rom. 2:16) and the rousing from among the dead of Jesus Christ, Who is of the seed of David (2 Tim. 2:8).

The various commissions which we have already considered do not involve the judgment spoken of in Romans. The *hidden things* of humanity are not adjudicated by any of the previous commissions. There is judgment for the Israelite who turns traitor to his King; for the nation which fails in allegiance to the expected kingdom; for the man who discredits the resurrection; for an unrepentant or unsympathetic attitude towards offered pardon; but now men's motives, the very basis of their acts, are to be brought to the test of God's glory apart from any national distinctions, government, or outward conduct. This is in harmony with Paul's message, which is based upon the fact that *all* have sinned and are wanting of the glory of God (Rom. 3:23). So, too, with the resurrection. One need only refer to the closing chapters of Paul's epistle to the Corinthians to see what a vital and unique place it has in his teaching (1 Cor. 15:12-58).

In its importance, as also its necessity, the rousing from among the dead of Jesus Christ ranks with His coming to be of the seed of David. Davidic descent gave Him a relationship as to the flesh, while His resurrection indicated His origin, designating Him Son of God. Both matters are in accord with "my" evangel. The relationship as to the flesh also provided a situation in which Paul could fill up, in his own flesh, in His stead, the deficiencies of the afflictions of Christ; and in this the apostle ever rejoiced.

#### OTHER EVIDENCE

But the coupling of the word "my" with "evangel" is only a small part of the evidence which bids us regard his glad message as a distinct revelation. Before considering the message itself and noting its distinctive

characteristics, we pause to point out how frequently he lays claim to the monopoly of it.

Some are stumbled by the statement in Galatians that "if ever we also, or a messenger out of heaven, should be bringing an evangel to you beside that which we bring to you, let him be anathema!" (Gal. 1:8). From this they conclude that there is but one universal "gospel," without variation or modification. But the study of the previous commissions has shown us that there is variety in the message of God, according to the object in view and in keeping with the condition of those to whom it is sent. Let us note, then, that the apostle qualifies his statement by adding "to you" (that is, the Galatians, as uncircumcised believers out of the nations). He was the apostle of the Uncircumcision (Gal. 2:8). The twelve apostles were sent to the Circumcision. They went to their respective spheres because of the character of the commission under which they served. By thus qualifying his statement by the phrase "*to you*" he does not object to Peter's proclamation of the kingdom to the Circumcision. Every circumstance and assertion in the context goes to show that while he cautiously obtained the fellowship of the twelve, the terms of that very fellowship sent him one way and them another. Indeed, the apostle did not preach this evangel when in Judea, for he speaks of it as "the evangel which I am heralding among the nations." (Gal. 2:2).

Let us note that here we have a name given to Paul's evangel. It is termed the "Evangel of the Uncircumcision" (Gal. 2:7). It is put in the possessive, but it is not yet considered here as in the possession of the Galatians. It was given to Paul for the Uncircumcision, so that the name denotes its *character*.

In their second letter to the Corinthians, Paul and Timothy remind those at Corinth that "if *our* evangel is covered, also, it is covered in those who are perishing, in whom the god of this eon blinds the apprehensions of

the unbelieving so that the illumination of the evangel of the glory of Christ, Who is the Image of the invisible God, does not irradiate them." (2 Cor. 4:3,4). He has been speaking of the covering lying on Israel's heart. Israel expected the future glory of their Messiah as the twelve apostles had heralded it. But they did not know the evangel of the "glory of Christ," a glory which He already possessed at God's right hand. The fact that the earthly glory did not appear was an opportunity for the Adversary to blind their minds.

In writing to the Thessalonians, Paul reminds them of his course among them. The evangel of God, he says, did not come to you in word only, but in power also, and in holy spirit and much assurance (1 Thess. 1:5). This is why they *knew* their election by God. In the same strain he writes to them again: "Now we ought to be thanking God always concerning you, brethren, beloved by the Lord, seeing that God prefers you from the beginning for salvation, in holiness of the spirit and faith in the truth, into which He also calls us through *our* evangel, for the procuring of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. Consequently, then, brethren, stand firm, and hold to the traditions which you were taught, whether through word or through *our* epistle." (2 Thess. 2:13-15). When we examine his evangel itself we will see that the characteristics here mentioned pertain to it alone and not to the message heralded by the twelve apostles.

The third item of the Secret Administration provides that the nations should be "joint partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus, through the evangel of *which I became the dispenser.*" (Eph. 3:6). It would be quite needless, in such an epistle as Ephesians, for the apostle to remind them that he was a dispenser of the evangel, yet that is all that is conveyed by the common punctuation. But the point is that the nations are not "joint partakers" of the promises which come through the evangel as proclaimed by the twelve, but rather through that evangel of

which Paul was, in a special and distinctive manner, the dispenser.

Paul lays himself open to the charge of egotism in commencing every letter with his own name were it not that he is writing in an official capacity and his name is the badge of his special ministry.

#### PAUL'S COMMISSION

Now let us ponder Paul's commission. Unlike the formal commissions we have been considering, Paul's commission is not stated categorically. We have a number of accounts, but in each there is a local coloring. Certainly in his first letter to the Corinthians he reminds them of the evangel he had brought to them. (1 Cor. 15:1,2). The great facts of Christ's death for sins, His burial and resurrection, are presented (15:3,4), yet this is really only an outline. Then he enlarges upon the resurrection, for it is this which is the subject before him (1 Cor. 15:12-58). In the book of Acts stress is laid upon those aspects of Paul's work which affect the kingdom, for that is the subject of the book. The account of his call merely tells us that he was to bear the Lord's name before both the nations and kings, besides the sons of Israel (Acts 9:15). We have the account of this threefold work in Acts itself. It is significant that nowhere else is Paul's testimony before *kings* brought before us, for the book records the rejection of the kingdom. In his defense before his own countrymen, Paul repeats the words of Ananias concerning himself: "The God of our fathers fixes upon you beforehand to know His will, and to be acquainted with the Just One, and to hear the voice of His mouth, that you shall be His witness to all men of what you have seen and hear." (Acts 22:14, 15). It was before King Agrippa that Paul gives the fullest account of his initial commission. The Lord explains His appearance to him thus: "...for I was seen by you for this, to fix upon you before for a deputy and a witness both of what you have perceived and that

in which I will be seen by you, extricating you from the people and from the nations, to whom I am commissioning you, to open their eyes, to turn them about from darkness to light and from the authority of Satan to God, for them to get a pardon of sins and an allotment among those who have been hallowed by faith that is in Me." (Acts 26:16-18). Two things are apparent from this. He was specially entrusted with that part of Luke's Commission for Mankind, which referred "to all the nations." (Luke 24:47). But it is also evident that this was not final, for he was promised future revelations. So, since Paul was not given all his orders at the start, we will need to notice his acts as he carries out the work assigned to him. Not only can we trace its correspondence with these charges, but also its gradual unfolding as a result of later revelations.

#### THE EVIDENCE UNFOLDS

Even before he and Barnabas were formally severed from the rest at Antioch, Paul had proclaimed Jesus as the Son of God, as well as Israel's Messiah. We have already noted the apostle's course at Pisidian Antioch, the first extended account of his preaching after his severance from the other apostles. Without setting the law aside, while still proclaiming pardon, he adds this most significant statement, "... and from all from which you could not be justified in the law of Moses, in this One everyone who is believing is being justified." (Acts 13:39).

Justification is never preached in the four "gospels." True, we have Wisdom justified and God justified and sinners seeking to justify themselves, but in only one instance do we read of a man being justified. The Pharisee justified himself on the ground of his own acts. It is in contrast to this that the tribute collector is "rather" justified (Luke 18:10-14). Not that he enjoyed the fullness of this blessing as we may, but he.

rather than the Pharisee, was right. It is important to note that this is the only case where a propitiatory shelter is spoken of in the four accounts. The tribute collector condemned *himself*, but asked *God* to make a propitiatory shelter for him, the sinner. This attitude was *right* and, because of this, he descended to his home justified, rather than the Pharisee. Even so, the case is *not* the justification of Paul's evangel.

While the book of Acts is filled with the fulfillment of Luke's Commission for Mankind coupled with the First Kingdom Commission when addressing Jews in the land, and baptism and signs from the Creation Commission, the account in Acts merely touches the distinctive commission which was entrusted to Paul. When Paul's commission does come before us, it, like Luke's Commission, is coupled with and colored by the burden of the book, which is the kingdom of Israel.

#### JUSTIFICATION IN ROMANS

The epistle to the Romans perfects the fragment of the new departure which began at Pisidian Antioch. After the failure of the kingdom proclamation, government is no longer in question and divine clemency no longer can send out couriers to proclaim pardon for the mistakes and misdeeds of its subjects. It is the function of the executive to punish or pardon where wrong has been committed. This is quite distinct from the function of the judge. His sole business is to determine whether the prisoner is guilty or not. In Romans, then, the scene is changed. We are in the courtroom. The law upon which all must proceed is laid down. It is perfect equity; there is no distinction.

Mankind is first on the docket. But each one wants to take the judge's seat himself and indict his fellow man, forgetting that he is equally subject to the judgment of God. Mankind condemns itself (Rom. 2:1-16).

Next comes the Jew, who does not wish to be reckoned

with the rest. He *knows* the law yet breaks it. But a lawyer has no better chance in this court than if he did not know a line of law. At the consummation of the First Kingdom Commission, judgment will proceed upon the basis of Israel's priority. The favored nation does not come into this judgment at all, and the rest are rated entirely upon the ground of their treatment of the faithful Jew (Matt. 25:31-46). The Second Kingdom Commission, though its object is the nations, subordinates them to His earthly people, Israel. And even when, in Luke's Commission, a pardon is proclaimed to all nations, including Israel, it was to begin at Jerusalem. The record in the book of Acts shows that it was only with the intervention of divine prompting that it was proclaimed to any other than fellow Jews. The commission was clear enough. The long narrative in the case of Cornelius shows how this prejudice was broken down. The book of Acts, however, is most strictly a kingdom account heralding a kingdom truth, and pardon a kingly prerogative. As such, it must give the Israelite the place preeminent. In Romans, however, we are in the courtroom, where there is no such distinction between Jew and Greek. Justice inflexible is the only rule. The law on which the Jew rested finds him with mouth barred and subject to the judgment of God (Rom. 2:17-3:20).

The charges against both Jew and Greek are sustained. Both await their sentence. Outside the courtroom the Jew's national privilege gave him a great advantage. But before the bar of God there is no distinction (Rom. 3:23).

GOD

Who is next on the docket?

God Himself!

And what is the charge?

Deviation from the strict line of justice on two counts:

- (1) Passing over the penalties of sin in the past, and,
- (2) Justifying the sinner now.

The first count is met by the fact of God's purpose that Christ Jesus was to be the Propitiatory Shelter (Rom. 3:25). His blood has reflected efficient value into God's prior forbearance. That blood also points forward to the future priestly work of Him Who will minister according to the power of an "indissoluble life" (Heb. 7:16).

The second count is a question of equity, that is, it is "apart from law." (Rom. 3:21). There is recourse to the righteousness of God, in all its exclusiveness. It is no problem to Him, for His righteousness is a realm where law has no jurisdiction, where the glory of God achieves His own results. Since God is God, He Himself is adequate to balance the equation.

And what is the evidence in this regard? It is summed up in the words: "Jesus Christ's faith" (Rom. 3:22). It is through His faith that God's righteousness becomes ours, for He was ever obedient to God's righteousness. The faith of Jesus Christ was in the righteousness of God.

In God's grace, those who are of Jesus Christ's faith are justified gratuitously. This is through the deliverance which is in Christ Jesus (Rom. 3:24), for this deliverance displays God's righteousness in the current era (Rom. 3:26). In Him Who knew no sin, God has approached the sinner, that those who believe may be becoming God's righteousness in Him (2 Cor. 5:21). The case of the irreverent is thus in the hands of God (Rom. 4:5).

However, since this case is outside the domain of law, what standard of equity is available? There are two, yet the two are one; God's glory and the welfare of His creatures.

Can sin be justified on the ground of God's glory? Sin *by itself* never can. But sin and the Saviour's obedience to His Father's will combine to give an infinite effulgence to God's glory. The combination is of such beneficent brightness that nothing could justify the withdrawal of sin now, even if that were possible, and

nothing could have given Him the right to withhold so much of Himself as the faith of Jesus Christ displays. From the very nature of the case, no other channel is possible for the manifestation of the essence and attributes of God but sin. Sin is against God's will, but the obedient sufferings of Jesus Christ were in line with God's will, and consequently the sufferings of Christ were and are "God's righteousness." Jesus Christ's faith was in the Father's righteousness. His blood is the glorious evidence of His faith; He believed the word of His God and Father. And His faith gives the value to the faith of the one who is of the faith of Jesus.

So that, while sin by itself mars and destroys and corrupts, Justice would demand its removal and condemnation, yet sin and the blood of Jesus Christ (the blood figuring His faith and consequent suffering) is the very ermine in which Justice is robed. They bring righteousness, peace and blessing; they preserve and create. The treasures of God's love would forever remain buried deep within His heart, unknown to His creatures, lost to the universe, apart from the occasion offered by sin. But since true love, by its very nature, must burst forth, its hiding would go far to prove that no love existed there at all.

This righteousness, for all and on all who are believing, is thoroughly distinct from law. Law cannot deal with sin. It only condemns and is unable to bestow any righteousness. It is perfectly right, then, for God to justify those who take part in this great purpose to reveal His own glory, even though law, both natural and divine, condemns their doings. He is just and the Justifier of those whose faith grasps the faith of Jesus (Rom. 3:26), for the faith of Jesus was in God's righteousness. The blood of Christ remains the evidence of the faith of Jesus, as well as a demonstration of the righteousness of God. Those who believe are *justified*.

This is not pardon for pardon assumes guilt. The

great difference between justification and pardon is immediately apparent when we apply them to God. The tribute collectors, we read, *justified* God (Luke 7:29). But how far was it from their thoughts to *pardon* God! Pardon can only be dealt out by one in authority. A judge cannot pardon. Pardon is the exclusive prerogative of the executive. The king may pardon a criminal (whom the law has declared guilty) because of extenuating circumstances. But he dare not, cannot justify his misdeeds.

A judge can justify. But a judge can justify only on one of two grounds. First, the accused is not guilty of the crimes within the letter of the law. Second, he is guilty as to the letter of the law, but an appeal to a court of equity declares the breach of law justifiable. This is the nearest approach that human jurisprudence is able to make to God's righteousness.

God then, is justified in His passing over of the penalties of sins which occurred before the Propitiatory Shelter was displayed. Indeed, the Propitiatory Shelter preceded sin in the divine plan. The Lamb was fore-known before the disruption occasioned by the entrance of sin, and in God's purpose, It was slain from that event. (1 Pet. 1:20, Rev. 13:8). Sin is not the *occasion* of deliverance; it is its foil, without which our eyes could not behold its beauty. It is the darkness which reveals the light. It is the necessary incident of deliverance. Without it, deliverance, with all its burden of endless glory, could never have found expression.

And, since God was righteous in passing over the penalty of sins previously committed, He is also justified in pronouncing just everyone who believes. They are justified *gratuitously* through the deliverance which is in Christ Jesus. This same word is used in Galatians 2:21 where we learn that if righteousness is through law, consequently Christ died *gratuitously*. There would be no need for His death. They hated Him *gratuitously*

(John 15:25). No cause for this hatred could be found in Him. Just so with our justification. Unlike pardon, it finds no worthiness in us whatsoever . . . it is *gratuitous*.

Pardon asked for at least a proper attitude of mind, or repentance, without which its exercise would only encourage wrong doing. But justification is divine from beginning to end. While the grace and love it displays eclipses any pardon which might be offered, yet it is the strictest justice. It is the outcome of divine counsels which long preceded the advent of sin and which find fulfillment long after sin has left the scene.

#### EXCLUSIVE TO PAUL

In this brief outline of the doctrine of Paul's "my" evangel, it is necessary to note that *it was never recorded by any other inspired writer*. Although James speaks of justification, his justification is by *works*, the very *opposite* of the evangel Paul preached. It has its place, but not in this administration of the *grace* of God.

So that, even if Paul had never spoken of "my" evangel, we would still have reason to call this message *his*.

Pardon reminds us of the day of *David* the King. Justification goes back further, to *Abraham* when there was no law. The secret commission which we are about to consider takes us back still further to the very beginning. It concerns us with *Adam* and his offense.

### A SUMMARY OF THE PREVIOUS COMMISSIONS

The various commissions differ in character, in scope, in the benefits conveyed, in the means used to carry them out, in the effect upon those who received their message, and each had a distinct history.

#### THE FIRST KINGDOM COMMISSION

The First Kingdom Commission (Matt. 10:5) was characteristically Jewish. The twelve apostles were

forbidden to carry it beyond the narrow pale of Israel. It brought temporal blessings, which were a sign of the nearness of the earthly kingdom. It was heralded by the King Himself as well as those whom He commissioned, having been made known by public heralding in the cities of Israel. He gathered out of the apostate nation a remnant in view of the coming kingdom. The heralding is divided into three periods. The Lord Himself began it and selected the twelve apostles as His heralds. When the message was rejected, its heralding was discontinued. During the interval which followed, He sought to occupy them with His sufferings and death. At Pentecost the heralding was renewed and continued throughout the period covered by the book of Acts.

Finally it is rejected again and once more discontinued, and, as before, the Lord seeks to occupy us with the deeper truths which flow from His death...this time through the apostle Paul. Before the kingdom comes on the earth this message must be heralded again, followed by His glorious appearing.

The Second Kingdom Commission (Matt. 28:16-20) requires Israel to have received the First Kingdom Commission and, as a result, to have jurisdiction over the other nations. This commission is national, including all the nations except Israel, and assures them a righteous government if they obey the delegates of the great King. In that day the King will reward His suffering servants by giving them jurisdiction over the other nations. This commission brooks no opposition and will be enforced with power during the day of the Lord.

#### MARK'S CREATION COMMISSION

Mark's Creation Commission is based upon the resurrection and is directed to the recovery of the entire realm of creation. It is world wide in its scope, conveys only material or physical benefits, was heralded by the disciples in the entire creation which is under heaven, and thus has been fulfilled. It will find its fruition when crea-

tion is freed from the slavery of corruption when the sons of God are unveiled (Rom. 8:19-21).

#### LUKE'S COMMISSION FOR MANKIND

Luke's Commission for Mankind is based upon the sufferings of Christ. While it embraces the whole human family, it depended upon the authority of the Son of Mankind and His delegates for its exercise. It extended a probational pardon for sins upon the condition of repentance. The power to pardon was delegated to the apostles. Its history is recorded in the book of Acts.

Many who were pardoned drew back and fell aside. The authority to pardon ceased with the death of the apostles and won't be exercised again until the kingdom is once more the subject of heralding.

#### PAUL PREACHES JUSTIFICATION

Paul, in his early ministry, seems to have had part in these various commissions. But the time came when he was severed from the others and given additional revelations. He first makes known justification to the Jews outside the land and also to the other nations. But, unlike pardon, this depended entirely upon grace and was received by faith apart from any works. Its history is quite the opposite of pardon, because it depends on God, rather than man. It forms the foundation upon which all further favor has been built. It is preparatory to reconciliation. It is the basis of the evangel for today. The revelation of the secret of the joint body (Eph. 3:3) only modified it so that it is now the equal portion of everyone who believes. This commission is exhaustively discussed in the earlier chapters of the epistle to the Romans and in the epistle to the Galatians.

#### THE CONCILIATION

The Conciliation is the commission for the present. It is unfolded in the fifth to the eighth chapters of Romans and in the second epistle to the Corinthians.

Thus we find that the apostle, during the greater

part of his itinerant ministry, had been acknowledging the physical ties which link Christ to the nation of Israel. This is knowing Christ "according to flesh." But when this ministry was finished there was a radical change. *There is a new creation. Lo! there has come new!* (2 Cor. 5:16, 17).

It was a secret until that great crisis in Paul's ministry, to which he always alludes when setting it forth. To the Romans he writes that he had completed the evangel of the Christ (as Israel's Messiah) in the power of signs and miracles (Rom. 15:19). At this juncture he also writes to the Corinthians (2 Cor. 5:16) :

So that *we*, from now on, are acquainted with no one according to flesh. Yet, even if we have known Christ according to flesh, nevertheless now we know Him so no longer. So that, if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: the primitive passed by. *Lo! there has come new!*

Yet all is of God, Who conciliates us to Himself through Christ, and is giving us the dispensation of the conciliation, how that God was in Christ, conciliating the world to Himself, not reckoning their offenses to them, and placing in us the word of the conciliation.

For Christ, then, are we ambassadors, as of God entreating through us. We are beseeching: "For Christ's sake be conciliated to God!" For the One not knowing sin, He makes to be a sin approach for our sakes that we may be becoming God's righteousness in Him.

Thus at one stroke the previous commissions are brushed aside. The physical distinctions which once were so prominent are no longer taken into account.

The secret of the evangel, as the Conciliation is called, is a separate secret from the present secret administration, though it was enriched and included in it. The Conciliation was made known in a letter to the Romans while the apostle was still at liberty. During his imprisonment in Rome he made known the truth of the secret administration in his three prison epistles. What, then, is the difference between the Conciliation before the present grace and now?

#### THE SECRET ADMINISTRATION

Israel's supremacy had two aspects: they were to be a

royal nation and a priest nation. They were to rule the other nations for God and they were to bring the other nations to God. In the grand consummation both of these prerogatives will become obsolete. But they do not retire at the same time. Israel's priestly mediacy vanishes when this old earth is destroyed, for in the new earth God dwells with all mankind and no priest nation is needed to bring them near. But not so with government, for it continues till the very consummation. Israel continues to be the ruling nation on the earth.

Just as these two prerogatives will retire in the future, so it has been in the past. When the Conciliation between God and mankind was first made known, Israel's priestly ascendancy vanished, while they still held their prior place in government. But when the present secret administration was revealed, there came reconciliation not only with God but peace was made between the believers, both Jews and nations as well (Eph. 2:15, 16). Rule among the celestials will not be dependent upon any physical prerogative, but is reserved for all who endure (2 Tim. 2:12).

Thus there were two distinct steps in ushering in the Conciliation. In view of Israel's apostasy, their priestly functions fail and God opens up the way into His presence by heralding peace to all the nations and access by faith apart from any intermediaries. And, when the secret is made known of Christ's *celestial* exaltation, the physical supremacy of Israel has no place. A new humanity is created without the jarring elements the old contains. Thus reconciliation erases the alienation between various sections of mankind as well as that between God and man.

And finally, we are taught, this grandest of blessings will embrace the entire universe. (Col. 1:20).

## CONCILIATION ADMINISTERED

For the love of Christ is constraining us, judging this, that, if One died for the sake of all, consequently all died. And He died for the sake of all that those who are living should by no means still be living to themselves, but to the One dying and being roused for their sakes.

So that we, from now on, are acquainted with no one according to flesh. Yet, even if we have known Christ according to flesh, nevertheless now we know Him so no longer. So that, if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: the primitive passed by. Lo! there has come new!

Yet all is of God, Who conciliates us to Himself through Christ, and is giving us the dispensation of the conciliation, how that God was in Christ, conciliating the world to Himself, not reckoning their offenses to them, and placing in us the word of the conciliation.

For Christ, then, are we ambassadors, as of God entreating through us. We are beseeching: "For Christ's sake be conciliated to God!" For the One not knowing sin, He makes to be a sin approach [offering] for our sakes that we may be becoming God's righteousness in Him.

Now, working together, we are also entreating you not to receive the grace of God for naught. For He is saying

"In a season acceptable I reply to you,  
And in a day of salvation I help you."

Lo! Now is a most acceptable era! Lo! Now is a day of salvation! We are giving no one cause to stumble in anything, lest flaws be found with the service, but in everything we are commending ourselves as servants of God, in much endurance, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, in blows, in jails, in turbulences, in toil, in vigils, in fasts, in pureness, in knowledge, in patience, in kindness, in holy spirit, in love unfeigned, in the word of truth, in the power of God, through the implements of righteousness of the right hand and of the left, through glory and dishonor, through defamation and renown, as deceivers and true, as unknown and recognized, as dying, and lo! we are living, as disciplined and not put to death, as sorrowing, yet ever rejoicing, as poor, yet enriching many, as having nothing, and retaining all.

Our mouth is open toward you, Corinthians: Has your heart broadened? You are not distressed in us, yet you are distressed in your compassions. Now, as a recompense in kind (as to children am I saying this), you also be broadened!

(2 Cor. 5:14-6:13)

## THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE CONCILIATION

GOD IS CONCILIATED! God is at peace! This is the key to the proclamation that pleases Him. How seldom is this wonderful fact fully acknowledged! Men are told to make their peace with God, disregarding the fact that He has already made it for them. They are constantly exhorted to pray to Him, entreating Him to hear their pleas, in utter disregard of His unparalleled condescension in beseeching them. *God does the entreating now*, so far as the unbeliever is concerned.

### THE CONCILIATION AND THE NEW CREATION

God is conciliated in this administration, but He certainly will not be during the period of indignation which follows the present era of grace, nor during the thousand year kingdom on this earth, blessed as that time will be. In the kingdom the "gentiles" will not be permitted to approach God except through His priest nation, Israel. It is not until the new earth that God will be tabernacling with all mankind. Then He will make all new (Rev. 21:5).

*A new creation*—such is the portion of the believer, *even now* (2 Cor. 5:17).

Earth's tardy eons have never yet presented us with a picture of the present grace. Even the grand millennium, the brightest bloom that this old earth will bear, cannot outline its transcendent glories. Not until the ashes of the present earth are displaced by an entirely new creation can the eye rest upon a scene which will

properly portray the spiritual blessings which are ours in Christ Jesus.

#### CREATION VS. BIRTH

Let us not confuse creation with birth. Adam was never born. He did not attain to manhood through the gates of infancy and youth. He sprang full-grown, perfectly matured, fully ripened, from the hand of the Creator. How different from his progeny! Instead of coming fresh from the hand of God, with all the perfection which that implies, we are ushered into the world as helpless babes, and, by a tedious growth, hardly approximate what Adam was the very moment of his creation. Creation implies perfection; birth, a renewal through the avenues of infancy and youth.

#### REGENERATION VS. NEW CREATION

Birth is the thought called forth when God counsels to give this earth a fresh start and terms it the "Renaissance" (Regeneration) (Matt. 19:28); and, when that has failed, He destroys the whole by fire and makes an entirely *new creation* (Isa. 65:17; 2 Pet. 3:13; Rev. 21:1). These also are the thoughts which come before us in the spiritual counterparts of these two. The Renaissance figures God's evangel as set forth by the apostle Paul, *up to the crisis* when the epistles to the Corinthians were written. As in the future glorious day of the Lord (Ieue), the nations approached God through the mediacy of Paul, acting as a priest (Rom. 15:16). The physical relationship of the nation of Israel to the Messiah gave them an ascendancy over the other nations which Paul had acknowledged hitherto. But, from that time on, the Renaissance (Regeneration) ceased to picture the attitude of God towards mankind.

In spirit, the words of the book of Revelation (the Unveiling of Jesus Christ) become true: "Lo! the tabernacle of God is with mankind, and He will be tabernacling with them, and they will be His peoples,

and God Himself will be with them." (Rev. 21:3). In spirit, also, "the primitive passed by." (Compare 2 Cor. 5:17 with Rev. 21:4). Then He will say: "Lo! New am I making all." And so it is now: "Lo! there has come new!"

#### CHRIST DIED FOR ALL

Just as in that day the death of Christ will be the basis of blessing for all the nations (as well as for Israel), so it is even now. A narrow-minded Jew, as the apostle Paul once was, would naturally deny blessing to the nations. But the love of Christ constrained him to think differently now. And even if blessing should leak out for the other nations, such a Jew would think it but in meager measure, in stunted style. But Christ's love contradicts that as well.

