

To Enlighten all
as to
THE
SECRET



A. E. Knoch

**To Enlighten All
as to
THE SECRET**

**or
"The Mystery"**

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INTRODUCTION

THE dimensions of the present grace are not constricted as with Israel. It reaches back to a time prior to the entrance of sin and forward to its exit. It includes not only all mankind who believe during the present administration, but is intended to affect the heavens as well. It takes men who are far below the plane of privilege on which Israel dwelt, with no claims whatever on God's mercy, and seats them far above the highest in heaven. May He help us to learn something of this grace! This knowledge leads us into the realm of the unknowable, for it reveals to us the transcendent love of Christ which we will never be able to fathom fully and which will always yield new delights.

Being addressed to those who believe in Christ Jesus, in contrast to those of the Circumcision whose blessings, on the earth, are postponed until His return in glory, this letter was intended only for those who had received Paul's previous ministries and were expecting to be with Him *before* His coming to the earth (1:12).

The letter to the Ephesians is an elaboration of the definition of the present secret economy (3:6) that, "in spirit the nations are to be *joint*-enjoyers . . . and a *joint*-body, and *joint*-partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus" through the evangel of which Paul became the dispenser.

This is the "Ephesian secret," concerning which the following study is presented. May it lead the believer into a greater perception and grasp of the love of God in which we are rooted and grounded.

On this behalf I, Paul the prisoner of Christ Jesus for you, the nations—since you surely hear of the administration of the grace of God that is given to me for you, for by revelation the secret is made known to me . . . 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. To me, less than the least of all saints, was granted this grace: to bring the evangel of the untraceable riches of Christ to the nations, and *to enlighten all as to what is the administration of the secret*, which has been concealed from the eons in God, Who creates all, that now may be made known to the sovereignties and the authorities among the celestials, through the ecclesia, the multifarious wisdom of God, in accord with the purpose of the eons, which He makes in Christ Jesus, our Lord.

(Ephesians 3:1-11)

PAUL TO THE EPHESIANS

"to enlighten all as to . . . the secret" (Eph. 3:9).

FOR SOME TIME after the inauguration of the secret administration, James and Peter and John, as witnessed by their epistles, continued to proclaim the coming Kingdom according to the prophets. Peter was not unaware that Paul preached something widely different, which even he did not understand (2 Pet. 3:15, 16). In his epistle from Babylon to the dispersed Israelites he seems to have these things in mind, as he tells them of the salvation for which the prophets sought and searched diligently, "who prophesy concerning the grace which is for you . . . To whom it was revealed that not to themselves, yet to you they dispensed them, of which you are now informed" (1 Pet. 1:10-12). He writes to them briefly for the purpose of "entreating and deposing that this is the true grace of God" (1 Pet. 5:12).

That Peter is not speaking of the "mystery" is evident, for it was never the subject of prophecy. The grace he dispensed was. It is, therefore, impossible that they should be the same. Yet how many are trying to mix the two! The result is a conglomeration which is true to neither. If we seek light on present truth in Peter's epistles, or indeed, in any of the Circumcision writings, we will be mystified rather than enlightened. All of them are in full accord with the prophets. No grace comes to them which was not foretold. In none of them are the nations given the place which is accorded them in the present secret administration.

But we do not need to deduce this fact by any process of reasoning, for we have the strongest possible state-

ment, directly declaring it. Paul, after defining the "mystery," adds that he is "*to enlighten all* as to what is the secret administration which has been concealed from the eons in God" (Eph. 3:9). It is true that one of the ancient manuscripts (Alexandrinus) does not contain the word "all," but it is also true that another more ancient text (Sinaiticus) was first written without it, and the error was corrected. Besides, the sense is conveyed by the context. The "all" merely makes it more emphatic. This much is clear: to Paul, and to Paul alone, may we go for light on this subject.

Paul had been at Ephesus not many years before he penned this epistle. While there he did not shrink from declaring the entire counsel of God to them (Acts 20:27). He himself was probably acquainted with this secret at that time, but it had not become a part of God's plan or *counsel*. This term cannot be applied to any secret purpose God may have, but only to the plans He had made public, of which His people were apprised in His Word.