He died for all, not Israel alone. And since it was necessary that He descend into death to rescue men, it follows that all are subject to that dark domain. But those who are alive through Him, for whom He was roused, whose hearts have responded to the love which led Him to die on their behalf—are they still to be shut out, kept at a distance, as aliens ever were? Not so! Their lives henceforth have a new object. Once they had their own happiness in view. Now they have Christ's fame at heart. They live to Him. Not merely as a distant foreigner, but as those close knit to Him by ties of love which He Himself has made. Not in the sense common nowadays of working for Him to pay off the debt they owe. Far from it! Living is not working. True life is the enjoyment of His favor.

#### THOSE WHO ARE LIVING

But since *all* those who are really alive, live to Him, what becomes of the distinctions till now maintained between Israel and the other nations? The Jews were His kin, and, in that primitive creation, must ever stand between Him and the rest of mankind.

All through Paul's ministry until this crisis, he had

not only gone to the Jew first, but had given them the prior place in blessing. As he had been proclaiming their kingdom, this was fitting and proper.

But now that ministry is fulfilled. From that point onward fleshly ties are no longer recognized.

#### THE PRIMITIVE PASSED BY

It is traditional to speak of the "old" things which have passed away as those which characterized our conduct before we believed. But Paul is not dealing here with the individual experience of each one, but the dispensational change which had just taken place. The "old" or *primitive* is that which was associated with Judaism and the physical supremacy of Israel. There are several words usually translated "old." The word here used is a form of the word generally translated "beginning." It is *archaion* which is almost identical with our "archaic" and indeed has practically the same meaning. It speaks of the first, the primary, the primitive things, such as are referred to in the sixth of Hebrews, as the "*rudiments* of Christ." (Heb. 6:1).

No such crisis as this can be discovered in the career of the apostles of the Circumcision.

Paul called the ministry to which he was severed at Antioch "my" evangel, to distinguish it from the ministry of the twelve. But the Conciliation is even further removed from their preaching and teaching.

#### THE APOSTLES OF THE CIRCUMCISION

Peter and James and John, as leading apostles of the Circumcision, continue to recognize physical distinctions to the very end, as is witnessed by their letters, written after this time. A careful investigation of their writings will show that they ignore the Conciliation altogether, and their words apply to God's future resumption of His dealings with Israel. Their epistles do not apply to this day of favor for the nations.

James recognizes the physical distinctness of Israel

by addressing his letter to the twelve tribes in the dispersion (Jas. 1:1). He speaks not only to the faithful among them, but also to the sinners and friends of the world (Jas. 4:4, 8). The coming of the Lord is proclaimed, not, however, as He will come for us, as a Saviour, but as a Judge (Jas. 5:7-9).

Peter also writes to this dispersion. Instead of telling them of *peace*, he tells them that *judgment* must begin from the house of God (1 Pet. 4:17). He not only recognized them as a "nation" (1 Pet. 2:9), but exhorts them as to their behavior among the other nations (1 Pet. 2:12).

John's epistle concerns that "which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, at which we gaze and our hands handle" (1 John 1:1). Messiah's flesh is the great point insisted upon in connection with His coming. "Every spirit which is avowing Jesus Christ having come in flesh, is of God, and every spirit which is not avowing Jesus the Lord having come in flesh is not of God" (1 John 4:2, 3). It is written with reference to the presence of the antichrist (2:18) and deals with the spiritual side of the Renaissance (Regeneration), being begotten of God (3:9, 10). In that day there will be blessing for all the nations through the seed of Abraham. So we read: "And He is the propitiatory shelter concerned with *our* sins, yet not concerned with *ours* only, but concerned with the whole world also" (1 John 2:2). Being fulfilled in the day of Ieue, which partially typifies Paul's early ministry, it has much in common with it.

Jude, the warning cloud which precedes the storm of coming judgments, is far removed from peace.

#### PAUL ALONE

These brief hints might be expanded, but enough has been brought forward to show that *the Conciliation is not to be found outside Paul's letters*, and that *his pur-*

pose to ignore the privileges connected with a blood relationship with Christ was not shared by the twelve apostles and those of the Circumcision who were reached by their ministry.

They knew nothing of any new creation except that which follows the day of the Lord (Ieue).

It behooves us, then, in our endeavor to discern what God would have proclaimed in this present period, to confine ourselves to Paul's writings, and particularly those letters which were written at this crisis and afterwards.

#### PRESENT DAY PREACHING

The effect of such a course would revolutionize present day preaching, even among those who seem comparatively enlightened. The Conciliation leaves no place for the preaching of judgment and the "new birth," common topics with the more faithful preachers. Baptism and all other ceremonies and "means of grace" have no part in this ministry at all. And the constant exhortation to the sinner to pray for salvation, becomes a fearful stumbling block, *because it practically denies that God is conciliated. God is doing the entreating now!*

What, then, is the message we are to herald?

First of all, to be fitted to make it known, we must know its power in our own heart. We must not only rejoice in justification by faith, but have entered into peace with God and the enjoyment of the sunshine of His unclouded favor. It is impossible to carry this grand good news to others without its joyous strength. It is those who have received the Conciliation, who *have* been allotted its administration.

#### THE CROSS WAS GOD'S WILL

There is a fearful misunderstanding in the popular mind and in the creeds of Christendom as to the part God plays in the so-called "atonement." God is often

represented as highly offended, threatening the sinner with terrible disaster if he should not "repent" and beseech God to save him. Yet Christ intervenes on behalf of the poor penitent. Thus it would seem that God and Christ are differently disposed towards mankind.

"NOT MY WILL"

Nothing could be further from the truth! Throughout Christ's earthly ministry He insisted that nothing that He did or said originated with Himself. "I cannot do anything of Myself...for I am not seeking My will, but the will of Him Who sends Me" (John 5:30).

And this marvelous subjection to the will of the Father is clearest at the cross. As its dark shadows began to close around Him, the only thing which sustained Him was His Father's will.

"Father, if it is Thy intention, carry aside this cup from Me. However, not My will, but Thine be done!" (Luke 22:42). "Yet He desires to crush Him, He causes Him to be wounded." (Isa. 53:10).

Nothing could be clearer than that it was God's will, and His work, though done through Christ. Thus "God was in Christ conciliating the world to Himself." (2 Cor. 5:19).

OFFENSES NOT RECKONED

The Authorized Version's rendering of the following verse by, "Not imputing their *trespasses* unto them" makes us miss the force of this passage. Here God speaks of our *offenses*, which is the real force of the Greek word used here (See Rom. 5:16, 17, 18).

Sin and transgression must be dealt with in accord with the inflexible rules of righteousness. But what necessity was there to deal with these at all at the cross? Why not wait until the day of judgment and give each his due desserts? What claims had His creatures which outweighed the request of His beloved Son that the cup pass from Him?

If God had taken account of the reproaches and scorn

and contempt men heaped upon Him in the person of His Son, would He not be highly offended? Would He have remained firm in the face of Christ's request? O, how gloriously His grace shines even in Gethsemane! Men's *sins* and *transgressions* He lays upon His Christ, but their *offenses*, which well might turn Him against them, *are all ignored*.

Would He have provided such a Sacrifice in any other frame of mind? Men's foul and flagrant offenses abounded the more He had revealed Himself. And now they reddened their hands in the blood of His Anointed. No greater provocation could be offered. But, instead of reckoning these offensive deeds against them, He retreats within Himself and finds the immanent love upon which He finds His sweet revenge.

#### GOD REMAINS RIGHTEOUS

But, though their offenses may be thus ignored, His justice requires vindication of the ruin wrought by their sins and of the breach of His holy law. These must be dealt with. Offenses may be overlooked, just as God pleases, without tarnishing His Name, but sin and transgression must be taken into account if God is to sustain His righteous and holy character. For these He Himself provides a Sacrifice. Christ is His sin offering (or: sin approach).

#### MAN'S SIDE

And so the Conciliation proceeds. Offenses ignored, sin and transgression put away—and what is left between God and His creatures? Nothing on God's side! And on man's side *nothing—but the reception of the Conciliation*.

God has left it with us to express this to others. Strictly speaking, this is Christ's work. For Him, then, we are conducting peace negotiations, as though God were entreating through us: "We are beseeching: For Christ's sake be conciliated to God!"

"Be conciliated to God," implies a change on the part of *one side only*. Such a change is manifestly needed on man's side, but no longer on God's side. He has already conciliated the world to Himself. It remains for men to *receive* this conciliation, and thus be reconciled.

How much this appeal is needed today! How little of this glorious truth reaches the ears of man. The world knows not that God is entreating it to be conciliated to Him. Few of those who have been justified in the blood of Christ ever respond to this exhortation in any perceptible degree.

#### SAINTS, TOO

The feeble flicker of faith sometimes lights up His Word and they rejoice to find their sins are gone. But how often, in times of stress, they plunge into darkness and despair. O, that they would leave their sins and feelings and all that hinders fellowship with Him and enter into *His* peace! God Himself entreats even His own to receive the Conciliation. Justification is but one of His gifts. It should lead to an acquaintance with the great Giver.

It may seem strange to some to beseech those who are saved to receive this additional favor. Yet when the Corinthians were first called it was still a secret and so it could not have been offered to them\*. Now that this favor is made public they are entreated to receive it and respond to its unparalleled grace.

It is far from our thoughts to create class distinctions between God's people. But full assurance among His

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\*It has been pointed out that, in the passage before us, the insertion of the word *you* (A.V. 2 Cor. 5:20), meaning the Corinthians, is without authority. While the original does not contain the pronoun, a correct rendering of the first few words of the succeeding chapter shows that Paul meant it for them, also. There he says, "Now, working together, *we* are also entreating *you* . . ." From this it is evident that God *had* been entreating the Corinthians.

beloved saints can come only through this one channel. There is urgent need to proclaim peace to the fearful "saint" as well as to God's enemies.

#### AMBASSADORS FOR CHRIST

We are ambassadors. This title alone gives a clue both to our message and to our behavior. The moment war is declared between two countries, the ambassadors are withdrawn. Thus, before God begins His strange work in the great day of His indignation, He will take us—His ambassadors—out of this earth (1 Thess. 1:10). Our very presence here is a true token of peace, which must continue until we are called to the celestials where we will continue our ministry in a higher sphere.

It is the policy of ambassadors, at all times, to avoid giving offense. This is especially the case when relations are strained and the home government is for peace and conciliation. God, at this time, is for peace, and it behooves His ambassadors to conduct themselves accordingly.

Elijah called down fire from heaven which consumed the captain and his fifty men who were sent against the prophet (2 Kings 1:10). The disciples suggested a similar course in the case of the Samaritans who would not receive Elijah's Lord simply because He wended His way towards Jerusalem. But He rebuked His disciples, for such a course was altogether contrary to His divine mission (Luke 9:51-56). They had an illustrious example and the Scriptures as a basis for their suggestion, but they failed to apprehend the spirit of the times. How necessary then, for us to know the manner of spirit which we should show!

#### CONCILIATION IN ACTION

The ambassador of the divine court of God who apprehends his mission is careful not to give or take offense. God is not angry and does not take offense. He conciliates. His ambassadors, regardless of their own feelings

at the time, must display the attitude of the Power they represent. This is the great guiding rule in the administration of the Conciliation. It should mold every circumstance into a renewed offer of peace and another opportunity to entreat men to accept God's gracious gift.

It is not difficult to be at peace in the midst of friends and comforts and popularity. But in adversity and trials, in calumny and want, when all *seems* against us, we have an opportunity, in act as well as in word, to express the Conciliation. It will teach us to be pliant and yielding in spite of the most intense enmity. It will expand the heart beyond the stress of circumstance.

Chief of the gracious qualities the ambassador should display is endurance. The apostle Paul enumerates nine desert fields in which it feeds. Some are affliction, distresses, toil, vigils, knowledge and patience, followed by kindness and holy spirit and love that is unfeigned. These qualities commend God's servant and make way for His message, backed by the power of God.

Yet, while seeking in every way to commend himself as God's servant, the ambassador must be prepared for dishonor as well as glory, for defamation as well as renown. Though charged with deception, misunderstood, chastised, sorrowed and poor, yet he is acknowledged to be true, he rejoices in all his sorrows, dispenses many a fortune, and knows everything as an item of his inventory.

#### A BROADENED HEART

How marvelous is such a ministry! The cramped and straightlaced dogmas of the self-centered Saul have all vanished in the brightness of this grace. The love of Christ has enlarged his narrow heart and his affections flow unrestrained to the alien and uncircumcised.

We, too, need enlargement to contain a tithe of this expanse of affection. It is only as we know and exult in the great Reconciler, that we will keep our hearts

from the common constricted creed. O, that every reader of these lines would charge his heart to enlarge its borders to include all that His affection has provided, and so equipped, link hearts with the apostle as he prays "that to me expression may be granted, in the opening of my mouth with boldness, to make known the secret of the evangel, for which I am conducting an embassy in a chain, that in it I should be speaking boldly, *as I must speak.*" (Eph. 6:19, 20).

Wherefore, remember that once you, the nations in flesh — who are termed "Uncircumcision" by those termed "Circumcision," in flesh, made by hands — that you were, in that era, apart from Christ, being alienated from the citizenship of Israel, and guests of the promise covenants, having no expectation, and without God in the world.

Yet now, in Christ Jesus, you, who once are far off, are become near by the blood of Christ. For He is our Peace, Who makes both one, and razes the central wall of the barrier (the enmity in His flesh), nullifying the law of precepts in decrees, that He should be creating the two, in Himself, into one new humanity, making peace; and should be reconciling both in one body to God through the cross, killing the enmity in it. And coming, He brings the evangel of peace to you, those afar, and peace to those near, for through Him we both have had the access, in one spirit, to the Father.

Consequently, then, no longer are you guests and sojourners, but are fellow-citizens of the saints and belong to God's family, being built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, the capstone of the corner being Christ Jesus Himself, in Whom the entire building, being connected together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord: in Whom you, also, are being built together for God's dwelling place, in spirit.

(Ephesians 2:11-22)

## THE NATIONS BROUGHT NIGH

WHILE HUMAN GOVERNMENT has succeeded in splitting humanity into a multitude of jarring and warring factions, God will yet unite it all under one Head (Eph. 1:10). As the "Firstborn of every creature" (Col. 1:15), Christ was once Head of all, yet, in His obedience to His God, He emptied Himself, descending beneath all. Now God has graced Him with a name that is above every name so that the entire universe will yet bow the knee and acknowledge His Lordship (Phil. 2:10). Thus will all discord in the sphere of government be forever banished.

And so it is in the sphere of reconciliation. He will not rest satisfied until all are brought near His heart, in harmony with Him.

### DISUNITY ON EARTH

None of this unity can be attained on earth, however, so long as Israel can claim the place pre-eminent. As long as they are *near* and the nations *far off*, unity there cannot be.

Humanity, at present, is a hopeless mass of conflicting interests. It is divided into a thousand fragments. There is the basic division of the sexes. It seems almost strange that this should be a basis of discord. But so it is. In Christ this distinction is gone (Gal. 3:28). There is the difference of race. In Christ this disappears. There is the diversity of station. Yet both

master and slave, high and low, are one in Him. But the greatest difference of all—the one most vital to a relationship with God—is that of circumcision, with its attendant privileges of relationship to Christ, of citizenship in Israel, of participation in the promises and a part in the glorious expectation of the chosen nation.

With all the blessedness which justification and even conciliation bring, they do not bridge the barrier between Israel and the nations. They do not bring in unity.

#### THE CONCILIATION

Let us follow the unfolding of the Conciliation, as it was revealed. Like all of Paul's ministry, it did not blaze forth in meridian brightness all at once, but gathered glory with each succeeding revelation from the glorified Christ. We have found it first in the fifth of Romans bringing the justified believer into perfect peace with God. We have pondered it in the eleventh of Romans, where the nations, as such, are conciliated, so that, in spite of Israel's defection, the way of faith is open direct to God without Israel's intervention. We have mused upon its ministry in the fifth of second Corinthians, after all physical relationship to Christ is repudiated.

#### THE EPHESIAN EPISTLE

And now, as we enter the Ephesian epistle we are told that, not only is blessing changed in kind—spiritual blessings superseding Israel's physical promises—but the very sphere of blessing is changed.

First, indeed, the secret of Christ is revealed as it had never been revealed before. His celestial headship is made known for the first time, so that that in the heavens and that on the earth are united under a single Suzerain. But more than this, the sphere of blessing for those to whom Paul ministered is changed from terrestrial to celestial (Eph. 1:3).

And now the question arises: Is the division, hitherto so marked, between the Circumcision and Uncircum-

cision who believed, to continue in this new realm? There is no necessity for this, for Israel's prior claim to blessing was always limited to the earth. Among the celestials all such distinctions disappear.

It is the grand function of the Ephesian letter to answer this question in all of its details. This is done categorically in the definition of the secret in chapter three, beginning with the end of verse five and including verses six and seven. It reads thus:

In spirit the nations are to be *joint* enjoyers of an allotment, and a *joint* body, and *joint* partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus, through the evangel of which I became the dispenser, in accord with the gratuity of the grace of God, which is granted to me in accord with His powerful operation. (Eph. 3:6, 7)

The words “in spirit” have hitherto been appended to the previous statement. In the Greek text their position makes them emphatic. But what need is there of emphasizing the fact that a *revelation* came to His holy apostles and prophets *in spirit*? Could it possibly have come any other way? But if we put “in spirit” at the beginning of the next clause its message is clear, and the reason for its emphatic position is vindicated. For, physically, the statements which follow are not true. They simply cannot be true in the physical sphere.

It is, then, *in spirit*, that the nations are united with believing Israelites in a three-fold bond of blessedness. They are *joint* enjoyers of an allotment, members of a *joint* body and *joint* partakers of God's promise in Christ Jesus. There is a triple unity here which it is our highest interest to acknowledge and appreciate.

#### OUR ALLOTMENT

God has a celestial allotment to bestow upon believers now, even as He has a terrestrial allotment for Israel in the land in the yet future day of her glory. In the Authorized Version we are said to have become “fellow heirs” (Eph. 3:6). The customs of land tenure in

Israel were so different from ours today, that it is quite difficult to find equivalent terms in English. As a rule, land was not owned by individuals in Palestine. It belonged to Ieue, the real Owner, and was held by the community, to be allotted each year. The lot was cast into the bag and the portion of land was assigned to each one as Ieue disposed the lot. The earth belongs to Ieue and he does not sell any of it. He only allots portions to His people for their enjoyment. Just so with our allotment among the celestials. Our portion there will not be ours to *own*, but to *enjoy*. So we are compelled, for the sake of accuracy, to use the words "joint enjoyers of an *allotment*" rather than "heirs," to show our portion in the celestial realms.

This phase of the secret does not consist in the fact that we are enjoyers of an allotment. This was well known before (Rom. 8:17). The secret lies in the fact that we are *joint* enjoyers of an allotment, not with Christ, as in Romans eight, but with one another, regardless of any physical distinctions. Believers out of the nations, the Uncircumcision, share this allotment on equal terms with those of Israel who accept Paul's message. The "mystery" we are considering is often taken to be "the body." But the truth of the body was no secret (Rom. 12:5). The *joint*-body was a secret, yet even this is but one of the items which compose *the* secret. The allotment has no reference to "the body." The secret now revealed lies in the fact that it is a *joint-body*. God has actually coined a word to express it, for there is no such thing in nature as a body in which all the members are of equal rank. This is unity indeed.

#### JOINT-PARTAKERS OF THE PROMISE

But we are principally concerned at this point with the third phase of this statement of the secret.

Most versions punctuate this passage as though Paul was informing the Ephesians (among whom he had

labored for years) that he was a "minister" (dispenser) of the "gospel"! The Authorized Version reads, "...and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel: Whereof I was made a minister..." There should be no colon after "gospel." What he insists upon is that the nations are now joint partakers of—not the promises which Peter and the twelve were heralding—they were now *joint* partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus which *Paul* had made known to them before.

At one stroke of Paul's pen we are relieved of the thought that the evangel which he heralded before was now to be discarded—the justification and conciliation and expectation and glory of which he had been the dispenser, which he had received direct from God apart from the twelve apostles—by one word he glorifies all these grand blessings by making them ours on equal terms with those of the chosen nation who may accept Paul's message.

Let this scripture settle the matter. Paul's previous ministry does not vanish at the revelation of the secret; it is rather enforced and enhanced by the very statement of the secret itself. The nations *were* partakers of this ministry; *now* they are *joint* partakers.

#### EPHESIANS CENTERS IN THE SECRET

The categorical statement of the secret we have been considering is the key to the whole epistle to the Ephesians. The body of the epistle is taken up with its elaboration. The first half develops its doctrinal details (1:1-3:21); the latter half its practical purpose (4:1-6:24).

The joint allotment is fully explained in 1:3-14 and 6:10-17. The joint body is developed in 1:20-2:10 and 5:21-6:9. The joint participation with the Circumcision is expanded in 2:11-2:22 and 4:17-5:20. In order that all may be able to grasp clearly these divisions we include on this two-page opening the "skeleton" frame-

## PAUL'S EPISTLE

## DOCTRINE

1:1 Commission: to Paul—1:2 Salutation: Grace and Peace .....	1
1:3-14 Joint Enjoyers: Celestial Blessings—1:15-19 Prayer: for Saints..	2
1:20-2:10 Joint Body: Members, in Christ .....	3
2:11-22 Joint Partakers: Believers, New Humanity .....	4
3:1-13 Summary: Grace for Nations Now .....	5
3:14-21 Entreaty: to the Father for Power .....	6

work which will place these vital relationships before the reader at a glance. Since it was necessary to spread this outline across two pages, we have numbered the lines at the center, to identify which lines correspond.

## JOINT PARTAKERS

It is especially with the last item of the secret that we are concerned, for the Conciliation is a part of Paul's previous ministry of which, we are now told, we have become joint partakers. The passage in Ephesians which especially sets this forth is chapter two, verses eleven to twenty-two. Here we are first asked to recall the condition of believers previous to the time when they became joint partakers. The highest that can be said of them (*from the standpoint of the flesh*) is that they were *guests*. The promises contained in God's covenants were not directly for them, yet did not forget them. The covenant with Abra(ha)m made provision for the blessing of all nations (Gen. 12:3). But *joint* participation was entirely out of the question.

*Yet now!* These thrilling words introduce the great change which the revelation of the secret brought about. The nations' *physical* status is not changed, but physical access to God is denied, even to Israel, by the destruction of the temple. The central wall of the barrier, the *soreg*, which denied the nations all access into the sacred courts, this barrier has been broken down, so that there are no longer two courts, one near for the Circumcision, and one far off for the Uncircumcision. There are no courts at all! Now we both have access—not to the court of the priests, not to the holy place, not to the holy of holies—but to the Father Himself!

## TO THE EPHESIANS

## DEPARTMENT

- 1....Commission: Tychicus 6:21, 22—Benediction: Peace and Grace 6:23, 24  
 2.... Joint Enjoyers: Celestial Warfare 6:10-17—Prayer: for Paul 6:18-20  
 3..... Joint Body: in the Lord, the Head 5:21-6:9  
 4.... Joint Partakers: New Humanity, not with Unbelievers 4:17-5:20  
 5..... Summary: Past Grace to Nations 4:7-16  
 6..... Entreaty: to the Saints to Walk 4:1-6
- 

The enmity and estrangement between Jewish believers and the believers among the nations, was based upon the flesh of Christ. The Jew was related to Him by ties of blood, the nations were not. But when His blood was shed by that near nation, then they laid the basis for a spiritual relationship which was indicated beforehand by the rending of the curtain which hid the God of Israel even from the priests. Jew and Gentile are now *one* in Christ.

## THE DECREES

A false coloring is given this passage at verse fifteen by the rendering "ordinances." There is no reference to ordinances here. The word *dogma* means a *decree*. Caesar made decrees, not ordinances (Luke 2:1, Acts 17:7). The decree of the apostles was to the effect that the believers among the nations need *not* observe Jewish ordinances. So the decrees themselves were very far from being ordinances (Acts 16:4). The two remaining occurrences (Eph. 2:15, Col. 2:14) refer to these decrees. The decrees issued by the council of Jerusalem were repealed.

## THE TWO MADE ONE

There is now an entirely new humanity in which the old-time distinctions and divisions vanish. Adam's descendants are a confusion of factions. Christ heads a new humanity in which not a vestige of any of the old divisions remain.

*Thus it is that there is reconciliation between Circumcision and Uncircumcision.*

Chapter five of Romans adjusts the estrangement

between God and the individual. Romans eleven puts the nations under God's proclamation of peace. Ephesians two, however, reconciles believers out of Israel with those of the nations, in Christ. Those of the nations are guests no longer, but fellow-citizens, and belong to God's family. They are no longer shut out of God's courts but, in spirit, are themselves His dwelling place.

It is important to note that the reconciliation between Jew and Gentile is *mutual*. It is not that the Jew who believes lays aside his enmity or that the Gentile is willing to be at peace with the Jew. Both are actuated by one spirit which destroys all differences between them. Both are in Christ Jesus in Whom physical distinctions vanish (Col. 3:11).

The word here used for reconciliation is a composite made up of the word which the Concordant Version translates "conciliation" and a prefixed connective which is usually translated "from." This changes "conciliation," a *one* sided amity, to *re*-conciliation, a *mutual* friendliness. The entire context of this passage is evidence of the fact that there is more than mere conciliation. Both parties are affected. There is reconciliation. The importance of this as bearing on the reconciliation of all will be noted when dealing with that subject (Col. 1:20).

#### UNITY OF THE SPIRIT

The deportment which accords with the unities which the secret inaugurates is set forth in the fourth chapter of Paul's Ephesian letter. Never before did Circumcision and Uncircumcision have the same expectation, or faith, or baptism. Now there is *one* expectation for all. Before, the chosen nation expected Messiah to return to the Mount of Olives and save them from their enemies. The nations and those of the Jews who came under Paul's preaching, looked forward to meeting the Lord in the air, as the apostle Paul had been taught by

special revelation. As the third item of the secret tells us, this ministry of Paul's still continues. They still have the expectation of being "always together with the Lord." (1 Thess. 4:17). This is further fixed by the fact that Ephesians was written to the very ones who had this prior expectation (Eph. 1:12). But Colossians 1:5 assures us that they still looked for "the expectation... *which you hear before in the word of the truth of the evangel.*" Both the Colossians and the Ephesians were looking forward to meeting the Lord Himself from heaven (1 Thess. 4:16) as they had been taught under Paul's previous ministry. Now, however, this expectation is enriched and glorified. It includes a celestial body (1 Cor. 15:49) and a celestial allotment.

If we insist that there is *one* expectation for God's saints now, it is only that we may apprehend and appreciate the great truth of the reconciliation of both Jew and Gentile into one body. *God's people are one!* Today there are no Divine distinctions between them. They have only *one* spirit, *one* faith, *one* expectation, even as they have only *one* God, Who is over *all* and through *all* and in *all*.

Let us, then, allow no barrier between ourselves and God. And let us allow no breaches to enter between saint and saint, for here, too, God desires unity—the unity that reconciles.

#### DIVISION

One of the distressing symptoms of any advance in knowledge or experience is the tendency to cause a division between the people of God. This division does not stop with local fellowship but usually advances to a claim of a "second work of grace" by means of which God accords the initiated special privileges not granted to the rest. So too there has been much teaching which destroys the truth of the "one expectation." Some would limit His coming to those who look for Him,

disregarding the declaration that "whether we may be watching *or* drowsing, we should be living at the same time together with Him." (1 Thess. 5:10). Others would make a special company of those who have entered the higher truths of Paul's prison epistles, failing to see that these very epistles are most emphatic in denying any such division. The building which is founded on *grace* cannot be finished by "experiences" or "knowledge." It is a question of *grace*, undiluted and unadulterated, which gives all equal privileges and blessings quite apart from their realization or appreciation.

Let us go on to learn and realize the transcendent *grace* shown us in this secret administration, but let us never depart from the underlying principles that all is of *grace*, in *spirit*, which assures perfect *unity*. Then shall we appreciate the truth of reconciliation in its bearing upon the relation of saint to saint.

But if we do not realize the unity of the spirit, how can we give it a practical place in our conduct? So long as it is not apprehended, every fresh item of recovered truth or revolt from unspiritual conditions will divide and disrupt and disintegrate.

May God preserve those who are finding spiritual treasures in His Word from marring the spirit's unity! And may He lead His saints more and more into the realization and enjoyment of this aspect of the reconciliation, which provides, not only for peace between Jew and Gentile, but also between every warring faction of His beloved "church"!

God is One. We are one in Christ Jesus. We are all members of *one* body, we have *one* spirit, *one* expectation, *one* Lord, *one* faith, *one* baptism, *one* God. In His sight we are not divided!

Such then is the glorious operation of the reconciliation among the saints: unity of spirit, unity of blessing, unity of heart.

At the same time giving thanks to the Father, Who makes you competent for a part of the allotment of the saints, in light, Who rescues us out of the jurisdiction of Darkness, and transports us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, in Whom we are having deliverance, the pardon of sins, Who is the Image of the invisible God, Firstborn of every creature, for in Him is all created, that in the heavens and that on the earth, the visible and the invisible, whether thrones, or lordships, or sovereignties, or authorities, all is created through Him and for Him, and He is before all, and all has its cohesion in Him.

And He is the Head of the body, the ecclesia, Who is Sovereign, Firstborn from among the dead, that in all He may be becoming first, for in Him the entire complement delights to dwell, and through Him to reconcile all to Him (making peace through the blood of His cross), through Him, whether those on the earth or those in the heavens. (Colossians 1:12-20)

## THE RECONCILIATION OF ALL

ALL GLORIOUS is the God of the heavens and the earth, Who, though now He seems dishonored by His rebellious creatures, had laid the groundwork for a reconciliation of both the heavens and the earth, upon a scale so vast, a scope of such appalling grandeur, and discovering the depth of such fathomless affection, that our very words of adoration seem to shadow its effulgence!

### THE NEW CREATION

In our meditation upon the conciliation of mankind, we left matters in a state similar to that which will exist upon the new earth, as described at the end of the book of Revelation. There the nations will be reconciled. God will tabernacle among them much as He did in Eden. Yet they remain subordinate to Israel, partakers of her blessedness.

A remarkable fact claims notice here. Years after the time when Paul wrote his letter to the Colossians, the Apostle John saw heaven's door ajar and viewed the heavenly activities during the judgment scenes and the thousand years as recorded in Revelation. But in the new creation which follows, he is shown nothing but an exterior view of the newly created heavens, though he fully describes the new earth (Rev. 21:1-22:5).

This new creation is the third of the three heavens and earths of which we read. The destruction of the first is recorded at the very threshold of revelation

(Gen. 1:2). We find that the primitive earth *became* a chaos and vacant. The second is our present earth and heaven. The great bulk of revelation is concerned with it. But it, too, shall pass away (Rev. 21:1; Heb. 1:10-12; 2 Pet. 3:12).

The new creation, then, will contain the third heaven. To this it was that Paul was snatched away, soon after his severance from the rest of the apostles. Here it was that he heard "ineffable declarations" which were not allowed a man to speak (2 Cor. 12:2-4). It may be that in Paul's later writings he unfolds the revelations thus received, for the construction of the Greek in this text allows for such an interpretation. John tells us that the earth will be happily reconciled, but what of heaven? It was here that sin first raised its venomous head. Shall the heavenly realms be unreconciled to the Deity?

This is our theme; this is the problem before us.

#### THE SON'S RELATIONSHIP TO THE HEAVENS

Before we discuss it, let us note that none of the passages we have considered so far, except some in Ephesians, accord the saints of this era a celestial destiny.

We have found that our Lord, as the Son of *God*, lays the foundation for the conciliation of the world. As the Son of *David*, He inherits David's throne, and is confined to Israel; related to them by ties of covenant and kinship. As the Son of *Abraham*, the land belongs to Him. As the Son of *Adam*, or the Son of *Mankind*, He inherits Adam's sovereignty over all the creatures upon the earth.

But God is not confined to Israel, nor even to the earth. He is spirit and He acknowledges no physical ties whatever. And, as the Son of *God*, our Lord knows no relationship but those of spirit and no

limits but the universe. Indeed, in a very real sense God is not the God of the present world-system at all (2 Cor. 4:4), but is called the God of Heaven (Rev. 11:13). As such His Son's sovereignty extends to the utmost boundless universe.

All earthly power is rightly His, and, as the Son of Mankind, He will yet assume earth's throne. But what of the Celestial realms? Though they are yet the home of powerful spiritual forces of wickedness (Eph. 6:12) they also are to fall within the jurisdiction of the Son of God.

#### SPIRITUAL FORCES OF WICKEDNESS

These world might's of this present darkness are the real rulers of the earth. Not only did the serpent accomplish Adam's downfall, but ever since, besides being chief of the jurisdiction of the air (Eph. 2:2), he guides the affairs of mankind by means of his deceived servants. He has usurped God's place as the object of man's worship, and he has robbed Christ of His place as earth's King. But men, his puppets, stalk upon the stage in utter ignorance of the cords that pull them in the paths he has prepared. Like the law breaker, Satan chooses to work in the dark, unknown by the very tools who carry out his dire designs.

Men sigh for a universal empire and the benefits which such a rule should bring. Though they know it not, they are already serving a sovereign, who, by means of his jurisdiction of the air, has brought the whole unbelieving world into his vast domain (Luke 4:5-8). He has been its ruler ever since Eve listened to him rather than to God. Wise beyond all human ken, powerful beyond man's utmost strength, he strives to show what he can do for mankind now that they have given him their allegiance. All this

will be plain when finally he takes human form in the obsession of the antichrist. It will then be seen that his opposition is not directly against mankind, but against Christ and His God (2 Thess. 2:4-12). Indeed, like antichrist, he does his best for the comfort and happiness of his dupes, if he can only keep them estranged from God. Thus we see that, until Christ comes back to earth again, Satan remains earth's spirit suzerain.

#### THE KINGDOM OF THE SON OF HIS LOVE

This is the jurisdiction of darkness from which God has rescued us (Col. 1:13). It is a spiritual kingdom and by no means displaces the kingdoms of this world. And so, too, the "kingdom of the Son of His love," unlike the kingdom of the Son of Mankind or the Son of David, is a *spiritual kingdom*, by no means displacing earth's monarchies or republics. We are not taken out of these earthly realms, but at present are bidden to be subject to their commands and to recognize their authority (Rom. 13:1-7). But we *have* been rescued from the jurisdiction of darkness, the hateful spiritual world empire which energizes the governments of earth and enthralls mankind. We have been removed into that other spirit realm whose Monarch is God's beloved Son—the very One Who lives for us and is our assurance of salvation from every adverse foe.

We are to witness the kingdom of God's Son extend to universal bounds. But first let us inquire what entitles Him to such a peerless place. What right has He to such imperial majesty?

#### GOD SEEN IN THE SON

"Show us the Father, and it is sufficing us," said Philip. "He who has seen Me has seen the Father," is the Lord's reply (John 14:8, 9).

God Himself is invisible. As such He cannot be seen by any of His creatures. Since creation's purpose is to manifest His excellence, it was necessary that somewhere in the universe there must be a perfect Image of His essence. Fragments are everywhere. His power is in the wind. His light is in the sun. Monarchs faintly mirror His majesty. Yet each lacks qualities which other fragments hold. But the chiefest lack is *love*. Nature, as well as man, seems heartless and relentlessly cruel.

But there is one Image Who is perfect. The Son of God, the visible manifestation of God, is the only One Who answers every attribute which Deity demands.

#### THE FIRSTBORN OF ALL CREATION

He is Creation's Firstborn (Col. 1:15). Like the eldest son, He inherits all the dignity and estate which belong to His Father. This is a powerful figure which has lost some of its proper force in this democratic day when the eldest son has but little preëminence above his younger brothers.

We are apt to confine creation to material substance. But the creation we are now considering is not that of the heavens and the earth, but that which is *in* the heavens and *on* the earth, that is, the spiritual powers which populate them, whether visibly embodied as upon the earth, or the unseen, but far more potent heavenly host. The creation of the heavens and the earth is not the only creation recorded in the first chapter of Genesis. This is dismissed in one brief statement. What follows does not describe that creation, but the readjusting of the earth after it had become a chaos and vacant (Gen. 1:2). There is no further creative act until the "living souls" are *created* in the waters and in the atmosphere. After that, man is created in the image of God (Alueim=

To-subjectors) to act as a subjector, not over the first material creation, but that sentient or soul-life which needed not "making" merely, but *creating* on the fifth day (Gen. 1:20, 21). The third day had witnessed life as seen in herbs and trees, but these do not seem to be created but rather sprang from previously created material (Gen. 1:9-12). Animals, it is true, were also composed of the material already created, so far as their bodies were concerned, but as "living souls" and "moving souls" each required a distinct creative act (Gen. 1:21).

We, however, are not concerned with the first two creations, but with the third, which partook of soil of the first and, like the second, became a living soul. This third creation, termed the "human," was given dominion over the lower creation. This dominion is now seen in a variety of forms. It may be political or private. It may be based upon prestige or ownership. It is seen in the king upon the throne or in the master with his vast estates and slaves. Political power is itself divided into two classes of widely differing rank. There is imperial power which allows none higher; and there is delegated authority, held at the appointment of the former. Caesar was imperial; Pilate was his delegate. These examples are taken from the visible creation upon the earth. But let us not forget that each has its celestial counterpart. Myriads of invisible, spirit beings populate the celestial realms, holding possessions there, forming dominions and dependencies ruled with imperial sway or inferior delegated power.

#### CELESTIAL DIGNITARIES

When John, in his vision while on the Island of Patmos, beheld some of these heavenly dignitaries, they compassed the Enthroned One, sitting upon

twenty-four thrones (Rev. 4:4). These are the elders or seniors of the heavenly administrations. They are the pattern after which the earthly temple worship was modeled. As priests they represent their spirit subjects in the Divine Presence. This is their Godward aspect, which is uppermost in the vision. But since they are seated upon *thrones*, they must be kings as well. As such they rule the subjects whom they represent. This is God's way. Only one who has access to His presence is fit to go out and rule over the creatures of His hand.

And how beautifully do these elders acknowledge the truths which we are pondering! When the Living Ones give glory and honor and thanks to the Enthroned One Who lives for the eons of the eons, the twenty-four elders fall down and worship Him and cast their wreaths before the throne, saying, "Worthy art Thou, O Lord, our Lord and God, to get glory and honor and power; for Thou dost create all, and because of Thy will they were, and are created." (Rev. 4:11).

#### THE SON'S SWAY

The latest revelation given to Paul regarding the secret of Christ puts Him at the head of the heavenly as well as earthly sovereignty, with a view to completing the cycle of the eras (Eph. 1:10). He will be the Sovereign of all government at God's appointed time. The title deeds of the whole creation will be vested in Him alone. Before either heaven or earth knew aught of rule or ownership, the Son of God, in His solitary sublimity, held undisputed sway and complete possession of creation from center to circumference, in the heavens, as well as on the earth.

And when, later, the heavens were filled with a shining host, each received his authority from Him.

This was true also of the Adversary. And, later still, when man came on the scene and dominion over the creatures of the earth was delegated to him, he, too, derived it from the Son of God.

In the beginning it was "*in Him.*" Down the eons, it is "*through Him.*"

Such are the Son's honors in that first and perfect creation, fresh from the hand of God. He was supreme.

#### SATAN AND SIN

But sin has come upon the scene. Satan seeks to rob Him of every glory that He has. And (so to garner greater glory in the end) Satan is allowed to gain the allegiance of humanity. Like the vessel which the potter marred upon the wheel, but the fragments of the original remain, the fair creation has been destroyed and lies in the dust of Death. And, meanwhile, in His dishonored work, the Son of God is Himself dishonored. What shall be done to retrieve His Name and set things right again? The potter did not mend his marred device. He made another, altogether new. And so with God. He never mends. Patches and paint will make man's work quite presentable. Not so with the perfect work of God.

He has determined upon a new creation. Not in the material realm alone, but also in the spiritual sphere. Here this new creation is already an accomplished fact. Its public inauguration before the powers of heaven awaits our gathering together unto Him (1 Thess. 4:17; Col. 3:4).

#### A FALSE PHILOSOPHY AND THE "FULLNESS"

Of old, proud Gnosticism raised her silly head and denied these glories, every one. This false philosophy vaunted the hyperspiritualistic theory of the essential evil of all material substance. It explained creation

by a series of angelic castes, to whom it gave the name of "fullness." These emanated from the God-head, and, like the rungs of a ladder, were said to reach downward to the earth. The lowest of these they blamed for the creation of all evil—matter. Thus, they strove to exonerate the Deity from any connection with evil.

But these are not God's "fullness!" Some of them, at least, would have emptied the Divine Majesty of His glories if they could. The Gnostic *pleroma* could only create matter intrinsically evil. But since He alone deserves the distinct dignity of doing all the work of creation we may deduce that matter is not evil in any sense, however it may be soiled by sin. But more than this, not only has material no inherent evil in its constitution, but it is an agent in sending sin out of the universe! Conciliation was effected by "the blood of the cross." Reconciliation is brought about through the death of Christ's *physical* body, the "body of His flesh" (Col. 1:22).

This "falsely named knowledge" (1 Tim. 6:20) not only robbed God of His glories as Creator, but blotted out the Son of God, the *real* "fullness" or complement, through and in Whom alone all the Divine activities find adequate expression. It insinuated into the mind, a base and inglorious conception of His character, as though He could, by interposing subordinate powers between Himself and His creation, cast the blame for evil upon them. But far worse than this, it placed a gulf impassable between His creation and Himself! Endless eons might roll on, judgment fires might destroy the whole, and yet the sting would still remain—a shattered world, a ruined universe, a thwarted and dishonored God! How dark a picture is this! And yet it serves its purpose well. The darkest night displays the starry heavens best.

And here we have a cluster like Orion, brightest of the starry host.

The real "fullness" can find no lodging in the menial minions of the Gnostic lie. The Son of God alone is great enough to harbor it. He is God's Image, Creation's Firstborn, Seed, Agent, Object, Head and Unifier. But, greater far than all this galaxy of glory, He alone, midst sin and disaffection, provides both God and His creatures with all each needs to effect a complete and perfect reconciliation.

Well nigh lost is the dominating doctrine of the *pleroma* or complement. Gnostics were well acquainted with the term, for they invented it to support their theory of the inherent evil of all substance. They applied it to the spiritual powers through whom God was able to effect the material creation without incriminating Himself. But the apostle not only transfers all this to the Son of God to show His solitary preëminence, but also removes the term to the field of reconciliation. The Gnostic "fullness" estranged the Creator and His creatures; the real "Fullness," the Son of God, reconciles them to their Father.

#### GOD'S SON THE TRUE COMPLEMENT

The reconciliation of the universe rests upon this transcendent truth. Apart from the Son, God could not be conciliated nor could His enemies be reconciled to Him. In the Son is found all that God needs and all that His creatures need. Nothing apart from Him is of any avail: anything apart from Him is an affront to His Father.

While the term *pleroma*, or complement, on God's side may be taken from the Gnostic philosophy, the truth that He is our Complement is a complete contrast to Judaism. God's approach to His creatures is clear and open through the death of His Son. Likewise, our entrance into His presence is unob-

structed and unhindered, through the death of God's Son. But before that death and its heralding, God had carefully hedged Himself with a barrier of Jewish forms and ceremonies, dwelling alone behind an unrent curtain in awful and unapproachable majesty. But now that curtain is rent, the blood of Christ's cross makes peace, the barriers all are down, and, lest we are yet too timid to approach, God comes forth and takes up His abode within the spirits of His saints. He beseeches the sinner to be reconciled, He implores the saint to enjoy the reconciliation, and we respond—all upon the ground of the Complement which His Son is for us both.

The present supremacy of God's beloved Son is founded upon His official glory as God's Complement. The entire complement delights to dwell in Him; making peace through the blood of His cross; and through this complement, God will yet reconcile all to Himself (Col. 1:20).

Let all who have learned to love God seek to know and acknowledge the supremacy of His Son! This supremacy has two distinct aspects. As the *Image* of God He is the Firstborn of all *creation*; as the *Complement* of God He is the Firstborn from among the *dead*. All creation was originally *in* Him; and the *entire* complement delights to dwell *in* Him. God did not delegate a part of the work of creation to another; neither does He assign another to do the work of deliverance. In both creation and reconciliation He is foremost—not in order merely, but also in rank.

Just as the whole created universe came *through* Him, so He, as the complement, is the fit channel to reconcile the universe after it has become estranged. So that the creation which was *for* Him may, in spite of its present alienation, become in very truth once

THE SUPREMACY OF GOD'S BELOVED SON  
(COLOSSIANS 1:15-21)

<p>THE IMAGE OF THE INVISIBLE GOD</p>	<p>Firstborn of Every Creature <i>Creates All</i> (Heavens and Earth) the Universe Created <i>in Him</i> <i>through Him</i> <i>for Him</i></p>
<p>THE RESIDENCE OF THE ENTIRE COMPLEMENT</p>	<p>He is Before All (as to present position)   All has its cohesion in Him   He is the Head of the body, the Ecclesia   Who is Sovereign (present tense as above) Firstborn from among the Dead <i>Reconciles All</i> (Earth and Heavens) the Entire Complement dwells <i>in Him</i> to reconcile all <i>through Him</i> <i>for Him</i></p>

more *for Him* as it never could have been apart from the entrance of sin.

Here we view the very pinnacle of His perfections. He is the First and the Last, the Origin and the Consummation of All. Just as the Gnostics sought to rob Him of His glories as God's Creative Original, so now Christendom, unaware of the truth, seeks to suppress His glories as the grand Consummation. It glories in His shame and insists that the vast multitude of those whom He originates never find a consummation in Him! Is God unable? Or is He not willing? Let us face the issue squarely. Is He such a God as this? *No!* He has not lost the reins of the universe or handed them over to His enemies. He is operating *all* in accord with the counsel of His will (Eph. 1:11). God is *God*, the great Subjector (Hebrew: *Al*), and Placer, (Greek: *Theos*); He is able to carry out the dictates of His heart. If He admits the entrance of sin and woe, it must have an object and an end. If it should last "forever" would it not cast a dark shadow upon His glorious name?

But let us turn from all human conceptions of God, and glory in the God Whose Head and Heart and Hand are all the servants of His Love. A God Who not only proposes to create but to reconcile all that He creates, since, in His love's wisdom, it is well that sin should estrange them from Him for a season.

O, what dishonor has been brought upon His Name by the denial of these glories! That God has centered all creation in His Son is somewhat known and acknowledged. But how little do we hear of His fame as God's complement! What He effected upon the cross has made Him competent to cope with sin and estrangement of every kind in every creature.

#### THREE OBJECTIONS TO UNIVERSAL RECONCILIATION

Three shadows have been made by men to eclipse the glory of the universal reconciliation. It is said that it is not universal, that it is confined to material "things," and that it refers to conciliation on God's part, rather than to a reconciliation between God and those once estranged.

The moment, however, that we question the universality of the reconciliation, we also question the universality of His creation. The introductory words in each part of the phrase "*whether* those on the earth or those in the heavens" are never used to limit a previous statement, as a glance at a concordance will show.

This objection, as well as the contention that *things* are referred to, rather than persons, is refuted by the apostle's declaration: "All *things* are yours, whether *Paul*, or *Apollos*, or *Cephas*, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come." (1 Cor. 3:22, A.V.). The "*things*" include Paul and two other *persons*. The words "*whether*" and "*or*" *amplify* the "*all*," rather than limit it. Besides, the word "*things*" is not in the Greek at all, and could better be left out.

That this is a real reconciliation may be shown in the same way. We need only refer to the fact that conciliation is clearly one-sided, but the word here used is not the simple form of conciliation, but a strengthened form, the remaining occurrences of which (Eph. 2:16; Col. 1:21) clearly and conclusively teach a mutual *reconciliation*.

#### THE FIRST BECAME LAST

To create, He was *above* all; to reconcile, He stooped *beneath* all. As God's Image He was the nearest and dearest in the Divine affections; as the Crucified He was forsaken and the object of God's curse. As creation's Firstborn He was "before all"; when He became a "Worm and no man" (Psa. 22:6), He was crushed beneath the heel of the lowest and meanest in His dominions.

The cross of the Son of God! The fullest of man's insolence and enmity is there displayed. The wrath of God, their due deserts, is there diverted from its proper course and falls on Him, the Righteous One. And there He Who knew no sin was made the "sin approach" [offering] (2 Cor. 5:21). There, too, we see the weakness of God, the helplessness of Him Whose arm spread out the heavens. We see Him Whose blessing filled the earth, accursed.

Adam's offense brought down the curse upon creation, and its groan has not yet ceased. The death of God's Son upon a cross—that, too, brought down a curse, not upon creation, but upon Himself. The one *estranged* the world from God. The other brought in *peace*.

Thus the reconciliation rolls along from heaven to earth, following upon the footsteps of Sin and Death until Sin is slain and Death discarded. During the eons its conquests comprise the faithful few who are selected for the special honor of fellowship with Christ in its administration. But when the enmity of the

creature is finally subdued nothing remains to hinder its universal enjoyment but Death.

## DEATH DESTROYED

The final foe, Death, is the last enemy to be abolished (1 Cor. 15:26). When this time comes, all enmity is passed. God's glorious goal is gained! The prodigal universe is clasped to the Father's bosom. The joy of heaven is full, for He has found His lost and erring creatures! They have been forgiven much, and much will be the measure of their love!

All strayed and sinned and suffered and succumbed to death and now all are revived and all are restored and all are reconciled.

## HIS GRANDEST GLORY

And this will fill every cup with cheer and every heart with overflowing joy. God will be vindicated on every point. And then we will realize—as yet we cannot—that ALL is *out* of Him and *through* Him and *for* Him. *To Him be glory for the eons! Amen!* (Rom. 11:36).

And now we plead with those who love Him, not to drag down the Son of God from the high honors God has given Him. Even though we may not understand how it can be possible, and though it jars our theology, and even though it *seems* to us contrary to some other of His statements—these are no excuse for denying the record of God concerning His Son.

His Son is Supreme! And His supremacy depends upon His reconciliation of the universe. If we deny this, His grandest glory is gone, His work unfinished, His effort a failure. Rather let it be ours to realize and ratify God's impregnable purpose for His Beloved, and proclaim to all, both saint and sinner, this highest of His glories, for He *shall* be

UNIVERSALLY SUPREME!

## “EVERLASTING” NOT ENDLESS

GOD IS CONCILIATED to mankind. This, however, is a *one-sided* conciliation. On the other hand, *reconciliation*, as the following pages show, is *mutual*; it is enjoyed by *both* God and man. God's goal, as Colossians 1:20 shows, is not merely to conciliate the world, but to reconcile *all*, whether those on the earth or those in the heavens.

If this be true, then what about “eternal torment”? God cannot “reconcile all” and, at the same time, torment the majority eternally. A thorough search into the words which are supposed to furnish us with the thought of eternity have revealed many startling facts, a few of which are presented here.\*

The conclusion that there will be an *actual, mutual, universal reconciliation* is so astounding, so overwhelming, so glorious, that we cannot contain it; it must overflow.

We do not appeal to prejudice, or to human reasoning, but solely to the Word of God. If we go past versions to the original texts, we trust that all is made so plain that every reader can follow and apprehend.

To discover such a glorious consummation to God's dealings with mankind immeasurably heightens our conception of the glory of His power and wisdom and truth and love. Sin is but His handmaid, not His master;

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\*For more detailed studies, see our Catalogue of the various printed materials, under the heading “Destiny.”

and shall not mar His work when it is finally finished.

It is usual to view this subject from the depths of the sinner's doom. But let us rather look at it from the heights of God's glory, and rejoice that He Who was made to be a sin offering for our sakes, will yet, by the power of His cross, annul the acts of the Adversary (1 John 3:8), and so sweep every sign of sin from God's universe.

*Katallassō* AND *Apokatallassō*

"and through Him to reconcile all to Him (making peace through the blood of His cross), through Him, whether those on the earth or those in the heavens."

(Colossians 1:20)

It may be new to many to know that conciliation, as viewed in the Word of God, is *one-sided*. When we are spoken of as "conciliated to God" we are not to look for any change in Him. He became conciliated through the death of His Son; we are conciliated when we believe Him. Usage, which alone can establish the current value and significance of any expression, shows us clearly that the word ordinarily translated "reconciliation" (*katallassō*) does *not* imply a *mutual* friendliness.

If *katallassō* had been used in Colossians 1:20, it would mean little more than what has already been so fully considered: the truth that God has laid aside all enmity and is most favorably inclined towards all of Adam's sinning sons.

But if we examine the text more closely we discover that the word *katallassō* has, in this case, been strengthened by the addition of the prefix *apo-*, which must mean more than *katallassō* alone. God *cannot*, however, be *more* conciliated than He is as set forth in those passages where the ordinary, unstrengthened form of the word is used.

Immediately following our text we read that the Colossians once were alienated and enemies. This they were years after God had become conciliated to them at

the cross. "Yet *now*," says the apostle, "He reconciles (*apokatêllaxen*) by His body of flesh." Once the estrangement had been laid aside on God's side only, but now that *they* had entered into that grand truth, the conciliation had become *mutual*. When both parties in an estrangement are conciliated the result is complete *reconciliation*.

The reconciliation of all cannot be confined to the peace made by the blood of the cross, for it is only *after* having made this peace, that we read the added truth that, through *Him* (not His cross), all are to respond to that peace and share its blessed fruits.

So then, mutual, complete, universal reconciliation is *based* upon the blood of His cross and God's attitude as a consequence. But it does not stop there. It includes the actual and complete blotting out of the estrangement on man's side as well.

This meaning is confirmed by the only remaining occurrence of the word reconcile. In Ephesians 2:16 we read: "that He . . . should be reconciling (*apokatallaxê*) both in one body to God through (*dia*) the cross, killing the enmity in it.' Here we are taught that the enmity *has been* slain at the cross; and this becomes the channel *through* which mutual reconciliation *is to be* effected. In view of the tremendous issues involved, it behooves everyone who treasures God's revelation, to search this matter to the core. We believe that those who do will come to the same conclusion to which we have been compelled, namely, that there is to be, at some future time, a condition of affairs in which the entire universe will be at perfect peace with God.

Glorious as such a prospect is, magnificent as such a consummation of God's mighty administrations must seem, and however passionately perfection pleads for some such a Divine Utopia, it will not be an easy task for most of us, who have been nursed in the lap of Tradition, to believe, much less to comprehend, truth so grand.

The many objections which present themselves have been examined with great care. The results of this investigation, though not in line with our main subject, are necessary to an acceptance and understanding of its marvelous message, and shall have the benefit of a separate chapter.

#### OBJECTIONS TO THE RECONCILIATION OF ALL

The host of objections raised against the possibility of the reconciliation of all narrow themselves down to those scriptures which speak of "everlasting" punishment, or torment "forever and ever."

A right division of the word of truth (2 Tim. 2:15) in regard to the doom of the lost is just as necessary as when considering the destiny of the saved. The fact that Satan, the Beast, the False Prophet and the worshippers of the Beast are to be "tormented" does not give us liberty to say that *all* the lost will be tormented (Rev. 14:10). Neither does the fact that their torment extends to "the eons of the eons" allow us to extend the duration of the punishment of others to a like length.