Of the letters to the seven ecclesias to whom Paul wrote, only three, Ephesians, Colossians and Philippians, are illumined by this mystery. His earlier letters are preparatory for its revelation. Now that it is revealed, we are able to see in them many a hint of its gracious, heavenly character, but the secret itself is not to be found.

Philippians and Colossians, companion epistles of Ephesians, may afford help at times, but they are not so much concerned with the *revelation* of this secret as with the correction of errors due to a departure from its doctrines and precepts. They cannot be taken to heart until we are first initiated into the mystery through the unfoldings of Ephesians. This narrows down our field to a single epistle.

We turn, then, to Ephesians. In it we find four mysteries, or secrets:

The Secret of Christ (1:9; 3:4),
 The Secret Administration (3:3, 6-9),
 The Secret of Marriage (5:32),
 The Secret of the Evangel (6:19).

The Secret of Christ is but briefly touched. The Secret of Marriage and of the Evangel are but references, one to Genesis, the other to Romans. The Secret Administration is categorically set forth in the summary given in the sixth verse of the third chapter. It is that gentile believers (the nations) are, in spirit,

- (1) joint enjoyers of an allotment,
- (2) a joint body, and
- (3) joint partakers.

An analysis of the Ephesian epistle will show that this is not only a summary of the secret, but also of the whole letter, which is an elaborate and extended exposition

FRAMEWORK OF "EPHESIANS"

Reversion

DOCTRINE	DEPARTMENT	JOINT ENJOYERS	JOINT MEMBERS	JOINT PARTAKERS	SUMMARY	Paul's commission 1 ¹ Salutation 1 ²
						The allotment—in heaven—blessing 1 ³⁻¹⁴ Paul's prayer for them 1 ¹⁵⁻¹⁹
						The body—in Christ 1 ²⁰ -2 ¹⁰ The members
						Participation—believers 2 ¹¹⁻²² The new humanity
						Summary of grace <i>now</i> shown to the nations 3 ¹⁻¹³
						Petitioning the Father 3 ¹⁴⁻²¹ Beseeching the saints 4 ¹⁻⁶
						Summary of grace which <i>had been</i> shown to the saints 4 ⁷⁻¹⁶
						No participation—unbelievers 4 ^{17-5²⁰} The new humanity
						The body—in the Lord 5 ^{21-6⁹} The Head
						The allotment—in heaven—warfare 6 ¹⁰⁻¹⁷ Their prayer for Paul 6 ¹⁸⁻²⁰
						Tychicus' commission 6 ²¹⁻²² Salutation 6 ²³⁻²⁴

of the secret, under these three divisions. Thus the joint allotment of the nations is set forth in the first nineteen verses of the first chapter. The joint body occupies the next section. Joint participation is developed in the latter part of the second chapter, from verse eleven onward. The latter part of the letter also takes up these three subjects, in inverse order. The accompanying framework, taken from the CONCORDANT COMMENTARY ON THE NEW TESTAMENT, will show this at a glance.

It will be seen that the bulk of the epistle is occupied with an orderly exposition of the three aspects of the secret. First we have its relation to God in the celestial allotment, then its connection with Christ, as joint members of His body, then its bearing on other saints. There are two summaries on the same subject, and two appropriate petitions, besides the introduction and conclusion. Thus the entire epistle is practically dedicated to the task of enlightening all as to this secret economy.

This simplifies our task very much. There is no need of any arrangement of our own, of gathering material together from various parts of the Scriptures. The Framework is the best possible analysis of the subject, and we can do no better than to follow the divine Author's divisions.

First of all it seems necessary to clear the ground of the confusion which exists as to what the "mystery" really is, and to whom it applies. If we approach this epistle with misconceptions on these points it will hinder our progress and will leave us open to many vague and vacillating views. This is especially important in fixing its relation to Paul's previous ministries and the epistles written before it was revealed. There can be no clarity in present truth apart from a clear conception of the essential elements of this mystery.