Nor are we at liberty to dislocate a passage (Matt. 25:46) dealing with the judgment of living nations gathered before the Son of Mankind, based upon their treatment of His Jewish brethren, and assume that their "everlasting" punishment may be transferred to those who live today. Such is not reading, but rather, wresting the word of truth.

The truth as to the present day unbeliever is not obscure nor hard to determine. God's present intentions are clearly set forth in the opening argument of the epistle to the Romans: "God, Who will be paying each one in accord with his acts: to those, indeed, who by endurance in good acts are seeking glory and honor and incorruption, life eonian; yet to those of faction, and stubborn, indeed, as to the truth, yet persuaded to injustice, indignation and fury, affliction and distress, on every human soul which is effecting evil" (Rom. 2:6-9).

It is most significant that there is no reference whatever to the *duration* of the doom inflicted in this passage. Let us not be wise above what is written.

The statements which *do* seem to deny the possibility of the reconciliation of all are those which speak of torment "forever and ever." We could probably prove that only Satan, the Beast, his Prophet, and his Israelitish worshippers, are included in this terrible doom. But if Satan alone were to suffer such a fate, and even if he be consigned to the remotest corner of the universe, his single case would not allow us to speak of the reconciliation as including *all*. We need to consider most carefully, then, the words which seem to teach the endlessness of Satan's doom.

#### "FOR EVER" AND "EVERLASTING"

How do we get the thought of "everlasting" in the Word of God? It is acknowledged by all that the Greek word *aion* (which we will call "eon") did not mean "for ever" until after it came in contact with Hebrew in the Greek version of the Scriptures. Then, because it was applied to God in such phrases as Psalm 90:2, "even from everlasting to everlasting Thou art God" it acquired, it is said, its new meaning of *endlessness*. Since it is used thus of God, consistency requires, we are told, that the same meaning be attached to it when it is applied to men.

In order to test the truthfulness of this deduction it will be absolutely necessary for us to get our facts directly from the original languages. It is quite easy, however, after these facts have been gathered, for anyone to satisfy himself as to the real meaning of the original terms which are rendered "for ever" in most versions.

#### OULM IN THE PAST

First let us consider the Hebrew word *oulm* (עולם), which lies at the root of the matter. It is used in reference to the *past* in a number of passages. It is

much easier for us to grasp that which has become history than that which is yet future.

The following are the passages in which *m-oulm* (מ-עולם) "from everlasting" occurs. They are arranged under two heads, first those which refer to God, then those concerned with mankind.

## USED OF GOD

1 Chron. 29:10	<i>for (from) ever.</i>
Psa. 25:6	<i>ever of old.</i>
41:13	<i>from everlasting.</i>
90:2	<i>even from everlasting.</i>
93:2	<i>from everlasting.</i>
103:17	<i>from everlasting.</i>
Prov. 8:23	<i>from everlasting.</i>
Isa. 63:16	<i>from everlasting.</i>

## USED OF MEN

Gen. 6:4	<i>of old.</i>
Josh. 24:2	<i>in old time.</i>
1 Sam. 27:8	<i>of old.</i>
Psa. 119:52	<i>of old.</i>
Isa. 42:14	<i>long time.</i>
46:9	<i>of old.</i>
57:11	<i>even of old.</i>
63:19	<i>(n)ever.</i>
64:4	<i>for since the beginning of the world.</i>
Jer. 2:20	<i>of old.</i>
5:15	<i>ancient.</i>
Ezek. 26:20	<i>old time.</i>

There is a startling inconsistency here. When applied to God it is always "ever" or "everlasting," but when applied to men it is *never* so rendered. Why? Because in no case will the sense bear it. Man and his history do not stretch back to a dateless past eternity. No nation, no prophets, have been "from everlasting."

The translators, when *oulm* referred to the past, saw fit to use *entirely different terms* for God, than for man. They were *sure* that the passages referring to man could *not* mean everlasting. A false sense of reverence led them to depart from the consistent usage of the

original and the example of the Greek translators, whose rendering received the stamp of divine approval in the later breathings of the Holy Spirit. The possibility that these passages might not refer to God simply as existent in eternity past, but to His revelation of Himself under various titles which describe His relationships to His creatures during the eons or age-times, does not seem to have suggested itself to them. We will follow this hint a little later.

Other passages make it still more manifest that *oulm* does not mean endless when applied to the past. Here are some with their renderings:

Deut. 32:7, *old*; Job 22:15, *old*; Psa. 77:5, *ancient time*; Prov. 22:28, *ancient*; 23:10, *old*; Ecc. 1:10, *of old time*; Isa. 44:7, *ancient*; 51:9, *of old*; 58:12, *old*; 61:4, *old*; 63:9, *old*; Jer. 5:15, *ancient*; 6:16, *old*; 18:15, *ancient*; 28:8, *old*; 1 Sam. 27:1, *old*; Ezek. 25:15, *old*; 26:20, *of old*; 36:2, *ancient*; Amos 9:11, *old*; Mic. 7:14, *old*; Mal. 3:4, *old*.

#### OULM IN THE FUTURE

Now we are ready to raise the question, can *oulm* mean "for ever" when it refers to the future? The Authorized Version is no authority in this matter. Its translators have rendered it by about twenty-five different terms. Even in the future we find *eternal*, *ever*, *lasting*, *long*, and *world*.

To be consistent they should have rendered Psalm 73:12: "Behold these are the ungodly who prosper FOREVER (*in the world*, A.V.)." The mere statement will be denied by everyone.

There are some things which we know are not eternal. Revelation 21:22 reads: "And a temple I did not perceive in it, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lambkin are its temple." Thus, in that blessed eon, when God is once more with men (Rev. 21:3) there is no need of the temple with its ceremonial. The very perfection and freedom of access to God make a temple obsolete. The sanctuary and its service and priesthood are *not* to last eternally. In conflict with these facts we are asked

to believe that the sanctuary (Ezek. 37:26, 28), its ministrations (Ex. 30:21; Lev. 6:18, 22), the priesthood (Ex. 29:9; 40:15; Num. 25:13; Psa. 110:4), the offerings (Ex. 29:28; Lev. 7:34, 36; 10:15; 17:7; Num. 18:8, 11, 19) are to continue "for ever."

Our Lord could say "Heaven and earth *shall* be passing by" (Matt. 24:35). And concerning the law and the prophets: "Till heaven and earth should be passing by, one iota or one serif may by no means be passing by from the law *till all should be occurring.*" It is evident that He expected the passing of the law and this present earth, both at the same time. But in the earlier revelation we read that the earth (Psa. 78:69; Ecc. 1:4) and its hills (Gen. 49:26; Deut. 33:15; Hab. 3:6) are to endure "for ever."

The position that *oulm* does not mean endless is much strengthened by the fact that *u-od* (וֹד), meaning "and still," is added to it in about twenty cases. In English it is usually rendered "for ever *and ever.*" Even in English we can get a glimmering of the true thought if we render the added Hebrew word (*u-od*) by the meaning which it ordinarily bears in hundreds of other passages, and change the phrase to "for ever *and still.*" And this would have the right effect of limiting "for ever" to a period of time. This combination is probably the most comprehensive expression which the Hebrew Scriptures know, relative to duration. If we can fix its meaning we shall have the key to our problem.\*

A most important and interesting occurrence of this phrase is Psalm 45:6: "Thy throne, O God, is for ever

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\*Its first occurrence is Exodus 15:18. The Septuagint (the "LXX"—the Greek version of the Hebrew Scriptures) renders this instance by "the eon and upon the eon and still" (*ton aiōna kai ep' aiōna, kai eti*). That the last word means *still* or *longer or further* is shown by its use in such passages as Luke 16:2; Romans 6:2; Revelation 22:11 (four times). This shows conclusively that, in ancient times, the thought of endlessness was not ascribed to *oulm*.

and ever." This is quoted in Hebrews 1:8: "But unto the Son He saith, "Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever" (*eis ton aiōna tou aiōnos*).

Other occurrences are: Psa. 9:5; 10:16; 21:4; 45:6, 17; 48:14; 52:8; 104:5; 119:44; 145:1, 21; Dan. 12:3; Mic. 4:5. Note that Psa. 148:6; Isa. 30:8 and Jer. 7:7 must not be confused with these, though rendered "forever and ever."

May we dare suggest that the kingdom of the Son of God is to have an end? Some there are, and we heartily sympathize with them, who may turn from such an inquiry as traitorous and unworthy of those for whom He died. But we beg them to bear with us a little further. We would never have taken it upon ourselves to write of these things unless, first of all, His highest glory had been set beyond question. Yet it will never do for *us* to decide what glorifies Him and what dishonors Him. God alone knows that. In 1 Corinthians 15:24-28, we read: "thereafter comes the consummation, whenever He may be giving up the kingdom to His God and Father, whenever He should be nullifying all sovereignty and all authority and power . . . Now, whenever all may be subjected to Him, then the Son Himself also shall be subjected to Him Who subjects all to Him, that God may be All in all."

Few things are more evident in Holy Writ than the perfect subjection of the Son of God to His Father. "Not My will but Thine" was His constant attitude. It sustained Him in the darkest hours of earthly sorrow. Such subjection will always be one of His perfections, but it is not the subject of our text. The subjection here spoken of follows the giving up of the throne of that universal kingdom which God will yet give to Him.

Earthly kingdoms last until some disorder disrupts them. What a contrast is His rule! His kingdom lasts until all are brought into such perfect subjection and harmony that His administration and that of His delegates is no longer needed. His power, too, lacks any further exercise, through its very forcefulness.

Just as priesthood is no longer needed where there is perfect and unhindered access to God by all His creatures, so government, in the hands of intermediaries, becomes unnecessary where there is perfect reconciliation between God and His creatures. Indeed, the eons will have failed of their object unless mankind learns not only that God's is the only worthy will, but that all true blessing issues from the Heart that moves it.

So then, the pinnacle of excellence is reached by the Kingdom of God's Son in its consummation. The rule spoken of in Hebrews 1:8 *ceases* when this "end" (*telos*) or consummation is reached. *Here is the key to our problem.*

Just as mankind for the present is confined by physical limitations to this comparatively small sphere we call "the earth," so also it has pleased God to limit man's present temporal\* boundaries by the horizon of the eons.

#### EONIAN DESIGNATIONS

God has been pleased to reveal Himself under various titles corresponding to the character and purpose of the end He has in view. Subjection is connected with the term "Alueim" (To-subjectors), eonian relationship with "Ieue" (Will-be-ing-was); "Adonai" is the Adjudicator, corresponding to "Lord" in the Greek Scrip-

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\*The rendering "temporal", i.e. *pertaining to time*, in 2 Corinthians 4:18 leads to serious misunderstanding. It should be rendered "for a season," "for a while," "temporary" or "transient." A reference to Matthew 13:21, Mark 4:17 and Hebrews 11:25, the only other occurrences, will substantiate this. The one whom our Lord compares to "rocky" places does not endure during the course of time, but "for a while" (temporary). And this reminds us that any superficial study of this subject in the Authorized Version can only lead us back to the traditions which its translators themselves held. They have colored the context with their opinions in many passages. The contrast in this passage is between temporary things and those which last through the eons.

tures when used in connection with the other nations. "God" in the Greek Scriptures literally means "Placer." This title is especially appropriate during this present interval of grace for we have been extricated out of this present wicked eon and *placed* among the celestials where every spiritual blessing is ours in Christ (Gal. 1:4; Eph. 1:3). Each of these titles is applied to the Son of God in His work of revealing the Divine excellencies.

So it is during the eons, but in the final consummation, when the dignities and activities which gave rise to these titles will have reached a full fruition, they will no longer be needed.

There will be no special covenants for Israel then with Ieue, for that would deny the reconciliation. He will be the Father of *all*, and thus the restricted titles which were used during the course of the eons will pass away in the perfect family of God.

Why at that time call Him Adonai, when all adjudication will have retired from the scene?

Such considerations as these will solve all those difficult passages which *seem*, by their connection with the names of God, to imply endlessness.

That keystone passage (Psa. 90:2), to which all point in order to show that "everlasting means everlasting," should be read in this light. Who is spoken of here? The opening of the Psalm tells us that it is Adonai, the Adjudicator (A.V., Lord). But how could He sustain such a title in the eras before creation, *when there was nothing to adjudicate?* And how can He continue to wear it in the consummation when all rule will have been ruled out? The glories it has gathered during the eons must ever adorn His praise, but when it has become merely a title, its very retirement will call for added applause.

#### THE CORRECT MEANING

The fact that "forever and ever" does not mean

everlasting in the original is enough to start us on the pathway to truth. But well may we turn aside a moment and ask, "What *does* it mean, then?" In about twenty-six instances *oulm* is not associated with time. Then it is allowed its ordinary sense of *obscure* (Psa. 90:8; Ecc. 12:14; Lev. 4:13; 5:2, 3, 4, etc.). It speaks then, of *obscure, unrevealed duration*, but *not* unlimited. The Greek translators so understood it when they changed the simple word *oulm* to a phrase "for the eon."

The horizon of the early prophets was limited to this present earth. Time prior to its making or after its destruction was outside the realm of that revelation. It was *obscure*, i.e. *oulm*.

Later unfoldings unwrap purposes *before* the eons (2 Tim. 1:9) or before *oulm*. They also carry us beyond *oulm* in the description of the new heavens and the new earth, and the consummation which follows.

This is confirmed by the uniform addition of "*and still*" (*u-od*) whenever rule or government is in question, because that still continues in the new earth all the way to the consummation.

"For ever," in the original, means *for the obscure eon* which lasts until the new creation. "For ever *and ever*" leads still further, to the very consummation. "Forever" is applied to this earth, the temple, the priesthood, the sacrifices—in fact to those things which endure till the last great conflagration (2 Pet. 3:12)—but never to those things which emerge from it.

"For ever *and ever*" is used of government because the universal kingdom of our Lord will not cease with the new earth but will continue until the consummation.

His priesthood passes with the earth, but His dominion continues beyond it, hence it is *oulm u-od*, "for ever" *and still*.

Then will the kingdom be handed over to God in His character as *Father*. This filial relationship, this chang-

ing of the great God from Subjector and Placer to Father, is the ripened fruit of the eons. Then will come to pass that daydream of the present, the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man, for then all will be one vast family linked together in Christ by the close fellowship of a Father's love.

Priests may be appointed for men in things divine, and rulers delegated by God to wield His authority during the course of the eons, but in that ideal, that perfect, that final consummation, they would but deny the fullness and infinite perfection of the reconciliation of all.

If we can fix this vision of the glorious ultimate, and enlarge our hearts to receive it, much that seems to intercept our sight will become transparent. For instance, in Ephesians 1:10 we read of the "administration of the complement of the eras," that is, the harvest season of the eons, when Christ will again be Head of everything, both that in the heavens and that on the earth. Not a word here, you say, regarding the subterranean or the lake of fire. But this scripture does not speak of the final state. Here it is a question of Christ's headship, His *rule*. At the consummation however, it will be a question of His *abdication*, the first and only Ruler who brings rule to ripened perfection.

#### WHAT OF THE UNSAVED?

This subject has been so long divorced from the glory of God and sunk to the level of an inquiry as to the doom of the impenitent that some will be impatient to know what becomes of them.

Since God does not associate everlasting, or any period of time, with the portion of sinners today, we, too, refrain from doing so. But there still remains the "everlasting" punishment of the nations who are gathered before the Son of Mankind when He appears in His glory (Matt. 25:31), and also the torment "for ever

and ever" of those who worship the Beast and his image (Rev. 14:10, 11), and the Beast and the False Prophet themselves with the Adversary who deceived them (Rev. 20:10). Only these three "shall be tormented . . . for the eons of the eons." Their dupes, however, are having "no rest day and night" *while* worshipping the wild beast and its image. The tense of the Greek verb (worshipping) suggests that this is their present experience. The fumes or smoke of their torment will serve as an eonian reminder of past fiery judgment as the Dead Sea does now (*cf.* Jude 7, Deut. 29:20, U.R. vol. 13, p. 215).

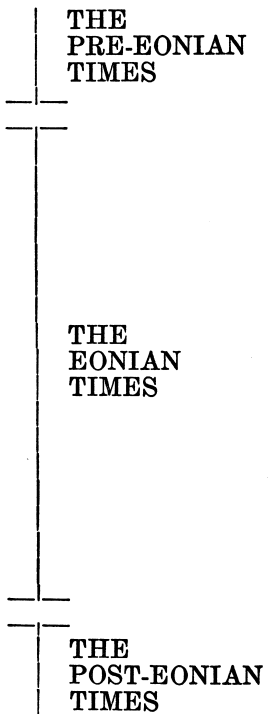
Besides, is not death to be abolished? (1 Cor. 15:26). What but life remains when the last enemy is defeated? Death could not be allowed to mar this perfect bliss. No, we are not promised "eternal" life but rather life for the "eons" . . . "eonian life" (Titus 1:2). This life is God's special gift to those chosen beforehand to serve as His instruments in reconciling the rest. We will serve as His display in the oncoming eons (Eph. 2:7). Thus He is the "Saviour of *all* mankind, *especially* of those who believe." (1 Tim. 4:10). We may rejoice, then, that our portion includes eonian life, but let us happily acknowledge that life beyond the eons is to be granted to *all* His creatures, in perfect fellowship with Him Who has become their All.

But what of our "eternal life"? Is it only for a limited time? What security have we for the future? Here again, instead of robbing God of the glory due His great Name, the truth only adds luster to its effulgence. As a matter of fact, His Word guarantees life and blessing until the consummation—when He will be All in all. Then we no longer have any prop to lean upon, no foundation whatever upon which to rest, but *God Himself!*

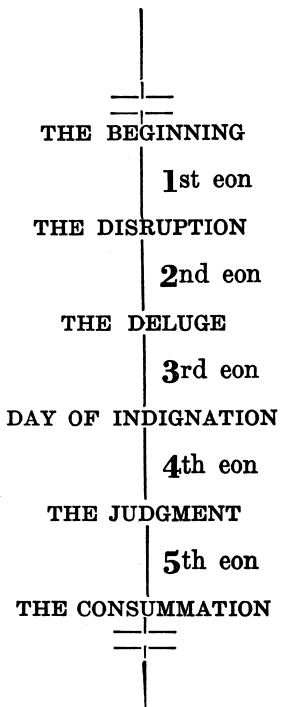
Yet Who would not trust themselves to Him? As for me, now that He has revealed Himself, I can repose upon Him in the utmost confidence, even when His

promises and His Word have long since been fulfilled.  
What He is is sufficient for me, and will suffice all to  
whom the eons have revealed Him.

And this I know most pleases Him.



THE FIRST DIAGRAM



THE SECOND DIAGRAM

## THE EONIAN TIMES

Time is divided into three grand divisions, which are characterized in Scripture as "before the eons" (1 Cor. 2:7), "times eonian" (2 Tim. 1:9) and "the consummation" (1 Cor. 15:24) which indicates the accomplishment of the purpose of the eons.

Thus the eons divide duration into three major divisions. Counting the five eons, there are seven secondary segments to all time. Such a division into three primary and seven secondary divisions is in perfect accord with both nature and revelation, for light itself is composed of three primary and seven secondary colors. Yet not only are there seven periods, but these are symmetrically grouped about that grand moral center of the universe—the cross of Christ.

The eons commence with the BEGINNING and close with the CONSUMMATION. The great cataclysm of Genesis 1:2, which we term the DISRUPTION, marks the boundary between the first and second eon just as the great white throne JUDGMENT separates the last eon from the one which precedes it. The present eon is bounded by the DELUGE in the past and the DAY OF INDIGNATION in the future.

These divisions, it will be noted, accompany marked changes in the very constitution of the world. They must not be confused with Administrations, of which the present eon alone includes eight. The first diagram illustrates the eons, or ages, as a whole. The second diagram shows the great crises which separate the five eons. The same divisions are shown on the chart.

# A CHART OF THE EONIAN TIMES

2 TIm. 1:9; TIt. 1:2; (Rom. 16:26) **GOD ALL**  
 BEFORE THE EONS, 1 Cor. 2:7; (Jd. 25). **GOD ALL**

BEFORE THE EONS, 1 Cor. 2:7; (Jd. 25).  
 THE BEGINNING

2 Pet. 3:6, "The world that then was" and Eph. 2:2. Then of 2 Pet. 2:5, "The ancient world" and Eph. 2:2. Leads to

**EONIAN TIMES**

THE DISRUPTION

TIm. 1:9; 2 TIt. 1:2.

of 2 Pet. 2:5, "The ancient world" and Eph. 2:2. Leads to

Ro. 16:28; 2 TIt. 1:9; TIt. 1:2.

THE DELUGE

LIFE  
 Mt. 19:16; Mk. 10:17; Lu. 18:18; Mk. 10:19; Lu. 18:30; Mt. 25:46; Lu. 10:25

THE PRESENT EON.

Gal. 1:4.

THE CURRENT EON.

1 TIt. 6:17; 2 TIt. 4:10; TIt. 2:12.

THIS EON.

Mt. 12:32; 13:22; Mk. 4:19; Lu. 16:8; 20:34; Rom. 12:2; 1 Cor. 1:20; 2:6; 6:8; 3:18; 2 Cor. 4:4; Eph. 1:21; 2:2 (with world).

FOR THE EON.

Mt. 21:19; Mk. 11:14; Jn. 12:84; 13:8; 1 Co. 8:13.

FROM THE EON.

Lu. 1:70; Acts 3:21; 15:18.

OUT OF THE EON.

Jn. 9:32.

CONCLUSION OF THE EON.

Mt. 13:39, 40, 49; 24:3.

THE DAY OF WRATH

Mk. 10:30; Lu. 18:30.

THE COMING EON.

Hb. 6:5.

THE FUTURE EON.

Hb. 6:5.

THAT EON.

Lu. 20:35.

FOR THE EON.

Mk. 3:29; Lu. 1:55; Jn. 4:14; 6:51, 58; 8:35, 35; 51, 52; 10:28; 11:26; 12:34; 14:16; 2 Cor. 9:9; Hb. 5:6; 6:20; 7:17, 21, 24, 28; 1 Pt. 1:25; 2 Pt. 2:17; 1 Jn. 2:17; 2 Jn. 2; Jd. 13.

FOR THE DAY OF THE EON.

2 Pt. 3:18 (of Dent. 32:7; Mic. 5:2; 7:14; Mal. 3:4).

CONCLUSION OF THE EON.

Mt. 28:20.

THE JUDGMENT

Mt. 28:20.

THE CONSUMMATION

1 Co. 15:24.

THE CONSUMMATIONS

OF THE EONS, 1 Co. 10:11.

2 TIt. 4:18; Hb. 13:21; 1 Pt. 4:11; 5:11; Un. 1:6, 18, 4:9, 10, 5:13, 7:12; 10:6; 11:15; 14:11; 15:7; 19:3; 20:10; 23:5

THE EONS of THE EONS

Ro. 16:27; Ga. 1:5; Ph. 4:20; 1 TIt. 1:17

EON of THE EONS

Eph. 3:21

EON of THE EON

Heb. 1:8

CONCLUSION OF THE EONS

Heb. 9:26

THE ON-COMING EONS

Eph. 2:7

FOR THE EONS

Luke 1:33; Rom. 1:25; 9:5; 11:36; 2 Cor. 11:31; Heb. 13:8

THE CROSS

Eph. 3:11; 1 TIm. 1:17; Heb. 1:2; 11:3; Jude 25

FROM THE EONS

Eph. 3:9; Col. 1:26

THE ON-COMING EONS

Eph. 2:7

FOR THE EONS

Luke 1:33; Rom. 1:25; 9:5; 11:36; 2 Cor. 11:31; Heb. 13:8

THE CROSS

Eph. 3:11; 1 TIm. 1:17; Heb. 1:2; 11:3; Jude 25

FROM THE EONS

Eph. 3:9; Col. 1:26

THE ON-COMING EONS

Eph. 2:7

Mt. 19:16; Mk. 10:17; Lu. 18:18; Mk. 10:19; Lu. 18:30; Mt. 25:46; Lu. 10:25

Jn. 3:15; 16:36; 4:14, 36; 5:22; 9:9; 6:37, 40; 47, 54, 68; 10:28; 12:25, 50; Acts 13:46; 48; 17:2, 8; Ro. 2:7; 5:21; 6:22, 28

Ga. 6:8; 1 TIt. 1:16; 6:12. TIt. 1:2; 3:5; 1 Jn. 1:2; 2:25; 3:15; 5:11, 13, 20, Jude 21.

Salvaton. Hb. 5:9.

Redemption. Hb. 9:12.

Covenant. Hb. 13:20.

Allotment. God Hb. 9:15.

Kingdom. In 2 Pt. 1:11.

Evangel. Christ Un. 14:6.

Consolation. 2 Th. 2:16.

Glory. 2 Co. 4:17; 2 TIt. 2:10; 1 Pt. 6:10.

God. Ho. 16:26.

Fire, Punishment, Etc. Mt. 18:8; 25:41; 46; Mk. 3:29; 2 Th. 1:9; Hb. 6:2; Jd. 7.

Other Occurrences Lu. 16:9; 2 Co. 4:18; 5:1; 1 TIt. 6:16; Phm. 15; Hb. 9:14.

THE CONSUMMATIONS OF THE EONS, 1 Co. 10:11.

GOD ALL IN ALL

The accompanying chart is confined to a graphic presentation of THE EONIAN TIMES. It cites every reference to these times, so located as to show its significance at a glance. The occurrences are grouped according to the phrases in which they are found. For the convenience of the English reader the Greek is replaced by exact and consistent translation. Everyone is urged to check each reference, compare it with its context and satisfy himself that it is correct.

The pre-eonian times and post-eonian times have much in common, chiefly, indeed, that sin is absent from them both. In the first it is unknown: in the last it is well known but abolished.

The third eon, in which we find ourselves, and the coming eon, of which the Scriptures have so much to say, are often referred to in God's Word, so that we have a large fund of information concerning them. Not so with the first and second nor the last eon. They are not directly mentioned as such in the Scriptures. But that there *were* eons before the present one is evident, for we read of eons in the past as well as eons in the future. So there *must* have been more than one eon before the present one.

A remarkable expression occurs in Ephesians 2:2. It is literally, “the eon of this world.” That is to say, the eon which corresponds, or pertains to, the present *cosmos*, or world, or system. So we only need to determine when this present *cosmos*, or world began in order to find out when this eon began. And we need only know how many and what worlds there were before the present world and we will also know what eons have preceded this one. The fact is, *the eons and the worlds synchronize*. They are two different views of the same thing. A radical change in the constitution of affairs is called a new world and the time which this world characterizes is called an eon. They must not be confounded with less radical changes in administration

which are called eras or administrations.

In 2 Peter 3:6 we have a reference to the world before the disruption of the second verse of Genesis. That world "perished." At the same time the eon with which it was associated passed away. The first short vertical stroke on the chart between the Beginning and the Disruption represents this first eon.

In 2 Peter 2:5 we have another reference to a past world. This one, however, came to its end in the deluge of Genesis 6:17. So here we have another eon. The second short vertical line on the chart between the Disruption and the Deluge represents this second eon.

The present eon began with the Deluge and will continue until the Day of Indignation of which the deluge was a type. The vertical line\* from the Deluge to the Day of Indignation or the Day of Wrath shows this on the chart. This is the third eon.

This inaugurates the coming eon in which Christ will reign for a thousand years. The next vertical line\* between the Day of Indignation and the Judgment represents this fourth eon.

When this is finished there is a new creation over which the Son of God rules until the Consummation. The last short vertical stroke between the Judgment and the Consummation stands for this fifth and final eon. Thus each eon after the first is introduced by judgment, remedial and worldwide, and the renovation of things mundane, and by a new and distinct constitution of affairs.

The second eon is ushered in by the great cataclysm of Genesis 1:2 and the readjustment of the verses which follow. Whatever may have been the nature of the previous world, it is quite certain that it had no sea and no human beings. Now, however, the land is divided

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\*A *short* vertical line on the Second Diagram, but represented by a comparatively *long* vertical line on the Chart of the Eonian Times.

by waters and a human is placed over the earth.