One of the greatest hindrances to the study of transcendent truth has been the prevailing methods of translation. No man or company of men, since the earliest

days, seems to have understood this epistle sufficiently to turn it into English. Edgar J. Goodspeed, one of the great modern translators, practically acknowledged this to me. They must give a rendering of their own conception of what is intended, hence their readers will not be able to go beyond their thoughts. Literal renderings such as Rotherham's are far safer. The Authorized Version has hopelessly missed the very heart of the matter in its version of the mystery. It is better adapted to hide it from us than to reveal it to us.

Hence we shall depend wholly on consistent renderings, such as are found in the CONCORDANT LITERAL NEW TESTAMENT. As our readers have, or should have, a copy of this Version, it will not be necessary to repeat the text. Important changes in translation will be fully discussed, and the evidence given for their correctness. This, we believe, is the only practical way of acknowledging the literal inspiration of the Scriptures, for such renderings do not depend on the translator's grasp of the truth, but on a mass of evidence, from other portions of the inspired record, which is entirely independent of our understanding of this epistle.

"Should I be perceiving all secrets and all knowledge ...yet have no love, I am nothing" (1 Cor. 13:3). This is the spirit in which we hope to engage our hearts while considering this sublime subject. Knowledge should lead us into an appreciation of God. The realization of this hidden grace, moreover, is the very key to God's affections. If we should obtain a cold and calculating conception of these things, a mere surface understanding, they will be worse than useless because they have failed of their real object. I pray that, as we delve into the depths and scale the heights, and consider the length and breadth of this marvelous unfolding, it may enlarge our hearts, and so fill them with praise and adoration that God will receive a rich response of overflowing affection.

SURVEY ON FIRST HALF OF EPHESIANS

**I. The Godward aspect of the Ephesian secret:
Our lot cast by God, 1:3-14**

Insertion: The secret of Christ in brief, "in all wisdom and prudence making known to us the secret of His will...to head up all in Christ...in the heavens and on the earth," 1:8b-10

First Ephesian Prayer, 1:15-19

- I. The expectation of God's calling**
- III. The riches of the glory of the enjoyment of God's allotment among the saints**
- II. The transcendent greatness of God's resurrection power, operative in Christ and in us while we are believing**

Insertion: Reference to past experience in our realm of faith: "the eyes of your heart having been enlightened," 1:18a

**II. The Christward aspect of the Ephesian secret:
Our joint vivification, rousing and seating in Christ among the celestials, 1:20-2:10**

- III. The manward aspect of the Ephesian secret:
Both Jewish and non-Jewish believers reconciled in one body to God through the cross, both having access to the Father, both jointly connected and built for God's dwelling place, in spirit, 2:11-22**

Summary of the Ephesian secret, 3:1-13

- I. Joint enjoyers of an allotment**
- II. A joint body**
- III. Joint partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the evangel of which Paul became the dispenser**

Insertion: The secret of Christ, "according as I write before, in brief...the secret of Christ...now revealed to His holy apostles and prophets," 3:3b-5

Second Ephesian Prayer, 3:14-21

Power for jointly grasping the dimensions of the Ephesian secret

THE "MYSTICAL" BODY OF CHRIST

"For even as, *in one body*, we have many *members*, yet all the members have not the same *function*..." (Rom. 12:4).

"God blends the body together ... that there may be no schism *in the body*, but the *members* may be mutually *solicitous for one another*" (1 Cor. 12:24).

"Making *peace...reconciling both* [groups, Uncircumcision and Circumcision] *in one body*" (Eph. 2: 15, 16).

TO GET AT THE VERY HEART of the secret unfolded in Ephesians is a great spiritual achievement, far beyond the soulish man (1 Cor. 2:14) and impossible to minors in Christ (1 Cor. 3:1-4). It has become so mysterious that it is well called a "mystery."

Even among those well advanced in truth, who have not shaken themselves entirely free of the shackles which once bound them, there is much misapprehension on this matter. Well do we remember the notable series of articles on this subject by Dr. Bullinger. But even he made the Ephesian mystery the body of Christ, as many spiritual divines, especially among the Puritans, had done before him. That position is well crystallized in the phrase "the mystical body of Christ." My own suspicions were aroused by the fact that no such phrase is found in Scripture. This led me to inquire what "the mystery" really is.

After much study, I found the answer to my quest in the categorical statement of Ephesians 3:6. There it is defined for us so clearly and concisely that we need never

be at a loss as to its precise provisions. There we are told that, *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 Paul became the dispenser.

That the nations were to be *heirs* or *allottees* was no secret. Long before this Paul had written to the Roman believers: "For you did not get slavery's spirit to fear again, but you got the spirit of sonship, in which we are crying, 'Abba, Father!' The spirit itself is testifying together with our spirit that we are children of God. Yet if children, enjoyers also of an allotment, enjoyers, indeed, of an allotment from God" (Rom. 8:15-17). Similarly he expostulates with the Galatians: "Now, seeing that you are sons, God delegates the spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying 'Abba, Father!' So that you are no longer a slave, but a son. Now if a son, an enjoyer also of God's allotment, through Christ" (Gal. 4:6-8).

That the believers among the nations were members of the body of Christ was no secret either, as we propose to show.

THE BODY AS A FIGURE

The word "body" is frequently used as a *faded* figure for any group of people, as we say of a crowd, "They went to the place in a *body*." We wish, however, to consider particularly those passages where the body is used in a definitely figurative sense in the Scriptures, and see if we cannot correct our thoughts and expressions to accord therewith.

ISRAEL FIGURED AS A BODY

Before considering the special figures usually associated with the ecclesia of the one body it may be well to consider the word "body" as figuring other things. When our Lord was explaining to His disciples how it would be when the Son of Mankind is unveiled, they say to Him, "Where, Lord?" In reply He speaks this

enigmatic parable: "Wherever the *body* is, there the vultures also will be assembled" (Luke 17:37). In the parallel passage (Matt. 24:28) the body is called a *corpse*. The most probable interpretation makes the body to be Jacob, as the victim of the nations in his time of trouble. As the vultures assemble about a dead body, so will the nations of the end time be drawn together to destroy Israel. Here the word *body* is used of those whom we usually *exclude* from "the body."

THE BODY OF JESUS

Our Lord used His physical frame in a figurative way frequently. He would have them eat His flesh (John 6:51). To this they took violent exception, because they did not recognize His meaning. Our life depends on food and drink. Just so our spiritual life depends on Christ. Unless we get nourishment from Him we will die.

The figure used in the Lord's dinner is different. There we have emblems, which we may literally eat and drink. And here it is His broken or given body and His shed blood, tokens of His sufferings and death, which are brought to our recollection, not merely to our minds, but to our feelings, by this figure.

HIS BODY A TEMPLE

He also compared His whole body to a temple (John 2:21). The Jews asked for a sign, and He answered, "Raze this temple and in three days I will raise it up." They should have realized that the literal pile of stones before them did not really house the Deity. God lived in His body, hence it was well worthy of the figurative appellation, "temple." They razed it and He raised it.

THE BODY AND BLOOD OF THE LORD

Those who delight in the exquisite diction of the Scriptures, and especially in the marvelous way in which the titles of our Saviour are varied to agree with the

context, will enjoy the change from the *communion* of the blood and the body of *Christ* (1 Cor. 10:16), to eating and drinking *unworthily* of the body and blood of the *Lord*. It is precisely the same body and the same blood, but the viewpoint in one case is privilege, in the other conduct. The passage follows (1 Cor. 11:27, 29):

So that, whoever should be eating the bread or drinking the cup of the Lord unworthily, will be liable for the body and the blood of the Lord. . . . For he who is eating and drinking unworthily is eating and drinking judgment to himself, not discriminating the body of the Lord.