The deluge prepared the way for the present eon. Man is given the right to rule over his fellows. It is the eon of human government. In this it is radically distinct from all other eons.

Man's misrule leads to the day of indignation which makes way for the coming of Christ. The kingdom of this world becomes our Lord's and His Christ's (Rev. 11:15). Israel becomes a kingdom of priests and rules the other nations.

The irruption of Satan and the great white throne judgment, which close the fourth eon, prepare for the fifth and final of all the eons. In that last eon the Son of God is supreme, and God once more dwells with mankind as in the garden of Eden, so that the priesthood of Israel is no longer needed (Rev. 21:3). Delegated dominion continues until it vanishes at the Consummation, when the death state is abolished and God becomes All in all.

This explanation of the chart is merely suggestive. The proof will be presented as we consider in detail every occurrence of the word eon in all its forms and phrases.

At the very outset some will ask, “Why use the word ‘eon’ rather than ‘age?’” What has been already presented makes it clear that the thoughts commonly associated with the word “age” are, in many important particulars, diverse from that which is brought before us by the Greek word *aiōn*. The period suggested by “age” in common usage is not nearly long enough to fit the thought of the eons. It will not do to put this new wine in old wineskins. It would be confusing to incorporate the thoughts clinging to “age” into the new perceptions which a thorough study of the eons will harvest. So we will use “eon” which is good English, yet not so much used as to be contaminated with unscriptural suppositions.

## EON IN THE SINGULAR

TO MAKE OUR STUDY SIMPLER, let us consider first every passage in which the word *eon* is used in the singular. Later we will take up those texts where the plural form occurs. Then we will explain the phrases where the word is used twice in the same phrase.

### REFERRING TO THE PRESENT

*The Present Eon.* In Galatians 1:4 we have this present time characterized as "the present *wicked eon*." This description cannot be applied to the two coming eons, yet may be used of either of those which have gone before. We may conclude from this expression that there are not only a number of eons, but that some of them are wicked, like the present, while others are not so described.

*The Current Eon.* The same thought is enforced in the three passages in which the word *current* (or *now*) is associated with eon. Sanity and justness and devoutness are foreign to the nature of the current eon (Titus 2:12). Its riches are dubious (1 Tim. 6:17). Demas is an example of those whose love for it have marred their service for God (2 Tim. 4:10). None of this could apply to the future eons which lead to the fulfillment of the purpose of the eons.

*This Eon.* In this phrase there is always a latent contrast with another eon in which its wicked ways will no longer be present. Indeed, in Luke 20: 34, 35 "that" eon is put in direct contrast to "this" eon. Those of this eon who are counted worthy to happen upon that

eon will be sons of the resurrection and will no longer enter the marriage state as at present.

And in Ephesians 1:21 the glorious name of our Lord is exalted above every name, not only in this eon but in the impending eon as well. Now the Son of Mankind may be spoken against (Matt. 12:32), but the holy spirit may not be spoken against, neither in this eon nor that which is impending. In Romans 12:2 we are entreated not to be configured to this eon, with its walk (Eph. 2:2), its worries (Matt. 13:22), its unjust gains (Luke 15:8), its wisdom (1 Cor. 2:6; 3:18), its discussers (1 Cor. 1:20), its chief men (1 Cor. 2:6, 8) and its god (2 Cor. 4:4). Its religion and politics and philosophy and business and customs are all at variance with the spirit that we have received.

*For the Eon.* As will be seen on the chart,\* this phrase is divided between this eon and the coming eon. Only the context can enable us to settle which particular eon is in view. As the coming eon was so constantly before the minds of the true Israelite (for in it alone would they find their blessing) it is generally that eon which is referred to. In either case we must limit the time to a single eon. A study of each passage will demonstrate this fully.

It has been customary to render this, literally, “unto the eon.” But a comparative study of the Greek prepositions leads to the conclusion that *eis* means “into” (abbreviated: <sup>to</sup>), while the thought of “unto” is distributed to *pros* “to<sup>d</sup>” or “toward”, *mechri* “unto” [the time when, (or) the end that], and *achri* “until” or “up to” or “as far as.” But when *eis* is used of time our English idiom will not bear the word “into,” but requires the somewhat more indefinite “<sup>to</sup>about” or “<sup>to</sup>for.” (See Matt. 6:34; Luke 12:19; Heb. 9:9; Rev. 9:15; and all the scriptures quoted under the phrase “for the eon” and

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\*See page 216.

those under "the eons of the eons" and similar phrases both in this series of articles and in the Keyword Concordance, page 91).

We have a striking confirmation of the limitations of this phrase in Matthew 21:19 and Mark 11:14, where the fig tree is withered "for the eon." It figures the Nation of Israel which is withered away. But they shall be restored (Rom. 11:26) and the sign of their restoration is the budding of the leaves and tenderness of the fig tree (Matt. 24:32; Mark 13:28).

During the absence of Christ, He sent a Paraclete or Consoler who would be with them for the eon. This is not a denial that they would have the holy spirit in the coming eon, even more than of old, but when Christ comes again, what need is there for the spirit in the character of a *consoler*? As *such* the holy spirit remains with them only so long as their Messiah is away (John 12:34). This same exactitude is apparent in many other passages, though the denials of Peter (John 13:8) and Paul (1 Cor. 8:13) need not be so precise.

In by far the greater number of instances the context refers this phrase to the coming eon. Who has not been perplexed by the Lord's statements in John's account such as "If any man eat of this bread he shall live *forever*" (John 6:51)? But later on (vs. 54) we read that "He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath eternal life, and *I will raise him up* at the last day." How can He raise him up if he has "never" died? And yet He repeats (vs. 58), "He that eateth this bread shall live *forever*." It is a stubborn fact that those who believed on Him *have* died and He *will* raise them up. They do not live "forever." They will live "for the eon" which is coming, which is preceded by the resurrection of the just. These passages will all come before us again when considering that eon.

*From the Eon.* A notable proof of the commencement

of the eon prior to the time of David lies in the prophecy of Zechariah in Luke 1:70. The prophets which foretold the Davidic glories of Christ have been "from the eon." But Acts 3:21 is even more definite, for it goes back to *all* the prophets which have foretold the restoration which Messiah's advent in glory shall bring. Acts 15:14, 18 clinches it by a reference to the nations. Now there were no nations in the eon before the flood. There were none until Babel when God scattered mankind over the entire earth (Gen. 11:6-9). So that the phrase "from the eon" not only makes it impossible for "eon" to mean eternity, but serves us with additional evidence that the present eon began after the deluge.

*Out of the Eon.* The miracles of our Lord were the powers of the coming eon. When the blind man was healed he rightly remarked that "From out of the eon it is not heard that anyone opens the eyes of one born blind." (John 9:32). Such signs as these are not characteristic of this eon, but rather of that which is to come.

*Of the Eon.* Mark 4:19 has already been referred to in connection with "this eon." Some manuscripts have this phrase in Ephesians 6:12, but none of the three great ancient witnesses combined to form the Concordant Greek Text include it here.

*The Conclusion of the Eon.* This phrase alone ought to be sufficient evidence that eon does not mean forever. Eternity cannot have a conclusion. It is used three times in the thirteenth chapter of Matthew. In explaining the parable of the sowing He explains that the harvest is at the conclusion of the eon (vs. 39, 40, 49). In Matthew 24:3 it is associated with His presence. The whole chapter is a commentary on the force of this phrase. It proves that the *conclusion* is that period of the present eon which immediately precedes the coming eon.

## REFERRING TO THE NEXT EON

The mere mention that there is to be another eon after the conclusion of the present should be sufficient to rob the word of every idea of eternity. Not only is the next eon a distinct segment of time, but it is so different in character, such an advance upon the present, that it should never be confused with it. It is the fruit of promise and prophecy, the era of God's regeneration of the earth.

*The Coming Eon.* In Mark 10:30 and Luke 18:30 this phrase is put in contrast with "this era." Now persecutions are promised, but in the coming eon, eonian life.

*The Impending Eon.* In Matthew 12:32, and Ephesians 1:21, there is a contrast between "this eon" and that which is impending. In Hebrews 6:5 the powers of the pentecostal era are characterized as those which belong to that yet future eon.

*That Eon.* Here again "this eon" is set over against "that eon" in which resurrection from among the dead will alter the condition of those who have been raised to enjoy its blessings (Luke 20:35).

*For the Eon.* This famous phrase contains the solution to many glaring discrepancies which have been allowed to mar the pages of the "Bible" without so much as a protest. We read of mercy shown to Abraham and his seed "forever" (Luke 1:55), in spite of the fact that they have been thrust aside and will yet endure the severest of the storms which break in the day of God's indignation. We are repeatedly told that those who believe will live "forever" and they have died long since; that those who do the will of God will abide "forever," and where are they? We are told that "If a man keep My word he shall never (i.e., 'not forever') see death." (John 8:51). Many have kept His word and yet they have all died. And the context itself is

proof that our Lord never intended to give such an impression by the words He used, which our translators have rendered “forever.”

FURTHER EVIDENCE

Let anyone turn to John 6:47-58 and note carefully that in spite of repeated assurances that those who ate the heavenly bread should live “forever,” yet at the same time He assures them that He would raise them up at the last day (John 6:54). This all becomes beautifully clear and simple when we change “forever” to “for the eon.” When He raises them up *then* they will live for the “eon,” the thousand years of bliss. Not, indeed, that they will necessarily die at that eon’s close. But all beyond is outside the scope of this promise.

The same truth is apparent in John 11:25: “He who is believing in Me, even if he should be dying, shall be living. And everyone who is living and believing in Me, should by no means be dying for the eon.” Two classes are dealt with here. Those who die before that future eon and those who are alive at its commencement. The latter shall not die “for the eon.” The casual evidence shows that “for the eon” does not commence until that future eon commences.

Such testimony as this is particularly valuable because of its incidental nature. There seems to be no hint as to the time when the later statement will be true. We can understand that those who have died shall live. But we are forced to the conclusion that it is those who are alive at the resurrection who will by no means die. How very apt then to find that this very time is indicated in the phrase “for the eon.” A similar blemish, more grave and glaring still, is found in John 8:51. “Verily, verily, I say unto you, if a man keep My saying, he shall never see death.” This is repeated and altered by the Jews to “never taste death.” This is most solemn, for, explain it as we may, those who kept His sayings

have *seen* death. That the Lord most emphatically meant what He said is seen in His "Verily, verily," and by His retort to the Jews, when He repudiates being "a liar like unto you."

The same difficulty is seen in chapter 10:28 where the "sheep" are said to "never perish."

What shall we do with these statements? Shall we refuse to believe Him Who is the Truth, simply to cling to an ancient and recognized tradition? Shall we blandly close our eyes to these distinctions which He made when He chose various phrases to convey His meaning, and, because we see them not, convict Him of uttering self-contradictory statements which have not stood the test of time? Let those who insist that all of these distinct expressions have the one invariable force of "forever" face this solemn dilemma and clear Him of this stigma!

These glaring discrepancies are eliminated immediately in the Concordant Version: "Verily, verily, I am saying to you, If ever anyone should be keeping My word, he should under no circumstances be beholding death *for the eon.*" (John 8:51). "...they should by no means be perishing *for the eon.*" (John 10:28).

#### THE MELCHIZEDEK PRIESTHOOD

The position here taken that "for the eon" is not endless duration, but refers to a distinct period of time is once more enforced in a series of passages in the epistle to the Hebrews (chapter 5:6; 6:20; 7:17, 21, 24, 28). All concern the Melchizedek priesthood of Christ. Now it is the very essence of this priesthood that He be a King as well as Priest. We know that He does not as yet rule as King (Rev. 11:15). His Melchizedek priesthood also waits that glorious day when He shall sit a Priest upon His throne.

Nor is it less clear that this priesthood is not eternal. A priest is an intermediary between God and man. And long before the consummation, at the very beginning of

the last eon, God tabernacles with mankind once again and the temple with its priestly mediancy vanishes when He makes all things new (Rev. 21:3-5). So that the Melchizedek priesthood is proven, by entirely independent scripture, to be literally "for the eon" and not forever. This priesthood vanishes even before His Kingly prerogatives are laid aside.

We need only to remember that thirst (John 4:14) and the distinctions between slave and son (John 8:35) and the mediatorial glories of Christ are adapted to eonian conditions and are impossible and out of place in a perfected universe, and all these scriptures will find a far fuller and more precious meaning than the mere thought of endlessness. As living "for the eon" is equivalent to eonian life (John 6:51-58) the discussion of these passages will come before us in dealing with that phrase. Suffice it to say that, to begin with, it waits the resurrection for its inception and merges into the life of the next eon, finally losing its distinctive character, but not endlessness, in the resurrection at the consummation when all receive eternal life.

Righteousness is the most notable characteristic of the coming eon. This alone will be enough to insure all the blessing which it brings (2 Cor. 9:9).

The declarations of Ieue will be fulfilled during the next eon. It will not pass until all be fulfilled. Hence we read, "the declaration of the Lord is remaining for the eon." (1 Pet. 1:25. The phrase "for ever" in the Authorized Version in verse 23 is not in the Greek). The fact that this phrase reaches to the horizon of the Hebrew prophets and the twelve apostles of our Lord is kept before us in the promise that "he who is doing the will of God is remaining for the eon" (1 John 2:17), as well as the statement that the truth "which is remaining in us, . . . will be with us for the eon." (2 John 2). "The truth" here referred to is fulfilled in that eon,

so that the phrase is far more appropriate than "forever" could possibly be.

The last example of this phrase gives us the same impression. Jude, in speaking of the false shepherds of Israel, calls them "straying stars, for whom the gloom of darkness has been kept for an eon." (Jude 13). They should have been bathed in the sevenfold light of that blessed day (Isa. 30:26), but instead are given up to eonian darkness until the judgment of the great white throne.

The mere fact that there is a phrase in the plural "for the eons" will be sufficient, not only to bar this phrase from meaning "forever," but will require us to confine it to a single eon.

*The Conclusion of the Eon.* Matthew's account is the record of the rejection and return of the King. How fitting that it should not close without a foreview of that eon when all authority is in the hands of God's Messiah! And He is with them to the very conclusion of the eon (Matt. 28:20).

All that we are endeavoring to prove at this point is the fact that eon in the singular is not a synonym for eternity. But we trust that our brief review will enable us to grasp and enjoy the marvelous message which this word brings to us if we only heed the testimony of the divine usage and discard the tradition of men. Never was there such a need for accuracy and never have the great Author's words been less regarded than in the rendering of this word. But for those who hear and heed there is a rich reward.

## EON IN THE PLURAL

In our study of the plural form of eon (should we still cling to the orthodox view) we are at once confronted with a grave difficulty. If one eon spans eternity, what place can be found for the other eons? If "for the eon" is equivalent to "everlasting" what can "for the eons" signify? If "from the eon" is "eternal," what of "from the eons"? If the "conclusion of the eon" means "the end of the world," what shall we understand by "the conclusion of the eons"? Each of these occurs in both the singular and plural form. But once we acknowledge the truth, all our difficulties vanish into a clear and accurate, a sufficient and satisfactory, a grand and glorious apprehension of the doctrine of the eons.

*The Eons.* Nothing so manifests God's multifarious wisdom as a view of the purpose of the eons (Eph. 3:11). Each separate eon has a purpose, and a grasp of each is necessary to appreciate God's mind. Yet there is a purpose common to them all and that is the revelation of God as Love and Light. This is His essence. His various attributes are called forth by the problems of the eons in order to display Him to His creatures both in the celestial realms and on the earth.

The eons were made through Christ Jesus our Lord, the *Son* of God (Heb. 1:2).

Creation also was His work, both in the material and the spiritual sphere (Col. 1:16). This filled the universe of space, but made no provision for its career—

the greater and grander work of redemption and reconciliation which would bind it with bands unbreakable to God's heart.

For this end He made the eons. They begin with Christ as the Head of all creation; they chronicle its ruin and its redemption through His humiliation; they end when He, once more the Head of all, presents God with a reconciled universe (Col. 1:20). Their purpose preceded this commencement; the consummation proclaims its fulfillment. All sovereignty and authority is centered in the incorruptible, invisible, only wise God (1 Tim. 1:17). He is the King of the eons.

The history of the eons as revealed by the prophets of old was amply detailed so far as they dealt with the earth and the eonian people, Israel. Now that they refuse their blessing and God turns to the nations during this secret administration, the eons readjust to conform to this new departure. In truth, there is a premature spiritual fulfillment of the eons for us who believe during this period of unparalleled grace.

But what of the Hebrews who had believed the preaching of our Lord and His apostles? This change calls for some explanation, lest they deem God untrue to His promises. And this is given them. "Now faith is an assumption of what is being expected, a conviction concerning matters which are not being observed; for in this the elders were testified to. By faith we are apprehending the eons to readjust to a declaration of God, so that what is being observed has not come out of what is appearing" (Heb. 11:1-4). Then the Hebrews are given the same place which the worthies before them had occupied. They died in faith, looking for the future fulfillment of all the promises.

*From the Eons.* That there have been eons in the past we learn from the fact that God concealed the present secret administration from them (Eph. 3:9). Christ among the nation of Israel was not hid, but Christ

among the *other* nations was a closely guarded secret (Col. 1:26, 27).

*For the Eons.* That there are eons in the future is clearly shown by Christ's reign over the house of Jacob for the next two eons (Luke 1:33). It is during these two eons that the results of His suffering and shame and death will reap its rich fruition. They are the eons of blessing in a very notable way—such as could not be the case now and as will hardly be appropriate after the consummation. And this fact it is that blends in blessed harmony with the doxologies which sing of His conquest over sin (Rom. 1:25), His relationship to the eonian nation (Rom. 9:5), the truth that not only all is *out of* Him and *through* Him, but will be *for* Him in these eons (Rom. 11:36), the full realization of the reconciliation (Rom. 16:27), and its ministry by the apostle (2 Cor. 11:31).

Israel is the "eonian people" (Isa. 44:7, C.V.). Their God is the eonian God. "The Alueim eonian is Ieue, Creator of the ends of the earth." (Isa. 40:28). And in close accord with this we are told that Jesus Christ, yesterday and today is the Same One for the eons also (Heb. 13:8). Then, when God gives all a place of nearness to Himself, their special privileges would be intrusive and disappear. And Christ, with all His work fulfilled, no longer needs to hold the place supreme, but lays the scepter at His Father's feet.

*The Impending Eons.* Sweet indeed is the thought that, in the impending eons (Eph. 2:7), when God's grace is poured out so richly over all the earth, He will not point to them as the highest effort of His love. The *transcendent* riches of His grace is lavished upon us in this secret administration. Even during those coming eons filled with tokens of His favor He will point all to us as the perfect products of His grace. For we are blessed with every spiritual blessing among the celestials (Eph. 1:3).

*The Day of the Eon.* This is a Hebrew idiom.

In Malachi 3:4 we are told that when the Lord comes into His temple again the sacrifice of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing as "in the days of the eon" (Septuagint). That this was not eternal in the past is evident, for neither Judah nor Jerusalem date that far back. Peter, in referring to that future day when the Lord will come, calls it "the day of the eon." In this apt phrase he combines the Lord's *day* with the coming *eon* into "the day of the eon."

*The Conclusion of the Eons.* A puzzling passage is found in Hebrews 9:26. "...since then He must often be suffering from the disruption of the world, yet now, once, at the conclusion of the eons, for the repudiation of sin through His sacrifice, is He manifest." It is clear that His sacrifice was not at "the end of the world" (A.V.). However, the conclusion of the eon (Matt. 13:39, 40, 49; 24:3) is not the absolute end, but a period of time, which is compared with a harvest. The signs of the end time all occur within this conclusion. This is the key to this passage. Christ appeared at the commencement of a period which will continue until the end of the eons. It differs from the previous part of the eons because of its new relation to sin, due to His sacrifice. In a sense, the sacrifice settles the question of sin for the rest of the eons, hence the word "conclusion."<sup>\*</sup>

#### EON USED TWICE IN THE SAME PHRASE

We have now reviewed every passage but one where the plural form occurs. It seems hardly necessary to insist that they not only prove a single eon to be terminable, but also are equally unanimous in the verdict that, even in the plural, they have both a beginning and a

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\* A more complete explanation of this passage, as rendered in the Concordant Version, is found in Unsearchable Riches, Volume 30, Number 2 (March, 1939).

consummation. This fact will aid us in considering the remaining occurrences and especially the phrase "the eons of the eons."

The crowning and convincing evidence as to the limitations of "eon" is presented by the fact that, in the Greek, there are three distinct phrases used in which one or more eons are said to be derived from another eon or eons. These phrases are:

THE EON OF THE EON

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THE EONS OF THE EONS

In English the little word "of" is very indefinite. It has been suggested that in this case the thought is "ages *tumbled upon* ages" or "ages *succeeded by* ages." But the more precise Greek will not bear such a loose paraphrase. If "on" had been meant, why was not the preposition *epi*, which means "on" used? The relation which is sought to be expressed here by "of" is the genitive case, which points out *that from which anything proceeds*. We may, therefore, expand "of" into "derived from" or a similar phrase. On the chart (shown on page 216) we print "of" in italics and locate it between the two eons or groups of eons to which the phrase refers. A discussion of the introductory preposition "for" instead of the usual "unto" is found in the introduction to the phrase "for the eon."

It might be profitable for those who take eon to mean "forever" to confine their study to these phrases, and refrain from final conviction until they are able to explain the differences between them on such a supposition.

These phrases offer a final and unanswerable proof that the eons are limited in extent and distinct in character. The fact that "eons" in the plural often refers to only two is in accord with "New Testament" Greek which never uses the dual, even when two are undoubtedly intended.

Before taking up each separate phrase with its occurrences let us sum up what we have learned as to the character of the various eons. A moment's reflection may remind us that the present and all past eons have been essentially wicked. The powers of evil as represented by the Adversary and man, his dupe, have been the chief factors in characterizing the eons up to the present time. How different are the future eons! The kingdom eon will be administered by our Lord as Christ, that is, the Anointed, while the last eon enthrones Him as the Son of God. Thus the eons naturally fall into two groups. In the former, evil is on the increase and sin seems to triumph. There is little in them for God. In His purposes they are only the seedbed in which He prepares for the administration of the last two eons. In the former eons Satan and man revolt and Death reigns. Christ dies and is buried and rises again. So that these eons, in spite of (rather, *because* of) their evil character, provide the basis on which the future will build. God now leaves mankind to prove its own impotence and folly, but, in the eons to come He will appear upon the scene in the person of His Son, and there will be divine government and divine glory such as could not be revealed while He refrained from intervention in human affairs.

These considerations alone will be sufficient explanation of the phrase

#### THE EONS OF THE EONS.

A reference to the Greek will show that the word eon occurs first in the accusative case and latterly in the genitive. Thus, "the eons (accusative) of the eons (genitive)." This is in perfect accord with the line of thought we have been pursuing. For the accusative tells us *what* is under consideration, but the genitive *whence* these eons proceed. This is important, for if our explanation seems ever so sure yet disagrees with the

grammatical forms used in the Scriptures, we would do well to cast it all aside and acknowledge that the minutest touch of God confounds all our apparent concord.

It is notable that this expression occurs most frequently in the book of Revelation (Unveiling of Jesus Christ) and Peter's epistles in conjunction with the day of indignation, which, as the chart of the eonian times shows (p. 216), is the very pivot on which the phrase turns. A glance will show that it describes the last two eons as being the result and fruit of all those which precede them.

Two characteristic and conclusive occurrences are Revelation 11:15 and 22:5. These describe the reign of Christ and His slaves. That Christ's reign begins here the text itself shows. We know that all sovereignty and authority and power will be nullified at the consummation (1 Cor. 15:24). Delegated government cannot be without these. Not that there will be a return to insubjection, but the opposite; for the Son Himself will take a place subordinate to the Father, that God may be All in all. This phrase, then, accurately describes the two eons in which Christ and His people will reign and at the same time links them with the preceding eons in which the suffering of Christ Himself laid the basis of that reign and the suffering of His people prepared them for their place with Him.

A statement which *seems* to point to several eons, rather than only one in the new creation is found in Revelation 22:5. "And they shall be reigning for the eons of the eons." The usual standpoint in this book is that of the vision. We are transported into the very scenes and hear the very sounds in our ears.

But here it is different. The vision is all *future*. The standpoint is the Island of Patmos (Rev. 1:9). So that, instead of reading there *is* no doom, they *see* His face, there *is* no night, etc., we are told that then there *shall*

be no doom, they *shall* see His face, night *shall* be no more, and they *shall* be reigning for the eons of the eons.

The statement that they "shall" be reigning is made from the standpoint of the present rather than that of the vision as is usual in the book of the Unveiling. This is clear from the other statement, night "*shall*" be no more. The usual form would have been, "night *is* no more."

Now the fact that Christ's reign comes to an end, that He will take a place subordinate, may, at first thought, seem to be derogatory. But the exact opposite is the truth. It is the very highest praise, for He reigns only as long as there is insubjection. When He brings the universe to a perfect state of loving subjection, then the active exhibition of such glories as might (1 Pet. 4:11, 5:11; Rev. 1:6, 5:13) and power (*cf.* 1 Cor. 15:24 and Rev. 7:12) will be obsolete because they have been perfectly administered.

Deliverance out of the present wicked eon prepares us for fellowship with Him, one of Whose glories is that of Deliverer (Gal. 1:4). That this glory is confined to the eons is clear, for there will be none needing deliverance after the eons have run their course. The same is true of His rich provision for all our needs (Phil. 4:19). "The King of the eons," as He is called (1 Tim. 1:17), is most emphatically a title limited to the eons. As such the honor and glory are His for the last two eons—the eons of the eons. Salvation for the celestial Kingdom is the basis of Paul's doxology (2 Tim. 4:18). The eonian covenant with Israel introduces the only remaining doxology connected with this phrase. That both of these are bounded by the consummation has been shown.

The phrase "they shall be reigning for the eons of the eons" shows that this form of expression has no reference to the present or preceding eons. In these they do not reign. Similarly the formula "Who is liv-

ing for the eons of the eons" (Rev. 4:9, 10) has no reference to the past eons nor the present eon. But let us not infer from this that He was not alive during all previous eons! It is, rather, that the characters in which He is presented—as Judge (Rev. 1:18), as Enthroned (Rev. 4:9, 10), as Furious (Rev. 15:7), as manifesting His power in the seven thunders (Rev 10:6)—are not assumed until the coming eon and as such He lives until the consummation in contrast to the lifeless gods of the nations. When the eons have run their course judgment and indignation will have fulfilled their purpose. Then reconciliation will have been effected and God becomes All in all.

The assertion that "the eons of the eons" *must* denote endlessness "because it is used of the life of God," is thus shown to be a hasty conclusion, not founded upon the facts. "If the eons end, then God's life also must end," we are told! But this reasoning depends for its support upon the very error which it is used to prop! Allow the truth that eon does not mean everlasting and the further truth that the death state is to be abolished at the consummation and the inaccuracy of such reasoning becomes apparent.

For if God lives for the eons of the eons, *after which there is no death*, how can this phrase limit His life? Is it not unwise to predicate life when there can be nothing else? If our water suffices until we get to a well, do we die of thirst? The phrase "the eons of the eons" is clearly limited in the case of the reign of the saints and only an unscriptural view of the consummation prevents it from having the same meaning here.