The Corinthians seem to have made a literal meal of this figurative memorial. They ate when hungry, instead of waiting to partake of the memorial in common with the rest. To set this right, they were disciplined. That which *figures* sacred spiritual realities must not be made a means of physical and literal satisfaction.

THE BODY OF CHRIST

The body of *Christ* is literally, of course, the same as the body of *Jesus*, or of the *Lord*. But, in figures of speech, the title used indicates a vast difference, which must be noted, or its force will be lost. Perhaps we should vary the title "Christ" occasionally for its equivalent, "Anointed," to show its *official* character. The main need, however, in these days, is to distinguish the various figures in which the body of Christ is employed. The thoughtless acceptance of these as one and the same has created much confusion, which need not continue if we will only test each context carefully for the *literal interpretation*. In figures, each usage stands by itself, and cannot be transported into another context. The word "body" here may figure one thing, yet quite another picture may be presented there. This is exceedingly important in concordant study. The *meaning* of a word is constant. It is the same everywhere. *On the contrary, the figurative usage is special*. It may occur nowhere else.

The first occurrence of the phrase, "the body of Christ," has been largely overlooked, because the figure does not fit well with so-called "body truth," which deals with the believers of this economy as a whole, not as individuals. But the individual saint has a relation to the body of the Anointed quite apart from his place in the one body. In dealing with the law, the apostle writes, "*you* also were put to death to the law through *the body of Christ*..." (Rom. 7:4). Here we have the *death* of the body, and *through* that death all who are in Christ and under law, die to law. The important point for us, in this study, is to see that there is an *individual* relationship to the literal body of the *individual* Christ.

Let us foolishly try to carry over the "one body truth" into this passage, as is sometimes done with other texts. Then the "body of Christ" *dies*, literally, and through that death those in it who were under the law of Moses are dead to it! But when did it die? And how could the death of its members, in any sense, provide a release from the law? Is it not clear that "the body of Christ," though usually used figuratively of a company of saints, can also be used literally of His actual body of flesh and bones?

THE PERSONAL BODY OF CHRIST

To clear the way, let us first consider those passages in which the personal body of our Lord is referred to. When He said "This is My body" (Matt. 26:26; Mark 14:22; Luke 22:19; 1 Cor. 11:24), the bread was not transmuted into flesh, hence His words are not true as to fact. The figure is explained to us by Paul by the words *communion* and *partaking* (1 Cor. 10:16):

The cup of blessing which we are blessing, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we are breaking, is it not the communion of the *body* of Christ? ... all are partaking of the one bread.

That the one body of the saints is not in view here is evident from the parallel with the blood. The believers

have in common both the blood and the body of Christ. By the figure of *Association* (usually called *Metonymy*) we partake of the benefits *associated with* the sufferings by His sheltering blood and the sustenance suggested by the bread and body.

THE BELIEVERS TODAY AS A BODY

We should seek to draw a clear line between those figures already presented, in which we partake of Christ and He comes to be *in us*, and those to which we now turn, in which we are *in Christ*. In these alone we have what is intended by the phrase "body truth." The blessings in store for Israel were shadowed by food and drink and festivals and sabbaths, but our blessings are in Christ, and are illustrated by various points which are literally true of His physical body.

MANY MEMBERS WITH DIFFERENT FUNCTIONS

Paul uses the body as a figure first in Romans 12:4, 5:

For even as, in one body, we have many members, yet all the members have not the same function, thus we, who are many, are one body in Christ, yet individually members of one another.

Let us note carefully just what the picture here really illustrates. It is not the relation of Christ to the saints which is uppermost, but of believers to one another. There were many different kinds of persons, with varying functions among them, yet all are in Christ, hence, like the members of the human body, all cooperate and are dependent on one another, and make one complete whole, because all have the same spirit.

If we are accurate in our statements we will not refer to this as the body of *Christ*. The literal is *our* body, not necessarily that body which He has in glory. The emphasis is on the individual members, as is fitting in Romans. They are spoken of as *members of one another*. The point is not their relationship to Christ. They are "*in Christ*," but the figure does not illustrate that.

The emphasis is laid on the *variety of functions in many members*, which make up one body. Literally, it may be interpreted thus: The believers in Christ form a single organism, although they are given different gifts. These graces are complementary, so that the whole makes one complete organism. Let us carefully keep this figure distinct from similar ones in Corinthians and Ephesians. These are not "different bodies" but *different figures* concerning the *same* company of believers. In Romans we may take our own body as the basis of the figure, but in Corinthians the picture varies. In some connections it is *our* body (1 Cor. 12:23), but it begins and ends with the body of *Christ* (1 Cor. 12:12, 27).

THE FIGURATIVE BODY OF CHRIST

In order to explain the spiritual endowments of the believers, the twelfth chapter of 1 Corinthians uses a figure almost identical with that used in Romans. There it is illustrated by any body. Now the figure is expanded and enriched. As all the saints are anointed by God's Spirit, the ecclesia is compared with the body of the Anointed. It is called "the Christ" or "the Anointed" (1 Cor. 12:12). In Romans, the emphasis was placed on the *diversity* of the members. In Corinthians it lies on their *unity*. This unity is brought about by the baptism of the spirit. See how the figures are mixed! We can baptize many "bodies" and thus unite them, but you can hardly baptize the members of one body to unite them! But the literal is clear. All who enter the sphere of God's Spirit are incorporated into one body.

The fullest unfolding of this figure is found in this passage. The object is to illustrate the relation of the believers to one another, especially in regard to the spiritual endowments which obtained at that time. It will be worth our while to study the occurrences of this figure very carefully, hence we will give the full text of this passage.

I CORINTHIANS 12:12-31

For even as the body is one and has many members, yet all the members of the one body, being many, are one body, thus also is the Christ. For in one spirit also *we* all are baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and all are made to imbibe one spirit.

For the body also is not one member, but many. If the foot should be saying, "Seeing that I am not a hand, I am not of the body," not for this is it not of the body. And if the ear should be saying, "Seeing that I am not an eye, I am not of the body," not for this is it not of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the scent? Yet now God placed the members, each one of them, in the body according as He wills. Now if it were all one member, where were the body?

Yet now there are, indeed, many members, yet one body. Yet the eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you," or, again, the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." Nay, much rather, those members belonging to the body supposed to be weaker are necessary, and which we suppose to be a more dishonored part of the body, these we are investing with more exceeding honor, and our indecent members have more exceeding respectability. Now our respectable members have no need, but God blends the body together, giving to that which is deficient more exceeding honor, that there may be no schism in the body, but the members may be mutually solicitous for one another. And whether one member is suffering, all the members are sympathizing, or one member is being esteemed, all the members are rejoicing together with it.

Now *you* are the body of Christ, and members of a part, whom also God, indeed, placed in the ecclesia, first, apostles, second, prophets, third, teachers, thereupon powers, thereupon graces of healing, supports, pilotage, species of languages. Not all are apostles. Not all are prophets. Not all are teachers. Not all have powers. Not all have the graces of healing. Not all are speaking languages. Not all are interpreting. Yet be zealous for the greater graces. And still I am showing you a path, suited to transcendence.

First let us note that it illustrates a temporary condition. It is suited to the grace then shown to the nations, but this was far below that which was revealed later. But, when the path suited to transcendence led to maturity, the figure of the body was not abandoned. It was used over again seven times, but always with a different point. The human body is not merely a composite unit, as here set forth. It may be looked at as needing food, or as being cherished, as executing the will of the mind, etc. In these and other relationships the ecclesia is also called a body.

In order to keep from confounding this figure with that of Christ's headship, let us note carefully that the *growth* and *subjection* of the believers is quite foreign to the theme here. The saints are the complete body of Christ, head included. The ear, the eye, the scent, are all *members* even though they are in the head. The relation of Christ to *this* body is *not* that of Head. He is *All*. Just as His literal body in glory consists of feet and hands and head, so His figurative body is a complete organism, and His Spirit gives life to *every member*, whether it is the lowest (the feet) or the highest (such as the eyes in the head). And He is full grown. No growth is possible on the part of His literal body, so that it cannot be used to illustrate growth or increase. *Growth* is true only where He is the figurative *Head* (Eph. 4:16).