Three scriptures remain. They are concerned with the torment of those who worship the wild beast and its image (Rev. 14:11), the smoke which ascends from false Babylon (Rev. 19:3) and the torment of the wild beast, false prophet and the Adversary (Rev. 20:10). These three passages are solemn and awful, and we have no

desire but to acknowledge both the desperate deeds and dreadful doom of those who are so justly condemned. But to refer these words to anyone outside of this category, as is so often done, is to invite the fearful curse of those who are adding to the words of this scroll (Rev. 22:18), and is like the attempt to fasten the "eternal punishment" of the apostate living nations at our Lord's return to *all* the wicked dead. These all find their place in the lake of fire, *which is the second death* (Rev. 20:14, 21:8). A comparison of 1 Corinthians 15:26 with this statement will show that the lake of fire is to be abolished at the consummation. It is the "last enemy." It would take too much space to elaborate upon the nature of the death state. But this is quite unnecessary, for the lake of fire is stated to be the very thing which is to be ultimately abolished. This abolition of death is quite distinct from the statement that there is to be no *more* death (Rev. 21:4), for the lake of fire is still in evidence at that time.

These are all the occurrences of "the eons of the eons." That it refers to the last two eons as the time of the revelation of such of His glories as blossom out of the previous eons is manifest, and that these glories are eclipsed by the greater glories of the consummation becomes clearer the more we meditate upon that august and loving ultimate. Let us remember that, when there is no death, it is useless to insure life, when there is reconciliation it is positively disparaging to provide against insubjection and sin.

#### THE EON OF THE EONS

But it is not the mere explanation of these passages which constitutes the solid foundation which supports this much needed truth. When the spirit of God departs from the usual formula, it is not only possible to follow the intended distinction, but the context in such variations supports the meaning at which we arrive.

The two eons which are yet to come have distinct characteristics. The first is pre-eminently associated with Christ as Israel's Messiah. Rule is with a rod of iron. Righteousness reigns. Israel is near, but the nations are kept at a distance from God. But in the following eon, which is more particularly associated with Him as the Son of God, much of this is changed. Righteousness dwells peacefully among a reconciled race, whose God is once more on intimate terms with humanity as a whole.

The burden of the Ephesian epistle is reconciliation between the Jew and the nations and the atmosphere one of love rather than an iron rod. How apt, then, for the inspired writer to leap over the lower glories of the coming eon to that glorious time, when, once again, the Jew and the nations are in close accord and the surpassing love of Christ is in full display to all nations! Hence in Ephesians 3:21 we read of "the eon of the eons."

#### THE EON OF THE EON

The Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures (called the Septuagint) translates the Hebrew *oulm u od* of Psalms 45:6 by "for the eon of the eon" (Alexandrinus and Sinaiticus manuscripts). The same phrase occurs in Hebrews 1:8. The scepter of the Son of God, which will be the token of His sovereignty in the new heavens and the new earth, is the successor of the iron rod of millennial rule. During the day of the Lord the religious ascendancy of Israel hinders His intimacy with the other nations, and, at the same time, prepares for it. So the last eon is, in a very special sense, the eon *of*, or derived from, the previous eon. This is shown graphically on the chart.

What a marvel of exactitude we find here! CHRIST—the Divine Executive, the Messiah of Israel, the power and wisdom of God—this is the title which glories the coming eon. But the SON of God, in Whom God dis-

plays *Himself* rather than His attributes, by Whom reconciliation is effected—this is the title which illumines the last eon and this is the One Who abdicates the throne which He had filled so perfectly that its functions vanish in its very perfection.

So that, in very truth, the Kingdom of the *Son* is for “the eon of the eon.” It is the choice fruitage of the Kingdom of Christ and its glorious consummation. Unlike every previous eon it closes without a cloud. Death alone is devoured and sin alone is slain, and the halo of humility once more finds its place on the head of Him Who has laid all His diadems at His Father’s feet.

#### THE CONSUMMATION OF THE EONS

Since so much of the confusion regarding the subject of the eons results from a loose and inadequate conception of the consummation, it will be profitable at this juncture to examine briefly the passage which sets it forth (1 Cor. 15:22-28). The tremendous issues involved prompt us to give the reader a strictly consistent translation so arranged as to show the balance of the argument.

The thoughts are grouped on the page so as to enforce the literary form which will enable us to grasp the argument more readily, as well as the vital relationship of each thought to the whole and its companion passage. The three classes of those who are “made alive” or vivified are each given a separate line. The description of the consummation is shown to be a literary reversal, as indicated by the vertical lines connecting parallel thoughts. The giving up of the kingdom is shown to be equivalent to the subjection of the Son; the nullification of all mediate rule with the subjection of all; the reign until all is beneath His feet is repeated in the subjection of all beneath His feet. But the center and core of the consummation, as it relates to resurrection (or rather, vivification), lies in the statement that “the last enemy

being abolished is death.” This explains why the consummation is spoken of as though it were the third class of those who are vivified. Thus we see *how* it is that *all* shall be vivified. There is no need of defining who are included in the last class, for it is already certified in the “all” and is further substantiated in the abolition of the death state. Whatever we hold as the nature of the death state, may we let this truth sink deep into our hearts: *death is to be abolished*. Let those who are accustomed to the thought that it is merely meant to indicate the cessation of the act of dying (for which the Greek has a different expression) substitute that thought and see what place it can possibly have in the apostle’s argument. What connection has it, first of all, with the

For even as,		thus also,
in Adam,		in Christ,
all are dying,		shall all be vivified.

Yet each in his own class:

- (1) the Firstfruit, Christ;
- (2) thereupon those who are Christ’s in His presence;
- (3) thereafter the consummation,

whenever He may be giving up the kingdom to His God and Father,

whenever He should be nullifying all sovereignty and all authority and power.

For He must be reigning until He should be placing all His enemies under His feet.

The last enemy being abolished is death.

For He subjects all under His feet.

Now whenever He may be saying that all is subject, it is evident that it is outside of Him Who subjects all to Him.

Now, whenever all may be subjected to Him, then the Son Himself also shall be subjected to Him Who subjects all to Him, that God may be All in all.

thought of "vivification"? How does it prove that *all* are to be vivified? How can it refer to a distinct class from those who have been previously raised? The argument demands the abolition of the death state and will not be satisfied with anything less.

#### THE UNIVERSALITY OF THE VIVIFICATION

"For since, in fact, through a man came death, through a Man, also, comes the resurrection of the dead." Death, as it is in the world today was channeled through a man, Adam (1 Cor. 15:21; Rom. 5:12). Not only did it come through Adam to his posterity, but its dark stream overflowed to the creatures who were placed under his feet. It is through the second Man that the resurrection of the dead is assured. The second Man is the Lord out of heaven (1 Cor. 15:47).

"For even as, in Adam, all are dying, thus also, in Christ, shall all be vivified." It is instructive to notice that it is not said that all shall be *raised* or *resurrected*, though that will be fulfilled at the judgment of the great white throne (John 5:29; Rev. 20:12). They are to be "made alive" or vivified at the consummation. But the main point to be insisted upon here is its *universality* in both cases. In Adam *all* are dying.\* Thus also, in Christ, shall *all* be vivified. This has been met by the contention that only those "in Christ" are meant. But the passage conveys that force without the addition of "all" and it would be quite redundant.

#### THE THREE CLASSES OF VIVIFICATION

Three classes are vivified. These are:

1. The Firstfruit, Christ (in the past).
2. Those who are Christ's (in His presence).
3. The balance of mankind (at the consummation).

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\* Note the perfection in the Greek at this point. It does not state that in Adam all *die*. That would not be true for some will not die but will be living when the Lord comes (1 Thess. 4:15). But in Adam all are *dying*.

This is the "explanation" of "...as, in Adam, all are dying, thus also, in Christ, shall all be vivified." But when will this occur? Even as there are three classes so there are three distinct periods when they will be vivified. Christ has already been raised to die no more. Others have been raised, as Lazarus, the widow's son, and the daughter of Jairus, and the son of the Shunamite (2 Kings 4:35), and the son of the widow of Zerephath (1 Kings 17:22), but the resurrections here alluded to are not of this character. Many rose after Christ's resurrection, but they are not counted here because, in the strict sense of the word, they were not "made alive" or vivified, beyond the reach of death. If some should say that "it is appointed unto men *once* to die" we only need remind them of the fact that this word "once" means no such thing (as a glance at a concordance will show), and that the term "*second* death" denies it. Those who are Christ's are to be vivified "in His presence." This term *parousia* is no special term to denote a particular event connected with His coming. As here, it denotes simply His being present. It includes our resurrection and the spoiling of Israel's tombs as well. All who are Christ's are vivified in His presence to die no more.

Death is death, whether it is the first or second death. The abolition of the death state cannot result in the lake of fire, *which is the second death*. Why should the *second* death not be death as well as the *first*? Was the *second* watch (Luke 12:38) not a watch at all? Or the *second* sign (John 4:54) not a sign? And was not the Lord a Man because He is called the *Second Man* (1 Cor. 15:47)? So also is the second death, death.

Besides, after the first death has been cast into the lake of fire, which is the second death, what death is left to be abolished? At the consummation, when this takes place, the *only death which can be abolished is the second death*. Instead of this passage referring ex-

clusively to the first death, it has no bearing upon it at all. It refers exclusively to the *second* death.

The next resurrection is at the judgment of the great white throne. But this is not even alluded to here because, as in the cases already mentioned, those who appear before its awful light shall not live, but die the second death. When, then, is the third class "made alive"? At the consummation, for then the death state itself is abolished, making it clear once more that eventually "in Christ, shall *all* be vivified." But every enemy must be subjected and *then* shall be *fulfilled* the saying that is written:

"Swallowed up was Death by Victory.  
Where, O Death, is your victory?  
Where, O Death, is your sting?" (1 Cor. 15:55)

This was the shout at the resurrection of the great Firstfruit; this will be our challenge at our own vivification; but this will not be finally *fulfilled* until the consummation.

There is a notable change in "quoting" from Hosea in this passage. While the text in Hosea 13:14 reads, "O hades, where is thy sting?" we have "O Death." Why so? The context of Hosea is confined to the resurrection of Israel. Then indeed, the sting of "hades" will be removed, for at that time all the saints will have been raised. But to quote this verbally in 1 Corinthians 15, would cramp the context, which includes the wider sphere of universal vivification. Hades (the unseen) is cast into the lake of fire long before the total destruction of death at the consummation (Rev. 20:14). So that, *at that time*, the saying must be changed from "O hades," to "O Death, where is thy sting?" The sting of hades will have long since been lost in the second death. This is but one of those inimitable touches of the Divine Author which tell the trend of the truth.

But *when* shall this occur? The reign of Christ and His people begins after the resurrection. It is char-

acterized by the sovereignty of Christ Himself and the authority which He delegates to His people and the power with which His decrees are enforced. But now we read that all sovereignty and authority and power is to be nullified. The word rendered "rule" is inconsistent and misleading. It is never so translated elsewhere. Strictly speaking, all *rule* is not nullified, for the Kingdom itself does not cease when God takes it over from His Son. But rule *in the hands of intermediaries*, as delegated to subordinates, as administered by sovereigns and authorities and powers, such rule becomes obsolete. God no longer governs mankind through these agencies, as He does during the eons, but administers His affairs directly. This condition is brought about by the fact that Christ and the saints continue to reign *until* (*achri*, see Matt. 24:38; 1 Cor. 11:26, etc.) the time that every enemy is beneath His feet. That every enemy is not beneath His feet at the end of the millennium is clear from the fact that after it Satan is *loosed*, not subjected, and death is not abolished, but the second death *begins its operations after* that eon has run its course. Furthermore, there are kings on the new earth (Rev. 21:24). The reign of Christ and His slaves extends far beyond the millennium because they reign for the eons, while the millennium is only one eon (Rev. 22:5).

The reign of Christ and His saints spans the interval between their vivification and that of the unbeliever at the consummation. Their reign results in the complete subjection of the universe and at the last, Death itself delivers up its denizens and is abolished. When every enemy is subjected God no longer needs to govern through the medium of His saints. He will be in sympathetic touch with all His creatures and will not mar that perfect fellowship by subjecting them to one another. He will have them find their All in Him. So He takes over the kingdom as a Father and transforms it into one great family.

## THE KINGDOM OF CHRIST

What kingdom is it that is handed over to God the Father? There is no need for confusion. It is specifically stated to be the kingdom of *Christ*, or *Messiah*, and the sovereignty of the *Son*. The context shows that CHRIST gives up the Kingdom to His God and Father and the SON subjects Himself to the Supreme Subjector. It is useless for us to gild the glories God has granted His Son. The abdication of the throne is not an abasement. It is no disgrace. Should He reign forever and never accomplish the object God has in view, *that* were failure and defeat. Such is not the case! His subjection to the Father tells us that His work is finished, that it is perfect, that still more effort can have no further effect. When He was on earth He finished the work His Father gave Him to do (John 17:4). The work accomplished on the cross needs no recurrence. And so with all His work! It is finished when it is done, and every effort brings the universe nearer to its goal. And, strange as it may seem to our skeptic hearts, there *is* a goal to gain, a purpose to attain, a destiny decreed by Deity Himself; and all the antagonism of the Adversary, the hostility of humanity and the opposition of His own dear people will not prevent Him from reaching the point which He has proposed. God will be All in *all* and the greatest and most glorious guarantee of this lies in the fact that, when the Son has subjected all else to God then He subjects *Himself*—for in no other way can God be All in all.

But the Kingdom itself, which is endless, must be distinguished from those who administer it. Who would think of limiting the *Kingdom* of Israel in the past to the *reign* of David? When the Kingdom is handed over to God its character is so changed that it has little likeness to the governments to which we are accustomed, yet it supplies the place which the Kingdom occupied and cannot well be described by any other term.

Note carefully, then, these two scriptures:

(1 Corinthians 15:28)

The Son Himself also shall be  
subjected...that God may be  
All in all.

(Hebrews 1:8)

Yet to the Son: Thy throne,  
O God, is for the eon of the  
eon.

## THE ADJECTIVE EONIAN

SINCE the eons are confined within the bounds constituted by the beginning and the consummation, that which is eonian must be likewise limited. Our previous studies will have shown that much which is termed eonian is clearly temporal, yet there are some passages which, at first glance, may present difficulties to those who have been accustomed to current interpretations. The former will be lightly touched upon; the latter set forth at greater length.

### TIMES

We have already considered the phrase "the eonian times," for it provides us with the name of the chart (see eonian times chart on page 216). The first occurrence (Rom. 16:25) gives us the added thought that that which is eonian need not last through all the eons. The thought of time is not the most important element in the adjective, eonian. It is descriptive rather of the distinct character of these times as compared with those which come before and after them. The secret of the evangel was hushed during eonian times (Rom. 16:25). Since Adam sinned God had not been on terms with mankind. But when the Conciliation was made known, that which had been hushed in times eonian was manifested. Here we have a clue given us of the chief characteristic of the eonian times. They are the eons of sin and estrangement and death, of salvation and mediatorial government and glories, in contrast to the

pre-eonian times and the consummation, when these are absent and God is All. The same thought is impressed upon us in 2 Timothy 1:9, where we are assured that, far from our acts influencing God's calling, grace was given us in Christ Jesus before times eonian—before there was any corruption or death or any need of salvation. All this was in accord with His own purpose. That primeval purpose is now being manifested through the advent of our Saviour, Christ Jesus, Who, indeed, *abolishes death*, yet illuminates life and incorruption through the evangel. The statement that Christ abolishes death is another infallible foundation for the truth that God will reconcile all to Himself. It is important to note, however, that the time is indefinite. It is not correct to translate "hath abolished" either from the standpoint of grammar or fact.

The remaining occurrence is very similar. "In expectation of life eonian, which God, Who does not lie, promises before times eonian..." (Titus 1:2). Here we have eonian life presented as a pre-eonian promise and present expectation.

#### LIFE

When we speak of the *believer's* life being eonian, rather than "eternal" or "everlasting," the invariable inference seems to be that the Scriptures do not guarantee endless life to the believer. The very reverse is the fact. The Word of God has gone forth that death shall be abolished. This scripture shall find fulfillment at the consummation—for death is the *last* enemy to be abolished (1 Cor. 15:26). Then *both* believer and those who were unbelievers will have endless life, simply because death will have been banished. *In the meanwhile* the unbeliever receives the ration of Sin, while the believer has the happy portion of life eonian and eonian glory (Rom. 6:23). Thus God is the Saviour of *all* mankind, *especially* of believers (1 Timothy 4:10).

Thus apprehended, how much grander is the gift of eonian life than mere endlessness! This, indeed, is included by the very nature of the case. But eonian life promises far more. It insures salvation from eonian judgment and condemnation and is a guarantee of glory as well as life. It includes fellowship with Christ in His reign and with the Son of God in reconciliation. It is the priceless boon bestowed only on those "called according to the purpose" of God (Rom. 8:28).

Let us suppose that, in the consummation, Sin conquers, Death reigns and Satan deposes the rightful Ruler of the universe. Then, and only then, would there be any fear for the believer, and unending agony for the unbeliever. But as we have God's word that the consummation is the very opposite of this—as is evidenced by the absence of death and the absolute nullification of all authority and power—we are prepared to see that endless life will be the portion of all, yet eonian life will be the special privilege of those whom He designates beforehand and calls and justifies and glorifies (Rom. 8:29, 30).

In the first three accounts of our Lord's ministry there are two groups of occurrences in which eonian life is viewed as a future reward (Matt. 19:16; Mark 10:17; Luke 18:18 and Matt. 19:29; Mark 10:30; Luke 18:30). This is expressly limited in two instances by the phrase "in the coming eon" (Mark 10:30 and Luke 18:30). A very similar passage is found in Luke 10:25.

Eonian life is spoken of nearly a score of times in John's Account. In close correspondence with this treatise, which commences with His rejection (1:11), but carries us immediately forward to His future glory (1:51), the signs of the Kingdom, such as the marriage of Cana (2:1-11), the cleansing of the "temple" [sanctuary] (2:13-17), and the "birth from above" (3:1-10, *cf.* Ezekiel 36:24-28), the removal of the temple from Jerusalem to the holy oblation (4:21, *cf.* Ezekiel 45:1, 2),

the healing of the infirm man (5:1-15), eonian life is viewed as a present possession. All of this anticipates and indicates the glories which will yet be His portion in Israel in the coming eon. That eonian life does not preclude death in this eon, but rather insures resurrection in view of the next eon, is conclusively shown when our Lord promises one who *has* eonian life that He "*shall* be raising him in the last day" (John 6:54).

The significance of the third chapter of John's Account has been much obscured by the "appropriation" of John 3:16 to modern gospel preaching. Our Lord taught Nicodemus a truth which Nicodemus ought to have known. It concerned the entrance into the Kingdom of God of which the prophets had spoken in the Hebrew Scriptures. It will not be seen by any except those who undergo the change which Ezekiel had foretold, and which our Lord describes as being "begotten anew." The Kingdom of which He spoke still waits until the time when "the kingdom of this world became our Lord's and His Christ's" (Rev. 11:15). It has no place in this eon, but occupies the coming eon. It will be inaugurated by unparalleled world-wide judgments.

In *this* light we read, "For thus God loves the world, so that He gives His only begotten Son, that everyone who is believing in Him should not be perishing, but may be having life eonian."

In *this* light we are reminded of Moses and the serpents in the wilderness, for the nation was once again to apostatize before they emerge from the wilderness into the promised land and Kingdom (Num. 21:4-9).

A passage which presents a difficulty to some is the statement that "he who is stubborn as to the Son shall not be seeing life" (John 3:36). But when we examine the context it is evident that the scope of the action is limited to the time when all things are still in the hands of the Son, during which time the believer has eonian life.

How refreshing are the figures of eonian life used by the Lord (John 4:14, 36). A flowing spring (not a well) and luscious fruit set forth the delicious satisfaction which it conveys.

Immunity from judgment is promised those who possess eonian life. Indeed, so sure is he of its enjoyment that, in spirit, he has already passed out of death into life (John 5:24). Yet the context seems to indicate that resurrection is the portal of entrance, as indeed it will be to all who are not alive at His blessed appearing (see verse 25). The Jews thought to get this blessing out of their Scriptures, and so they could if they had but heeded the testimony found there concerning the Christ (John 5:39).

Eonian life is not only compared to a spring of water and delicious fruit, but is sustained by the Bread of Life. The manna sustained life in the wilderness, but those who ate it were strewn along the line of march as though it were one long funeral procession (1 Cor. 10:5). Not so with those to whom the Son of Mankind will give the Living Bread which will sustain as long as any sustenance will be needed (John 6:27).

As in chapter five, eonian life is immediately followed by a reference to resurrection in chapter six. "And I shall be raising him in the last day" is the explanatory phrase, which assures us that eonian life is not mere continuity from the present throughout eternity, but that it has its beginning in the resurrection and its continuance during the coming eons (John 6:40, 54).

The people of our Lord's day were more concerned about a good meal than the true Bread. So when He insists that "the flesh is not benefiting anything. The declarations which I have spoken to you are spirit and are life," many of His disciples forsake Him. "Not *you* also are wanting to go away!" He asks the twelve. Then Simon Peter answers nobly, "Lord, to whom shall we come away? Declarations of life eonian hast Thou!

And we believe and know that Thou art the Holy One of God." (John 6:68).

Eonian life is associated again and again with the activities of Christ and the Son of God. And how natural to connect it with the time as well as to color it with the character of His victorious administrations!

So complete will be the conquest of Christ in the coming eon that those to whom He gives eonian life are out of reach of all danger (John 10:28). That this world is not the normal sphere of eonian life is seen in the statement: "He who is fond of his soul is destroying it, and he who is hating his soul in this world, shall be guarding it for life eonian" (John 12:25). And in the next occurrence the context once more occupies us with "the last day," the time of the resurrection (John 12:48-50).

The last two instances in John's Account (John 17:2, 3) give us at once the subjects and objects of eonian life. It is for those whom the Father has given the Son and it is given them "that they may know Thee, the only true God and Him Whom Thou dost commission, Jesus Christ."

The rejection of the Kingdom by the Jews proved their unworthiness for eonian life, so Paul and Barnabas turn to the other nations (Acts 13:46). And as many as are set for life eonian, believe (Acts 13:48).

The opening argument of Romans sets forth God's righteous ways (Rom. 2:6-10). If anyone, by good acts is seeking glory and honor and incorruption, He will repay them with life eonian. Since none such exists, all are shut up to His grace in Christ, for eonian life is a free gift (Rom. 6:23). The same inflexibility of God's laws is presented to the Galatians when Paul writes: "For he who is sowing for his own flesh, from the flesh shall be reaping corruption, yet he who is sowing for the spirit, from the spirit shall be reaping life eonian" (Gal. 6:8).

Paul presents God's patience shown him as a pattern for those who were about to believe for eonian life (1 Tim. 1:16), and exhorts Timothy to get hold of the eonian life for which he was called, and gives directions how those who are rich in the current eon may also get hold of "life really" by investing their "riches" towards that future day (1 Tim. 6:12, 19).

These scriptures hint at the future aspect of eonian life, but Paul's epistle to Titus puts it plainly as an "expectation" (Titus 1:2, 3:7).

When we enter John's first epistle we find ourselves once more in the atmosphere of his "gospel." But here, also, now that the Kingdom is postponed, eonian life is called a promise (1 John 2:25). This life is in God's Son (1:2; 5:11, 13, 20) and can dwell only in those who love (3:15).

The last occurrence links love and eonian life together and its realization is fixed in the future. Jude exhorts his brethren to keep themselves in the love of God, "anticipating the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ for life eonian" (Jude 21).

By comparing these various passages, some of which, in John's writings particularly, assure a present possession of eonian life, and others, in the earlier accounts, and Paul's epistles especially, which make it a future expectation, we may be perplexed as to the real scriptural teaching on the subject. Had the Kingdom come it would have been the portion of all who believed without death or resurrection. But now this life is "in His Son" (1 John 5:11). The grand exhortation of Paul, based on the fact that our life is *hid* with Christ in God (Col. 3:3) is, however, decisive. "Whenever Christ, *our Life*, should be manifested, *then* you also shall be manifested together with Him in glory." Eonian life, then, though the inalienable portion of every believer, is safely treasured up in Christ. His life is a resurrection life. Eonian life is also resurrection life. He

is hid, and as He is our Life, this also is hidden. He will be manifested, and then His abundant life will find its first real manifestation. In the meanwhile let us "get hold" of it in joyous expectation.

The Hebrew believers who are called obtain the promise of the eonian enjoyment of the allotment (Heb. 9:15), based upon an eonian covenant (Heb. 13:20) which is made good by an eonian salvation (Heb. 5:9), and redemption (Heb. 9:12).

The nation of Israel is called the "eonian nation." They inherit an eonian kingdom (2 Pet. 1:11) with eonian glory (1 Pet. 5:10).

That the eonian evangel is not "everlasting" is evident from its character (Rev. 14:6, 7). "Be ye afraid of God" is an echo of the eons and is not at all possible when reconciliation has been effected.

A like restriction applies to eonian consolation (2 Thess. 2:16). Consolation may be a balm now, but it would be a slight and an insinuation in a sinless universe.

There are three passages which tell us of eonian glory. The eonian glory to which the faithful of Israel are called in Christ Jesus (1 Pet. 5:10), that which accompanies the salvation of the chosen (2 Tim. 2:10), and in the light of which our present afflictions seem light and momentary (2 Cor. 4:17). The glories which are the special portion of Israel are those associated with them as a kingdom of priests. But in the new earth their priestly functions vanish even as their dominant position does when the kingdom is handed over to God.

Satan is the god of this eon (2 Cor. 4:4), for in it he is able to obtain the homage of humanity. To speak of God as an "everlasting" God adds nothing to our knowledge of Him, for, being God, His endless existence is a matter of course. But how much more do we apprehend whenever we learn that, during the eons, He decrees that all shall honor the Son even as they honor the

Father (John 5:23), and that all approach to the Father is through Him. Thus He becomes the God of *all* the eons. The great object of the eons is to reconcile the universe to God. Accordingly the injunction to make known the secret of the evangel, the Conciliation, is promulgated by the eonian God, the Placer (Rom. 16:26).

When we insist that eonian "punishment" (Matt. 25:41-46) must not be forced upon all mankind, it is only because we do not wish to add to the Word of God. While we believe that the punishment of the wicked will be eonian, we must refuse to intrude the thought in the passage in point. God deals with various classes of offenders in a variety of ways, corresponding to the nature and gravity of the offense. Here we have the nations who refused to succor His people Israel in their distress. Those who helped them are invited into the eonian kingdom. The rest are pruned off, and, in the figurative language of the parable, are cast into the fire. The fire is not literal, and is like that mentioned in the prophets which overtakes those nations who oppose Israel. Here, the fire is extended to eonian proportions in order to preserve Israel during the era of the Kingdom. A nation's attitude toward God's people, in the end time, is the criterion for this judging session. Within the terms of the parable, it seems likely that the fire is said to be made ready for the adversary *nation* and its messengers. The other nations are invited into the kingdom.

The word here rendered punishment in the King James Version is more accurately rendered by the word "chastening." It is always in reference to corrective discipline in ordinary Greek. The only reason it was allowed its vindictive version is because, being associated with "everlasting," the punishment could not be corrective, because such discipline cannot be endless. But if eonian be given its true meaning, we are at liberty to allow *kolasis*, chastening, its proper force.

We have already dealt with the question of "eternal" sin (Mark 3:29). As "for the eon" is limited, eonian must likewise be limited. Eonian extermination (2 Thess. 1:9) and judgment (Heb. 6:2) and fire (Jude 7, Matt. 18:8) are all limited. Indeed, we are expressly told (Ezek. 16:53) that Sodom's captivity shall be turned. The fact that it is lying before us, a "specimen" assures us that the city of Sodom is meant. Even in the coming eon it may be included in the "marshes" which are not healed by the river which proceeds from the house of God (Ezek. 47:1-11). But in the new earth all things are made new (Rev. 21:5) and nothing is doomed (Rev. 22:3).

Our translators all seem agreed to advise us to "make friends by means of the mammon of unrighteousness," that they may receive us in "eternal tabernacles" (Luke 16:9). What a theology this is! What right have we with riches unjustly obtained? And if we had it, could we buy a footstool with it in the eonian tabernacles? We may be sure our Lord gave no such advice. Let us rather read it as a question: "And am *I* saying to you, Make for yourselves friends with the mammon of injustice, that, whenever it may be defaulting, they should be receiving you into the eonian tabernacles?" No, indeed, for "he who is faithful in the least is faithful in much also, and he who is unjust in the least is unjust in much also. If, then, you did not come to be faithful in the unjust mammon, who will be entrusting to you the true?"

The scripture that *seems* to contain the strongest argument for "eternal" is the statement that "the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal" (2 Cor. 4:18). The contrast with "temporal" seems conclusive. The word here rendered "temporal" is nowhere else so rendered, but rather by such phrases as "for a while" (Matt. 13:21), "for a time" (Mark 4:17), "for a season" (Heb. 11:25). It

denotes that which is transient, temporary, not that which abides the course of time. Fleeting appearances are going to give way to eonian realities.

The doxology to the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords ascribes both honor and might to Him for the eons (1 Tim. 6:16). The very character in which He is presented confines this ascription to the time when might will be displayed, but it would be far from pleasing to Him to import it into the consummation, for it would reflect upon its most blessed perfections.

In Philemon eonian is contrasted to an hour (v. 15).

The only remaining instance of eonian is instructive. The eons, as we have seen, are the scene of estrangement and of reconciliation. An eonian spirit is one which grapples with the mighty intruders into God's creation. So that it was through this spirit that Christ offered Himself to God (Heb. 9:14).

This concludes the list of passages in which eonian is used. We trust that this hasty survey will not only relieve it of the thought of endlessness, but provide an entrance into the treasures of wisdom and knowledge which it contains.

## THE CONSUMMATIONS OF THE EONS

WE HAVE CITED every occurrence of the words eon and eonian in the New Testament. Only one passage remains which has not been discussed. It contains the phrase "the *ends* of the eons," or, as we prefer to render it, "the *consummations* of the eons" (1 Cor. 10:11), for they not only come to an end, but culminate in the accomplishment of the purpose (Eph. 3:11) for which they were made (Heb. 1:2).

That the word "end" or *consummation* really refers to a winding up of the eons, is seen when we examine all of its occurrences which refer to time. Thrice it is in contrast to the "beginning" or "Origin" (Heb. 7:3, Rev. 21:6, 22:13). It is used thrice in the well known phrase "Yet he who endures to the consummation..." (Matt. 10:22, 24:13, Mark 13:13). Many other instances might be cited where it has this force, but perhaps one will suffice. We are told that "of His Kingdom there shall be no end." (Luke 1:33, A.V.). As we have shown before, the Kingdom never ceases, but is handed over to the Father. It has no consummation.

In the passage under consideration (1 Cor. 10:11) the word *telos* (finish) is in the plural. So that, instead of the eons having *no* end, the fact is they have *many ends!* There was a beginning of the eons, but not all factors which characterize the eons began at that remote point in time. The beginning of mankind was not until long afterward. Human government was not introduced until much later. So it will be with their "ends," or consummations. The purpose and perfection of the final

consummation is partially anticipated and realized beforehand. In the preparatory eons there is type and prediction and promise. But when the crisis created by the cross is reached all this gives place to fulfillment. The righteousness of the Kingdom, the reconciliation of the new creation—all these are fulfillments of the purpose of the eons. All these are consummations, though in English, we hardly may call them “ends.” The final consummation, then, is not immediately introduced by world-wide judgments or the instant arrest of a revolt or a new creation (though these are steps necessary to bring it about), but is rather the deposition of a perfect universe into its perfect depository—God. It is marked only by the subjection of the Son after all else has been subjected. And this perfection is itself the result of previous consummations.

In this light we can understand the apostle telling the Corinthian saints of the arrival of the consummations of the eons. Now the time had come for the fulfillment of the types.

But, in a far deeper and closer sense, are we, as well as the Corinthians, associated with the consummations of the eons. The rejection of Israel has made way for a *spiritual* fulfillment of all for which they wait more than a thousand years. Our justification is more than millennial, our reconciliation exceeds that of the new creation (for we are already a new creation) and we are consummated or mature (“perfect” A.V.) in Christ (Eph. 4: 13, Phil. 3:15, Col. 1:28). In our own spirits we have an undeniable foretaste that the eons are accomplishing the purpose for which they were made. And every accomplishment of His purpose is but one of many consummations which presages the grand final perfection—the end and object of God’s primeval purpose.

## ENDLESSNESS

If the words "eon" and "eonian" do not convey the thought of endlessness, how can it be expressed? This is often asked, so we will give a few instances. It will be noted that each of these is connected with the Kingdom, which, as we have said before, is handed over to the Father when all become one great family and nothing but filial relationships remain to replace the political powers of the great Potentate. It alone, of all we have in Scripture, is really endless, for it alone becomes perfect. Every other kingdom is destroyed by its enemies or subjected by the Son of Mankind at His appearing. Not so the Kingdom of the Heavens. The jurisdiction of Christ over the Kingdom is an eonian jurisdiction (Dan. 7:14), for He shall sit upon the throne of David to prepare it and brace it with judgment and with justice...henceforth and in the future eon (Isa. 9:7), for the Lord God shall be giving Him the throne of David, His father, and He shall reign over the house of Jacob for the eons (Luke 1:32, 33). But the Kingdom itself is not confined to the eons, for it shall not pass away and His Kingdom shall not come to harm (Dan. 7:14), but of the increase of the chieftainship, and to the welfare shall be no end (Isa. 9:7). Thus of His Kingdom there shall be no consummation (Luke 1:33). In each of these three Scriptures we have a marvelous example of the surpassing purity and exactitude of God's words. Let us enjoy the wealth which comes to us through observing their precision and infinite perfection!

Endlessness, then, can and is expressed in the Word of God. And it is most simply phrased by means of a

negative and the use of the word *telos*, "end" or *consummation*, which, in turn, is expressly predicated of the eons. If the Kingdom has *no* consummation and the eons *have* a consummation, they cannot be of the same length.

#### UNQUENCHABLE FIRE

The "unquenchable" (*unextinguished*) fire (Matt. 3:12; Mark 9:43, 45; Luke 3:17) and its equivalent "not quenched" (*not going out*) (Mark 9:44, 46, 48) is often given as an example of endlessness. In the latter form it is used of Ieue's anger against Jerusalem (2 Kings 22:17), which indeed was not quenched, but burns itself out until the time of her restoration (compare also Isa. 1:31, 66:24; Jer. 7:20, 17:27; Eze. 20:47).

## SOME DIFFICULTIES DISPOSED OF

Most who will read these lines have profited by "rightly dividing" the word of truth (2 Tim. 2:15) and will readily grant that endless confusion is avoided by leaving each truth in its own time and proper place. But if this is true of the administrations, how much greater is the need to correctly cut the eons! And still more urgent is the necessity to keep eonian truth and conditions out of post-eonian perfection. Most of the difficulties connected with this subject vanish once this principle is understood.

To serve as a sample we will suggest the solution to a few difficulties which have been brought to our notice.

### THE SALVATION OF THE UNBELIEVER

It is evident that, during the eons, God, through His Spirit, operates in His saints, fitting them for fellowship with Himself. These operations vary, not only in each individual, but in the various administrations. With Israel it is characterized as "begotten anew" (John 3:7); with us a "new creation." (2 Cor. 5:17). They will be "born again," fitted for the terrestrial Kingdom. We require a "new creation" to fulfill our mission in Christ's celestial Kingdom.

While sin is still on the scene, God places various barriers between Himself and mankind. He imposes conditions, such as repentance and baptism, for entrance into the earthly Kingdom. As we have already, in spirit, anticipated the coming eons, and are a new creation, we are in a position to determine whether the way to God

grows more complex or whether the barriers are removed as we approach the consummation. Every consideration points to the fact that, the more the work of Christ is applied and the more its power is experienced, the freer is the approach to God. In fact, when sin is gone, all barriers are removed.

But even those who believe look forward to *resurrection* as the full release from sin and for perfect fellowship with God. Thus it is during the eons.

But after them, what is needed for the unbeliever, who has suffered for his sins, but the resurrection life of Christ to fit him for God's presence in that sinless scene? He will surely experience in fact what we experience in faith—that he has passed out of death into life.

#### THE "UNDERWORLD" (SUBTERRANEAN)

It is evident that the phrase, "that in the heavens and that on the earth," when applied to the creation, does not limit the preceding phrase, "the all" (Col. 1:16). It does not imply that the creatures in the sea and in the subterranean were created by another hand. That is the very error which the apostle is refuting. So also with the reconciliation, for its scope is exactly the same as that of creation. Why, then, are not the sea and the subterranean specifically declared to be reconciled? Is this a case of looseness in God's Word? Far be the thought! It is rather a case of man's loose comprehension—a striking illustration of the exactitude of God.

It is a notable fact that the Hebrew word *artz* (land or earth) does *not* include the sea. So that the statement, "In a beginning created by the Alueim were the heavens and the earth" gives us to understand that there was no sea on the primeval earth (Gen. 1:1). In the new earth we are told, "and the sea is no more" (Rev. 21:1). So that the earth as God made it and as He will yet have it has no seas. In this the first and last eon correspond—in neither is there any sea.

How accurate, then, in describing creation, to omit any mention of the creatures in the sea, for these were put there afterward. And how intensely accurate to describe the reconciliation in the same terms, for then once more the sea will be absent.

The same is true of the subterranean region. Though now it contains creatures with which God will scourge some of mankind during the period of His indignation (Rev. 9:1-3), in the new earth no such "underworld" will find a place, and to speak of its reconciliation would betray an ignorance of conditions at the consummation which the Spirit of God is careful to avoid.

#### THE DAY OF SALVATION

"Now," we are told, "is *the* day of salvation," (2 Cor. 6:2) and there is no other day of salvation. But a reference to this scripture will show that its original intent is not for the present at all, but refers to Israel's future deliverance (Isa. 49:8). So that (to follow out this reasoning) this is not the day of salvation at all! There is only one and that is for Israel! A mere glance at the inspired Original will show that this is not *the* day, but only *a* day of salvation. In such a day God "helps." But this does not preclude another day of salvation for His people Israel, nor still another for all mankind, to fulfill what is written that God is the Saviour of *all* mankind (1 Tim. 4:10).

## ALL IN ALL

Picture to yourself a perfect universe! Not a trace of sin or of transgression to eclipse the effulgence of God's love! Not an impulse of His affection but receives an instant and thrilling response from every heart. What a marvelous harvest of the eons that will be! How potent the cross through which it comes! How glorious the God Who purposed and perfected such a reconciliation!

The travail of sin may well be borne exultingly if such a birth impends. Even the eons of suffering and anguish which now dim our eyes will then prove to be the dark background upon which the glory of that perfect day shines brightest.

To us, a dreary day may drag its length so slowly to a close; toilsome years wear wearily away; but what are days or years, yes, what are even eons compared with an endless and unceasing eternity? All of the eons from the beginning to the consummation are but a brief moment, a passing cloud, compared with that which lies beyond.

But alas! If this is but a mirage, a dream which is denied by the Word of the God upon Whom its fulfillment depends, why mock ourselves with it now or embitter the bliss that surely will be the portion of all who are His favorites? For, if an eternity of happiness will blot out the sorrows of the ages, it is no less true that an eternity of suffering would infinitely transcend all the anguish which pales us now. Why even the tiniest tinge of sin, so rigidly confined that it cannot spread, would at length amount to more than all the sins of all

the eons. It would work a worse woe from the mere immensity of its duration.

But if, instead of a slight trace of sin and its consequent suffering, we imagine the sinner suffering the torment of the orthodox "hell" with its unbearable bodily anguish, the pangs of conscience, the taunts of fiends, one hour of which is more than all his earthly sorrows rolled in one—lengthen this out to endlessness and season it with hopeless despair—and its horrors will be absolutely inconceivable.

But this is far from all. Multiply this single case by the vast majority of humanity, who, age after age, have been huddled into this horrid "hell"—and each one tortured and tormented while the ages roll, and roll, and roll... without respite and without remedy, and then imagine—but no, we will imagine no more, for the heart grows sick even at the very thought.

Though our lips may be afraid to frame the words, our hearts *will* whisper "Can such be the fruit of God's adventure?" Would such sorrow serve as one of the jewels that He sought for His eternal diadem? Is that the response for which He hungered when He allowed—nay, when He *purposed*—that sin should estrange His creatures from Himself?

Christ came to "destroy the works of the devil" (1 John 3:8, A.V.). But, if orthodoxy is true, then Satan has not only the vast majority on his side, but his work is not destroyed at all. Its results would never cease to mar the universe.

David was right when he preferred to fall into the hands of God, for His very judgments show none of the cruelty which so often mars man's mercy.

But let us awake from the sickening nightmare of man's imaginings and let us wing our spirits to God's glorious consummation. Here is a vision worthy of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Sin, sorrow, suffering, estrangement—all these are but memories

which, in the divine alchemy of that blessed era, will illumine love itself. Not sin triumphant, with its bitter fangs buried even in that blessedness. Ah, no. Sin will be absent, though the memory of it remains—the chiefest condiment of sinless bliss.

Once all was perfect; and all shall be perfect once again. Man has been God's enemy; yet through this very enmity He will draw mankind far closer to Himself than otherwise could have been.

And the zenith of that sublime perfection will be—not innocence or friendship's chain unbroken—but *reconciliation*, perfect and complete. A universe in harmony with God!

This, *this* is our goal.

This, *this* is *His* grandest glory.

Before the beginning God was All in *Himself*. Now He is All in *Christ* and the saints. In the consummation He will be All in *all*. All in all—what an epitome is this of God's purpose! What a compendium of universal history! What a pledge of His perfection and the perfection of all His work!

That God was All in Himself none will deny, for there was no creature to be insubordinate.

That He is *not* All in all at the present is quite apparent, for only a fraction have faintly felt that God was indeed All to them. Some have seen Him as their Saviour, some have acknowledged Him their Lord, some have found Him their All. Happy they who know Him thus! They have tasted of the cup ineffable, which quenches every thirst and brims with every blessing.

But our God has foretold the blessed era when He shall be All in *all*. How can that be? Are there not some too calloused to bend to His omnipotence? Let each one who knows Him as their All give answer thus: "He Who has broken my stubborn will and brought me to His feet can lead the most obstinate to Himself." His will is more than a match for any man's. Were it

His decree to become their Doom, they could not say Him nay. But as it is His will to become their All (which is a far nobler, greater goal) their All He shall become. His indignation may destroy for the eons, but His love will last endlessly.

He will be All in *all*. As each class is delivered from the domains of Death, God's great purpose becomes more and more apparent. When Christ arose from among the dead, the great Firstfruit, He was the Herald of a universal harvest. For in His future presence, all who are His will be "conformed to His body of glory," to reign with Him. But so long as He rules there must be insubjection, there must be those who do not find in God their All. Yet so perfect does the rule of God's Son become, so potent are His judgments, that at the consummation all are in perfect subjection. Death, the last enemy, is abolished, all are "made alive" and the last flicker of opposition has been snuffed out. Christ has accomplished the work His God had given Him to do. The Son of God has effaced all disaffection from the universe. And still God is not fully satisfied. He is not All in all.

His Son has brought the universe to His feet. His Son rules until sovereignty itself has become obsolete. Is not His Son eternally entitled to the dignities He has won? He would never have it so! For when He has attained the zenith of universal glory and dominion He lays it all at His Father's feet! The humble One He ever was, as witness Bethlehem and Calvary. And humility will be the brightest halo on His blessed head for all eternity. For He steps down from His high place and prestige to present His God with the prize for which His love had longed and labored. He presents Him with a universe subject to His will, satisfied with His wisdom, thrilled with His love, and takes His place at His Father's feet. Thus only can His God be

ALL IN ALL.

#### THE THREEFOLD WARNING (COLOSSIANS 2:8-3:4)

Beware that no one shall be despoiling you through philosophy and empty seduction, in accord with human tradition, in accord with the elements of the world, and not in accord with Christ, for in Him the entire complement of the Deity is dwelling bodily. And you are complete in Him, Who is the Head of every sovereignty and authority, in Whom you were circumcised also with a circumcision not made by hands, in the stripping off of the body of flesh in the circumcision of Christ. Being entombed together with Him in baptism (in which you were roused together also through faith in the operation of God, Who rouses Him from among the dead, you also being dead to the offenses and the uncircumcision of your flesh), He vivifies us together jointly with Him, dealing graciously with all our offenses, erasing the handwriting of the decrees against us, which was hostile to us, and has taken it away out of the midst, nailing it to the cross, stripping off the sovereignties and authorities, with boldness He makes a show of them, triumphing over them in it.

Let no one, then, be judging you in food or in drink or in the particulars of a festival, or of a new moon, or of sabbaths, which are a shadow of those things which are impending—yet the body is the Christ's. Let no one be arbitrating against you, who wants, in humility and the ritual of the messengers, to parade what he has seen, feignedly, puffed up by his fleshly mind, and not holding the Head, out of Whom the entire body, being supplied and united through the assimilation and ligaments, is growing in the growth of God. If, then, you died together with Christ from the elements of the world, why, as living in the world, are you subject to decrees: "You should not be touching, nor yet tasting, nor yet coming into contact," (which things are all for corruption from use), in accord with the directions and teachings of men?—which are (having, indeed, an expression of wisdom in a willful ritual and humility and asceticism) not of any value toward the surfeiting of the flesh.

If, then, you were roused together with Christ, be seeking that which is above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Be disposed to that which is above, not to that on the earth, for you died, and your life is hid together with Christ in God. Whenever Christ, our Life, should be manifested, then you also shall be manifested together with Him in glory.

## EXHORTATION TO VIGILANCE

GOD'S COMPLEMENT is Christ: We are complete in Christ.

In Christ God is fully furnished for every phase of His purpose to reconcile the universe. In Him we, too, are fully furnished from our first faint spark of faith until we are found perfected in His presence.

Rationalism and Ritualism are the two enemies of this great truth. Rationalism repudiates Him as God's Complement. Ritualism refuses Him as *our* Complement. Philosophy robs God of His Christ. Ritual robs us of our Christ. Reason deems Him incompetent to cope with the "problems" of the universe. Religion regards Him as insufficient to care for the case of the individual.

Rationalism employs unaided human reason, but Ritual is based upon divine revelation. Hence, the greatest danger with the *believer* lies in the latter. Philosophy may be fought from the standpoint of the Word of God, and at the same time ritualistic error may be *founded* upon that same Word, as a result of failure to cut or partition properly. It is exceedingly difficult for some of God's dear children to see that Christ Himself is the Substance of which all ritual was but the shadow, and that, divine as these shadows were, they must not fall athwart Himself and darken His effulgence.

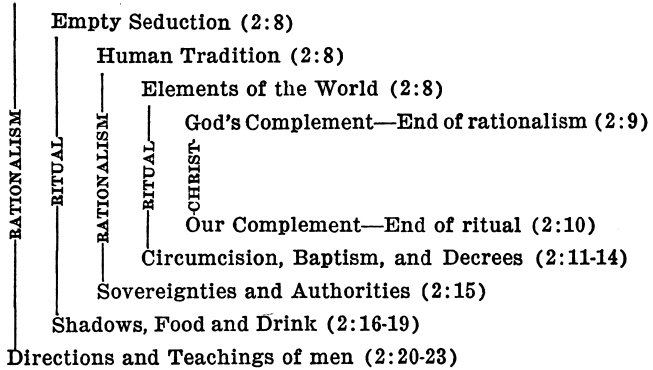
So difficult is it for His saints to see this, and such a hold has divine ritual, that some special means are needed to impress us with the dangers of its infatuations.

The following skeleton outline displays the method God has used in order to impress us with His present

estimate of the Divine ritual which He once gave to His people Israel. The passage, it will be seen, alternates between philosophy and religion, between rationalism and ritual.

SKELETON OUTLINE OF COLOSSIANS 2:8-23

Philosophy (2:8)



This, indeed, seems to make it difficult to follow. If philosophy had been dealt with separately, and then the subject of ritual given a distinct section in the apostle's warning, it might possibly have been easier for our dull minds to apprehend. But then we would have missed a lesson quite as important as the warning itself and indeed, vital to it. It is this: *Truth misplaced is more dangerous than error*. Its seeming support in "the Bible" gives it far greater weight with spiritual minds than human philosophy can ever hope to gain. Witness the state of Christendom today. Strong as is the hold of rationalism upon the pulpit, the pews are even more distressed by rites and ceremonies, the ghosts of truth designed for other days and for those who could not know the fullness there is for us in Christ. Baptism and Sabbath keeping and the observance of human commandments—these are the essence of the religion of today.

Not only do the two themes alternate, but the whole

passage is a "reversal" in which each subject is explained in the reverse order to that in which it is first mentioned. Yet, at the very heart of all is CHRIST, Who, as the Complement of the Deity, is the answer to all philosophy, and as our Complement is the answer to all ritual.

God Himself is the Guard of reconciliation. No sooner was this precious truth revealed than it was attacked from both front and rear. A sham philosophy withstands it to the face. A divine religion stabs it in the back. Gnosticism and Judaism, enemies themselves, clasp hands in their common cause against the reconciliation.

We are prone to handle religion with gloves and class it by itself, but God knows its subtlety and puts it on a par with human tradition.

Reconciliation is not a religion. Indeed, they are sworn enemies. Religion, as God knows it, is a system of divine ritual. The tabernacle and temple were the divinely appointed places for its ceremonies. But when every form had been duly observed and the last letter of the liturgy fulfilled, it led only to the thick veil which barred all access to the shekinah glory.

Circumcision is but a shadow. The substance is Christ. It figured death; He fulfilled it. Baptism, too, was but a type, telling of His burial. But the circumcised Israelite is kept without the curtains, and the baptized priest is shut out of the presence of God in spite of these physical rites and ceremonies.

But the death of Christ leads to no veiled Deity! Even in that dim ritual the curtain yielded once a year when Ieue's goat was slain (Lev. 16:7-9). Though its body was burned outside the camp, its blood provided for a passage to the glorious "mercy seat" (propitiatory shelter) (Lev. 16:15, 27).

And what is it that veiled God from mankind?

*Christ's flesh.*

When He expired, the curtain of the temple was rent from the top to the bottom. It may be hard for many of us who have been taught that He was "God *manifest* in flesh," to receive this illuminating truth. But in the passage from which this is quoted, it is not *God* Who is manifested in flesh (1 Tim. 3:16). The one clause "heralded among the nations," coming before "taken up in glory" (which cannot be true of Christ in the flesh) ought to be sufficient, apart from the evidence of the ancient manuscripts, to show that it is not *God* Who is referred to here. We are distinctly told that the curtain was a figure of His flesh (Heb. 10:20), and that access is *through* the rent curtain. But if that flesh *manifested* God, it could be no curtain to *hide* God.

His whole earthly ministry was "straitened" (Luke 12:50, A.V.). He spoke to them in proverbs, but rejoiced in the hour when He might report boldly to them concerning the Father (John 16:25). His flesh was rent on Golgotha, *then* God was first revealed. This is the true, the genuine, the real circumcision.

And this is all ours as well as His. His in fact, ours in faith. If we apprehend its true import we have laid aside our physical frame and its rites and religious duties, and base our relationship with God solely on the ground of spirit. Then shall we have access unhindered and unafraid into the glorious presence of a manifested God (Eph. 3:12).

If the "body of flesh," that is, our physical frame, has been stripped off, what place is there for the baptism of that physical body in water? Here, too, the figure has been displaced by the substance—the burial of Christ.

Thus are the saints "complete in Him." They are fully outfitted for access into the Divine presence altogether apart from the "weak and beggarly" elementary observances which led only to the antechamber of His holy place (Gal. 4:9, 10).

There is a threefold warning here which often remains

unheeded by God's own. They are in the toils of philosophy. Plato preaches more than Paul. They are in the toils of ritual. Moses binds more than Paul frees. And when men preach philosophy and practice ritual they are preying on those whose ears have never heeded God's warning and who have never heard of the completeness that there is in Christ.

The next warning, as well, is quite unknown. Sunday, a heathen holiday, has become a spurious sabbath, the observance of which has become the badge of apostate Christendom. On every hand God's saints are being "judged" and told to observe days and abstain from foods as a part of their religion. The days observed by Israel were designed by God to shadow the day of "His stopping" which He had in store (Heb. 4:9, 10). No such significance can be attached to our Sunday.

Why, then, should we allow anyone to dictate to us concerning the ceremonial observances of Judaism? They are but shadows at best, of things impending. They all foreshadow Israel's future earthly blessedness and can only be realized by the people to whom they were given.

But our blessing, also, has its material expression and embodiment. At the right hand of the Heavenly Majesty clothed with a real human form, sits the Man, Christ Jesus. That glorified body of His is the material expression of all our blessings. It is a picture of that spiritual Christ; "the ecclesia which is His body."

It is vitally one with Him; we are His members (Eph. 5:30).

It is among the celestials; so are we (Eph. 1:20, 2:6).

It is seated; we too, are at rest (Eph. 2:6, Col. 3:1).

He is its Head; He is ours (Eph. 1:22, Col. 1:18).

But let each heart trace for itself the transcendent glories which are the portion of His body—both physical and spiritual. That any part of earth's substance should ascend to such supernal glory seems incredible. But no

less difficult is it for us to entertain a fraction of the blessing which is ours as His spiritual complement.

Earthly shadows may suffice to show earthly bliss—but celestial honors demand a celestial parallel. Israel may be His bride, for marriage is the lot of mankind upon the earth. So, too, with His relationship to Israel as the Lamb. Earth alone can furnish the figure, and earth alone can be the scene of its fulfillment.

Is it not ineffably sweet to know that though all earthly figures fail to picture our place and portion, He Himself, enthroned at the right hand of God—He Himself embodies all that we have and are! And what of all the high honors and loyal love which that body shares as joined to its glorious Head—do not these portray our eonian portion?

The first warning refers us to the past and all we have in Christ by virtue of His sacrifice on Golgotha and the resurrection from among the dead. His circumcision and His baptism—the realities of which the ritual was but a type—His death and burial and resurrection, all are ours. He was our Complement in the past. And now, at God's right hand, He is still our Complement for the present. We are complete in Him.

But still another warning rings in our ears. Not only may we look *back* and find all in Him, not only may we look *up* and find our all in Him, but we may look *forward* and still find Him our Complement. He is our Prize.

Human infirmity and failure and offense—these are fit fields for His favor, forms from which to fashion a new creation, and one through which He can unfold His fathomless affection, and which would respond in all the fervency of love.

And if those who are thus drawn to Himself fail to respond; if they hide behind the ritual of the messengers, with fearful reverence, they rob God of the choicest fruit of reconciliation, and themselves of the highest prize in all the universe, the supremacy and esteem which

flow from the nearness and dearness God bestows only upon His favorites.

Let us grasp the Head! Is He near to God? Is He dear to God? Is He the highest? Then so are we, for we are His body. Can we imagine Him, like the seraphim veiling His face in the presence of the Divine Majesty? Would it please the Father that He approach through various spectacular forms, with a tardy faltering step? Never! Away then, with all ritual! It merely denies *His* acceptance. Away with all mock humility! *He* is worthy! The angelic messengers who may approach only through ritual proclaim that *He is worthy* (Rev. 5:12).

And we, too, in Him, our Head, are worthy!

O, to be found in Him! And thus to gain the prize which Christ alone can win, the exultation of the universal conquest, the place supreme, the reward of closest intimacy and love! This was the goal Paul had before him, for which he pressed forward, forgetting earthly hopes he left behind (Phil. 3:13, 14).

And this should be our goal, as well. But on every hand we encounter that which would rob us of this prize and fill His place with forms and ceremonies, which estrange, instead of reconcile, and put God at a distance, instead of putting us at ease in His presence. May we never allow that this supernal prize be snatched from our hearts! With Paul let us be pursuing that we may be grasping that for which we have been grasped by Christ Jesus (Phil. 3:12).

Death and resurrection do not sever us from this earth. Christ Himself, during the forty days after His resurrection, was occupied with the affairs of the earthly Kingdom. But this is no cue for us. We are not like the disciples who were left behind when He arose from Olivet. *We went with Him.*

How unutterably grand was His ascension! Not even creation's birth gave the sons of God so much cause to shout for joy, for now He has relaid the foundations of

the moral universe, and a new creation has been inaugurated—far grander than the first—with its foundations firmly fixed in God's deepest affections. His lowly descent to Bethlehem had tuned their hearts to sing of glory to God among the highest. But now that glory has been gained. The battle with the hosts of darkness has been fought and won. The flood tide of evil has been turned. The crisis of the eons has been triumphantly passed. The Victor has vanquished every foe. God's great name has not only been vindicated but gloriously glorified.

Heaven welcomes the return of a Conqueror—the very King of glory. Could bounds be set upon the bursting joy of the heavenly elders and messengers as they behold their Lord awarded the place of honor and power supreme at God's right hand? Let us not attempt to tell of such a triumph.

*But He was not alone!* In spirit we share this greatest of all glories with Him and thus He weans our hearts from matters mundane which once engrossed us. Satan is enthroned here below. How can we find any satisfaction in his abortive attempts to satisfy men's hearts? But in the place supreme—in Christ—there is more by far than heart could wish to engage, to satisfy, to entrance (Eph. 2:6).

After He was roused He did not appear except to a few chosen witnesses. Though still on earth His life was hid from the mass of mankind. And doubly so now that He has ascended. And this is true of us as well. Our life has never yet been seen by mortal man. It is hid together with Christ in God (Col. 3:3).

But our life shall not always be hid. He Who is our Life shall be manifested. Why should we want to be known in this day of His rejection? Let us rest with Him at God's right hand and wait until His time has come. But when His hour strikes, then our time will have come—and He will not be glorified apart from us.

Meanwhile let us fix our hearts upon the celestial expectation we have in Him. This alone will enable us to give our earthly interests their true place. This alone will give rest and refreshment in the midst of the rush and exhaustion of these strenuous times.

But above all, let us explore the "fullness"—the completeness—there is in Christ. Let us beware of aught that seems to take His place. What do we lack in Christ? Or what can we add? In Him we are complete. The very thought that aught is lacking there, of means of grace, or access to the throne of God, or anything that man or God can give, is in itself a slander on His Name!

Are we not circumcised in Him? Is not His word and spirit all to us that any covenant ever was? His spirit is our pledge, the earnest of all He will bestow (Eph. 1:14). They mutilated the flesh. But we strip off the entire body of flesh and acknowledge and confess that when He was cut off and died for us, then we, in Him, were circumcised.

And as Abraham of old (to whom the rite was given) buried Sarah out of sight in hope of resurrection, so we also have been buried out of sight by that baptism which Christ knew, which He endured for us and we in Him. And when He arose we arose. And when He ascended we left the earth behind for a seat at God's right hand.

How blessed is all this! At the altar we die in Him, a sweet savor unto God. And this was once for all. Not as the oft repeated type, but once for all time. And at the laver we are baptised in Him. All defilement which disqualified us for God's presence is removed. In Him we tread the courts of God in conscious and unclouded peace.

How few have found their "fullness" in Christ! And the reason is not far to seek. Instead of heeding the three-fold warning God graciously gave, Christendom has courted philosophy and married ritual.

In its attempt to explain the origin and object of all

things it follows human philosophy and ignores Christ. The origin of evil is the greatest of all its problems. As the Gnostics of old it still seeks to exonerate God from the creation of evil even though God Himself said He creates evil (Isa. 45:7). Instead, however, of shifting this to a mythical "fullness," it is now shouldered by a mythical "devil," a grotesque caricature of the Adversary as revealed in the Scriptures.

The toils of human tradition keep them from Christ. The observance of days is rigidly prescribed in spite of this warning. Asceticism, directions and teachings of men are often used as a test of "Christianity." "Touch not, taste not, handle not," is openly palmed off as God's exhortation, when the opposite is the fact. We are *not* to be subject to such human injunctions.

Nothing is more evident than that our God knew the dangers which would confront us and has made provision for our escape. Christ is our Refuge from them all.

Christ, as God's Complement, assures us that, on God's side every provision has been made to reconcile the universe. And Christ, as our Complement, removing as it does every human pretention to fitness for the Father's presence, dispels every difficulty in the way of reconciliation. Human failure or fitness would be an element which would forever preclude perfection and thwart God's purpose. But if God is pleased to put all upon Christ, why should we hesitate? If Christ is all God needs to reconcile us to Himself, why should we not give Christ the same honor?

May all who read these lines realize and revel in the transcendent truth of

CHRIST: GOD'S COMPLEMENT

OUR COMPLEMENT

## ISRAEL RESTORED TO GOD (ROMANS 11:25-36)

For I am not willing for you to be ignorant of this secret, brethren, lest you may be passing for prudent among yourselves, that callousness, in part, on Israel has come, until the complement of the nations may be entering. And thus all Israel shall be saved, according as it is written,

Arriving out of Zion shall be the Rescuer.

He will be turning away irreverence from Jacob.

And this is My covenant with them

Whenever I should be eliminating their sins.

As to the evangel, indeed, they are enemies because of you, yet, as to choice, they are beloved because of the fathers.

For unregretted are the graces and the calling of God. For even as you once are stubborn toward God, yet now were shown mercy at their stubbornness, thus these also are now stubborn to this mercy of yours, that now they also may be shown mercy. For God locks up all together in stubbornness, that He should be merciful to all.

O, the depth of the riches and the wisdom and the knowledge of God! How inscrutable are His judgments, and untraceable His ways! For, who knew the mind of the Lord? or, who became His adviser? or, who gives to Him first, and it will be repaid him? seeing that out of Him and through Him and for Him is all: to Him be the glory for the eons! Amen!

## ISRAEL'S RESTORATION

**GOD IS FAITHFUL.** Israel has been unfaithful. But will her unfaithfulness make His promise void and His efforts ineffectual? (Rom. 3:3, 4). Not so! Even conciliation must retire to allow His plans to have full play. He had a purpose in locking up that nation in stubbornness. Just as their rulers carried out His sovereign and predetermined counsel in crucifying the Son of God (Acts 2:23), so the nation, in rejecting the offer of salvation afterwards, fulfilled His purpose. Both rulers and nation were bent only on their own will, but behind all was the inflexible decree of the Omnipotent, the wisdom which could weld their very waywardness into a way of carrying out His intention.

As Israel's blindness is not an end in itself, but merely a means to magnify His mercy, it must come to an end. The prophet's "Till when?" (Isa. 6:11) shows very clearly that he had not the slightest suspicion that Ieue was going to go back on His previous promises. He knew that their callousness must have an end. And this is confirmed by Ieue's (Jehovah's) answer, indefinite as it may seem:

"Till the cities should tumult from having no dweller,  
And houses, from having no human.  
And the ground is remaining a desolation,  
And Ieue removes the human afar,  
And much is forsaken within the land.  
Yet still a tenth remains in it, for it turns back,  
And it becomes consumed as a terebinth.  
Yet, as an oak which, when flung down, is a monument,  
Among them, the holy seed is its monument."

(Isaiah 6:11-13)

We, too, once we grasp the grand truth of Israel's restoration, cannot but echo the prophet's words, "Till when?" And we are more fully furnished to give an answer than he could possibly be. We may meditate upon it from two distinct aspects: conditions among the nations which point to their being cut out of the olive tree, and signs in Israel which imply its restoration.

Israel, nationally, was broken out of the olive tree for lack of faith, and the same fate is speedily overtaking the other nations. The fact that a few, a remnant, believed God, did not save the nation of Israel from the doom of her defection. Neither will the fact that a feeble few among the nations hold fast the faith, and even recover much of what has been lost for centuries—these few cannot fend the fate of the nations as a whole. The nations, as such, are fast following in the footsteps of apostate Israel. Faith has either degenerated into tradition or is openly decried by skepticism.

For a long time the characteristics of the "subsequent eras" (1 Tim. 4:1) have been in evidence. Spiritism, misnamed "spiritualism," has long been teaching the doctrine of demons. Multitudes have been giving heed to the deceiving spirits so that now we are no longer startled, as once we were, by the uncanny presence of the supernatural.

And even more notably evident are the tokens of the "last days" (2 Tim. 3:1-5). Insubjection to God is fast finding fruit in the insubjection of children to their parents. This has shown a marked increase in the last generation. And when has the love of money become so acute as in the last few years? Men are money mad. And when has pride and boasting reached such a pitch as in this vaunted age of progress? Yet natural affection and the relationships which spring out of it are violated on every side. Divorce is increasing at an alarming rate. The family unit seems in danger of becoming obsolete. Selfish pleasures have driven all thought of

God, and the delights to be had in His love, from the hearts of multitudes.

But the *most* significant token of the apostasy is the fact that devoutness has largely become a futile form. The services of the churches preserve every outward show, but the power has departed. And in an effort to hold the people, instead of returning to the vital truths of Holy Writ, the pulpit often imitates the theater and the rostrum, and denies the power of vital devoutness.

And should we try to stop the advancing tide of apostasy? We might as well sweep back the breaking billows of the sea, for God has spoken, and it shall come to pass. O, how many there are who are ignorant of this secret! The very pulpit which refuses to acknowledge the failure of the nations to carry out their assumed function as God's "light-bearers," is itself a positive proof of the apostasy. Faith bows to God's decree, but unbelief doubts its own doom.

We conclude, then, so far as the nations are concerned, that they have failed utterly in their trust, and the time is ripe for them to be hewn out of the olive tree. The Conciliation has well nigh run its course! This feeble attempt to illumine its message may be too late for even the faint response which it could call forth. The darkness is gathering fast. Let us who know its precious burden make no delay in heralding it abroad!

But if premonitions of the end of the eon abound among the nations, equally notable are the features in the Nation of Destiny, God's ancient and beloved people, Israel. For well nigh two thousand years they have fulfilled the curses which are written in their sacred scrolls, and shall they not enjoy the blessing which those same scrolls contain? More and more is it becoming evident that God's set time is near to remember Zion and to comfort the people on whom He placed His holy name.

Jacob's sons seek to secure their own future without

real reliance on Ieue. They strive to build up the land of their patrimony, and, in the past century, there have been great advances in its restoration. Ruined cities have been rebuilt. Jerusalem has spread far beyond its ancient walls; and more recently, other cities have been built along modern lines. Kibbutzim (collective farm settlements) dot the landscape; thus the land which has lain fallow for centuries is now being tilled by the returning Jew. They are making quite a success of agriculture and afforestation, and it seems that, in some measure, there has been a return of the annual rainfall. For example, the Jewish Chronicle reports that, at Elath, Israel's Red Sea port, 1.625 inches of rain fell in a single night. This was *more than the yearly average* of 1.375. Land which has long been a desert is now producing abundantly and supporting the continuous influx of Jews returning to their ancient heritage.

Industries are being developed, using the natural resources of the land, especially in the Dead Sea area. It is interesting to note that the Bible is being used as a sort of textbook or guide in the field of agriculture and industry, in this development. An agricultural experimental station has been set up on the hot shores of the Dead Sea, 1300 feet below sea level. The same method used during the Kingdom of Judah, about 3000 years ago, is being tried. Vineyards are planted at the foot of the hills; then the hillsides are terraced to conserve the rain water. Olives, apricots and peaches are also being grown in this manner. This should result in producing fruit which contains many more minerals and vitamins than that grown in depleted soils with commercial fertilizers and poison sprays.

In Genesis chapter 19, verse 28, fumes were said to have gone up from the basin where Sodom and Gomorrah were located. Hence it was assumed that there must be natural gas present in that locality. So a well was drilled, and it was found to be so. The presence of this

gas will play an important role in the future of heavy industry in the Negev. Production of chemicals from the waters of the Dead Sea have already reached substantial proportions. Included are 850,000 tons of phosphates and 400,000 tons of potash annually.

It is also reported that King Solomon's mines are operating on an unprecedented scale.

Modern ideas and methods are brought to underdeveloped countries all over the world by small teams of Israeli experts, with no strings attached, thus creating an ever increasing trickle of goodwill toward the new state of Israel.

As in Egypt, when the time of Israel's deliverance drew nigh, they multiplied far more rapidly than the Egyptians (Ex. 1:12), so the past two centuries have witnessed a wonderful increase. Two hundred years ago there were only about three million Jews in all the world; now there are almost that many in Israel alone. The Jewish world population is now thirteen million, and this, notwithstanding the many persecutions which they have endured.

### BABYLON'S ROLE

But not only is the land of Israel responding to the voice of the future, but Babylon, also, is hearing the cue of her prompter, and is rising to the part she has to play. Once the granary of the world with the most extensive irrigation system on the face of the earth, it flourished like the garden of Eden. Although progress here seems slow compared to that in Israel, the speed with which cities can now be built should remind us that Babylon, too, could quickly become the imposing city which she yet must be.

As we meditate upon the Secret ("Mystery") of Great Babylon, we can see that all that is taking place in these crucial areas is directed toward the setting of the scenes for the final act in the great drama of man's rebellion against God. For it is in Babylon, not Jerusalem, that

apostate Israel defies the blessing of Ieue, her Alueim (Jehovah, her Elohim).

The way of life in Israel today will never content the money-making merchant which the Jew has become. So the ephah, the market measure, the scriptural symbol of commerce, carries the woman to the land of Shinar, and there is set on its own base (Zech. 5:6). Hence the further development of Israel and the restoration of Mesopotamia are both on the future program before the refining and the redemption of God's Covenant People. So much for the stage upon which the last scenes are being set for man's misrule. But what of the actors in this great tragedy?

The people of Israel not only multiplied in a much greater ratio than the nations among whom they were scattered, but the race consciousness which they never entirely lost was fanned into a flame by persecution without and by federation within. Today they are not merely scattered fugitives but stand before the world as a *nation*, because of their strenuous striving to effect their own salvation. But it will result in their own destruction, since, in all their zeal, there is no real recognition of Ieue (Jehovah).

There are two distinct aspects to Israel's efforts at restoration: (1) Those efforts which Jacob's sons make to defend their state in Palestine. (2) Those which are taking place among other nations in opposition to Israel.

The first aspect culminates in Babylon and thus ensues the episode of the Ephah of Zechariah five. The second aspect provides the circumstances which will lead to the time of Jacob's trouble. And thus will arise the need for Israel's salvation!

Of old when Hoshea (or Oshea) whose name means "Being-Saviour," was to become Israel's deliverer, his name was changed to Jehoshua, *Joshua*, that is, Jehovah-Saviour (Num. 13:16). This is the Hebrew for *Jesus* (Heb. 4:8). And in the terrible days which will

precede the Kingdom, only those "who call on the name of Ieue shall escape" (Joel 2:32). Hence all their scheming and planning will never effect their salvation. Nevertheless, it all contributes to the fulfillment of God's purpose. God not only saves but He also locks up in stubbornness—all is *out of* Him. And, by the same token, He works, not only through faith, but also through failure and unbelief—all is *for* Him.

"*For unregretted are the graces and the calling of God*" (Rom. 11:29). The word usually translated "gifts" here means far more than a gift. We might call it a "free gift," but as it is but a form of the word "grace," we may best learn its import from this relationship. What God has promised Israel will be hers because of His unforced favor. All that their professed law keeping has done is to draw down the curses for which it calls; their efforts at covenant keeping have done naught to win the blessings which they crave. But God's gracious promises, which depend on Him alone, will surely be fulfilled. And, far from their defection marking the failure of these graces, it is the means to bring them about. For just as the nations were made subjects of mercy due to their own stubbornness toward God, so now the mercy which Israel is to obtain is made possible by the apostasy of the nations. God wishes to have mercy on *all*. But how could that be unless He first locks them up in stubbornness? So now Israel is locked up, but many there are who seem to hear the key grinding in its lock—the key which will open the door to Israel's restoration.

God's graces are *unregretted*. This means more than "unrepented of" as rendered in the Authorized Version. He not only does not change His mind, but His love is never disappointed or despairing. It has never relied on a due response to feed its flame. It finds in itself the sufficient and satisfactory source of continuance. Having loved, it loves to a consummation. All the depths of

God's riches and wisdom and knowledge are pledged to perform its purpose.

The grandeur of this portion of God's Word (Rom. 11:33-36) must not be lost by us, for it is the rich and mellow fruitage of the preceding passage (11:29-32). We may be perplexed by God's dealings with Israel or by the failure of the nations, but when once we see how it accords with God's purpose, our perplexity gives place to worship and adoration. It is only as we see God's *purpose*, we repeat, that this happy result can follow. Meanwhile Israel is still apostate and, worse yet, the nations are just as unfaithful.

The word of prophecy, indeed, assures us of Israel's restoration, but here we see not only the *height* of His riches and wisdom and knowledge in their restoration but also the profound wisdom and knowledge which can work in the *depths*, before their restoration, while they reject their Messiah.

But, are we not told that His judgments are unsearchable and His ways past finding out (Rom. 11:33, AV)? This indeed was true of His dealings with Israel and the nations before He made known the great truth that He locks up all together in stubbornness that He should be merciful to all. But now this much, at least, is clear to faith.

But let us not confound His inscrutable *judgments* and His untraceable *ways* with His declared *purpose*. They deal with processes in attaining the goal, but God's purpose is the goal itself. We make such distinctions daily. We see the plan of a building and we are quite content to leave the execution of it to the contractor. In our simplicity, if we have never seen a building erected before, we may wonder at some of the methods of construction. We might well ask why men begin to dig *down* when they start to build *up*. But the builder knows that he must lay his foundation deep. Just so with God's purpose and His ways. His purpose is one

*and He has made it known; His ways are many and some of them are hid.*

Can we not *believe* the announcement as to His purpose even if we do not understand the elements which enter into its execution?

Shall we deny His decision because we do not see how some details can possibly be carried out? What would we think of the gardener who would not plant a seed because he could not see how such a small thing could possibly grow and blossom and bear fruit?

Let us rather enjoy the fruit of God's great effort beforehand, for we know that every seed He plants will grow. Let us *believe* that *He locks up all together in stubbornness, that He should be merciful to all.* Thus we can know the final outcome of His purpose and await and welcome all His words which enlighten us as to His ways in working it out.

The word "judgment" here is worthy of study. It is *krima* (JUDGE-effect) in the Greek, which expresses the result of the action denoted by *krinō* (JUDGE). This is generally translated "judge" but must not be given the common thought of "condemn" which is expressed by *katakrinō* (DOWN-JUDGE). When the apostles "judge" the twelve tribes of Israel in the Kingdom on the earth (Matt. 19:28) they will not *condemn* them but rather *govern* or *rule* them, seeing that they will all be righteous. So, too, *krima*, judgment, does not carry in itself an adverse sentence or verdict, but rather the result of rule and government.

Israel's defection and restoration are both His "judgments." These were indeed inscrutable or unsearchable before their object was made known. Israel's defection *seemed* to defeat God's purpose—but in reality it fulfilled it. So each one of us doubtless can find examples in our own experience where God *seemed* to care little for His own—but His seeming indifference was but the studied neglect of His inimitable wisdom.

The way to a place is not the place. Neither are God's ways the goal to which they lead. Faith may grasp the goal, but it would take almost infinite wisdom and knowledge and time to consider and account for His multifarious ways. The burden of these is beyond us. They are a labyrinth we cannot follow—they are *untraceable*. To return to the figure of the seed: Why must the seed *die* in order that it may bear fruit? How does life come from the dying? We need not be like the child and dig it up to see *how*—for then, perchance, it will not grow at all—but all we need to do is to cultivate and water it, and God will make it grow up. We plant and partake—the *process* is all *His* work. So in God's ways. They are beyond our ken. But though we cannot follow Him in His path, we can believe Him when He tells us of its end.

And what is its end? First, let us ask, What was its beginning? *All was out of Him*—this we can understand. *All is through Him*—this is perplexing to sight but obvious to faith. *All is for Him*—this is the goal. Here we have a compendium of universal history—the past, the present and the future in its relation to God. In the midst of the maze in which we find ourselves, we look back to one settled point in the past—God is the One *out of Whom* all has come: and we may just as well look forward to the future and rejoice that out of all the intricate tangle in which we are enmeshed shall come that far grander and more glorious truth—*all is for Him*. Literally this reads, all is *into Him*—the exact converse of the first statement (Rom. 11:36).

But some may exclaim, impatiently, *how can ALL be for Him?* And we answer: He has just been explaining how Israel's *defection* contributes to His goal. And if He can do it by means of the very opposition which seems to make it impossible, it ill becomes us to question His ability to carry out His word. And if we had not the slightest hint as to *how* He would carry out His word,

it is ours to *believe* in spite of all appearances. This is what gives flavor to faith. Real faith takes God at His word.

And need we press the word *all* to its legitimate conclusion? Was all out of Him? Or are there two gods, neither of whom is "out of" the other; each being independent? Far be the thought! God is one, and *all* is out of *Him*. And by the same token *all* will be *for* Him. Not *some*, not *many*, but *all*.

And shall we discover all this wealth of wisdom, this consummate knowledge, without response? Shall not our hearts echo the apostle's words as we extol and laud the God of the *all*, and give Him all the glory which He will most surely gain? Such a God as this ought to stir our hearts and kindle our affections and arouse our adoration.

TO HIM, INDEED, BE GLORY FOR THE EONS! *Amen!*

## CONCLUSION

**A CHAINED AMBASSADOR!** Here, at one stroke of His graphic pen, God has drawn a perfect picture of the Conciliation (Eph. 6:19,20).

An ambassador is a token of peace. The moment hostilities begin the embassy is withdrawn. So we, too, will be recalled the moment God commences His "strange work" and declares war upon the earth.

The chains speak of peace. Not on Caesar's side. Not on the part of mankind, but on the part of God. What must it have meant for the great Warlord, Jehovah of hosts, to see his ambassador laden with a chain at the court of the great Roman empire! Truly, nothing but His most gracious insistence on peace would permit God to see His ambassador treated so shamefully!

However men may challenge God to draw His sword, He refuses to do so now, for *He is conciliated*.

"Be conciliated to God!" is an appeal equally needed by both saint and sinner—unless they have already responded to His entreaty. The sinner may accept this grace from the very first and find in it the strength and joy for every hour. The timid saint may become established by responding to this appeal.

Reconciliation is the ripened fruit of redemption, by which God proposes, not merely the salvation of a lost humanity, but the losing as well as the saving, so as to impart to His creatures the capacity to enter His inner affections. But if we are concerned merely with our own safety, or assurance, and do not see His heart hunger satisfied, we rob Him of the fruit He craves, and lower the level of our blessing to a mere restoration. But sin

and suffering are our lot solely to raise us beyond the creature ties, and by His Son's death, seal us to His heart in love.

God Himself is the Suppliant now! God, at present, is beseeching men! He is entreating through us: "Be conciliated to God!" He is not now the angry God with stern expression and finger pointed at our sins. Ah, no. He does not speak of us. He speaks of Christ and of the work He did, and that He now can come, by virtue of His Son's sacrificial death on the cross, with holiness unsullied, even to the foremost of sinners, as in the case of Paul (1 Tim. 1:15, 16). He speaks of peace—peace made at the cost of His Son's life, and entreats all to enter in and enjoy it to the full. He speaks of love—love that did not withhold His Son, the Beloved One, but graciously gave Him up, that such as we might approach in confidence and boldness with not a fear to bar our way into the very heart of His affections.

*God is at peace with mankind!* Soon they may feel the fierceness of the indignation of the Almighty, for He will make His arrows drunk with blood (2 Thess. 1:8, 9). But now there is peace. Here is the very pinnacle of grace—a God beseeching men, entreating that they should receive the richest blessings that His love can bring!

The revelation of the Conciliation was progressive. It was given in two great sections.

Its first proclamation followed Paul's personal priestly ministry among the synagogues outside the land, which was a spiritual counterpart of Israel's ministry in the Day of the Lord. Just as this Day is followed by the Day of God with its new earth in which Israel's priestly supremacy vanishes and God tabernacles with all mankind, so with the initial administration of the Conciliation. The nations are ushered into perfect peace with God while Israel's political supremacy still lingers.

The second revelation of the Conciliation was granted

subsequent to the public repudiation of Israel and after Christ's heavenly glories and the celestial destiny of the ecclesia which is His body had been made known.

As the first section provided for the conciliation of all mankind on the earth, the second section insures the reconciliation of the heavenly realms to God. A unique race of human beings ascend to celestial supremacy, and thus the entire universe is once more attuned to God. In harmony with this is the spiritual character of the present secret administration. The system of generation that exists among mankind does not extend to the celestial realms. Spirit beings have no ancestry. They know nothing of birth. They are special creations. So now: All those privileges which arise from physical ascendancy are left below with Israel, where they belong. Physical relationship is most important to the Israelite upon the earth. It loses all meaning among the celestials. The Israelite is related to the Messiah by *blood*; we are united to Christ by *spirit*. The latter is the ranking relation: it rules the former. As God had not committed Himself as to the disposal of heavenly place and power, and as Israel, nationally, has no allotment there at all, the believers among the nations are placed on a par with those of the favored nation who believe in this administration of grace. Both together form the *joint body* which is blessed with every spiritual blessing among the *celestials* (Eph. 3:6; 1:3). So then, during the last two eons (the eons of the eons) there will be two systems, one in the celestial realms and one on the earth. The administration of the realms above will be entrusted to the ecclesia which is Christ's body, while the earth will be subject to the nation which is His bride.

The heavenly host will be the subjects of the body ecclesia's rule, the nations on earth come under the righteous rule of Israel. Christ, as the Suzerain over all, unites all into one grand Kingdom which shall never pass away, but is transfigured unto perfection, when

human rule retires, when delegated dominion is discarded, and the Son Himself abdicates in favor of the Father.

Then reconciliation will have arrived. Every trace of Satan's sin and Adam's offence will have been transmuted into the bonds of affection. The gloomy shadows of the eonian estrangement will have faded and fled before a universal and abiding reconciliation.

*Reconciliation*—not restoration. Restoration will have its place in the Day of the Lord, while reconciliation is not realized for a full eon further. Restoration or restitution could never justify the entrance of sin or the awful agony of the eons. But once we taste of reconciliation we bow before the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who uses eonian evil to fill, for His whole creation, a cup of bliss unceasing.

## THE MYSTERY OF THE GOSPEL

Somehow the very word "mystery" seems to shut the door of love in our faces, instead of opening portals for it. The word "mystery" looms large and dark and shadowy. It seems to defy understanding. None but the wisest may even attempt the solution of a "mystery"! Not so with the mysteries in God's Holy Word. They were simply *secrets*. Once they were hidden and could not be known. And yet, after God revealed them, they were easily understood by all who had ears to hear.

THE MYSTERY OF THE GOSPEL was the first book which A. E. Knoch published, over half a century ago. During the last years of his life, he edited it thoroughly so that it might be reprinted in his bi-monthly magazine UNSEARCHABLE RICHES. He changed the title to THE SECRET OF THE EVANGEL in order to emphasize the fact that the conciliation is indeed no longer a "mystery" but rather a secret which God has made known through Paul. Even when the apostle was held captive in Rome, his burning desire was to blaze abroad this secret. No longer could he go among the ecclesias to impart God's glorious revelation, but must content himself with speaking with such liberty as his chain allowed, or with writing to those to whom he could not speak. And so, in Ephesians 6:19, he asked his readers to pray for him, that he might open his mouth with boldness, "to make known the secret of the evangel," as the CONCORDANT LITERAL NEW TESTAMENT has it.

Since it is usually called THE MYSTERY OF THE GOSPEL in other versions and because we are offering this edition now to a wider audience, to which this term may be better known, we will retain it as the title of this book.