The literal truth so graphically set forth under the figure of the body (in 1 Cor. 12:12-31) should be clear to each one. It is the spirit they receive which unites all who are in Christ, and which gives them the power of *cooperation and mutual sympathy*. The more this spirit fills us the more this will be apparent. The less there is of it the less we will see of the cooperative unity and sympathy which should be the most marked feature of the church.

It is seldom, indeed, that a figure is so detailed as in this example. There are many points of contact. There

22 *One Body: Mutual Care for One Another*

are *many members* in one organism, and mutual dependence, helpfulness, and sympathy.

THE BODY IN THIS SECRET ADMINISTRATION

Ephesians does not repeat all that Paul gives us in his previous epistles, even if it is included in the truth for today. It simply incorporates what was already revealed by referring to it under some clear designation. Thus, little is said of our expectation in this epistle, yet the subject is based upon what had been made known before. "Those who are in a state of prior expectancy" clearly recognize what he had written to the Thessalonians and Corinthians (Eph. 1:12); then follows the prayer that they should be able to perceive the prospect now revealed (Eph. 1:18), and the exhortation to keep the unity made by the one expectation (Eph. 4:4).

So also with the truth of our spiritual union in Christ. No detailed illustration is needed, since it has already been given, and the saints associated with Paul's ministry have come to be called "the ecclesia which is His body" (Eph. 1:23). It is the special designation for them when their relation to *Christ* is before us, as the expression "body-church" is with some today. Since, in fact, the same believers and the same unity are shown by the same figure we are hardly justified in making different bodies of these.

THE JOINT BODY

At this point I hope to help our friends by freely confessing my own failure in confusing the figure used in Ephesians with that in First Corinthians. Even though there is a basis in fact, as we shall see, the two figures are too different to form a direct contrast. More mature reflection has led me to see that the *joint* body of Ephesians and the *one* body of Corinthians must not be mixed in our minds. They were made by different methods and cover distinct areas of truth, which may, indeed, overlap, but are not identical. The one body was

Joint Body: Both Groups Blessed Jointly 23

brought about by spirit baptism, and unites its many *members*, Jews and Greeks, but also slaves and free, and those who vary in the scale of respectability and honor. It leads to *sympathy in suffering*, and *rejoicing in esteem*. It is concerned with the *mutual care* we should exercise *for one another* while in weakness and insufficiency and shame in this nether sphere (1 Cor. 12:13, 26).

This joint body, however, is the result of *vivifying* and *rousing* and *seating* two *groups* of believers, those among the nations *together* with an election out of Israel, among the *celestials* (Eph. 2:5, 6), both groups being dead to their offenses. The action is literally true of Christ's body. In this view it is not composed of *many members*, but of only *two groups*, which have been dealt with *together*, or *jointly*. It is not concerned with their sympathetic exercise, but with the display of God's grace in the coming eons. The words *joint* and *together* are the same in the Greek, and mark a distinction between this aspect (*two groups* brought together) and that of a body with *many members*, though, of course, both describe a *unity*, and may be called *one* body.

Yet the fact that this joint body does away with the prerogatives and preeminence of Pauline Jews and gives them the same place among the celestials as believers among the nations, in Christ, has its effect on the constitution of the one body of Corinthians. This is clearly indicated by the different lists of the gifts. Those in Corinthians were suited to the time. Ephesians does not discard them all, and start fresh. It continues those suited to the new grace, drops those which are not in line with it, and adds two new ones. Apostles and prophets continued in the foundation (Eph. 2:20). Teachers are still with us, as well as evangelists and pastors. As we also are baptized in one spirit, and have gifts, we, as many individuals, are one body, as in Romans and Corinthians, composed of various degrees or ranks with different functions, which are figured by the differently

esteemed members of the body in all of these epistles.

Thrice, in Ephesians, the nations are addressed in order to *explain their jointure* with some believers out of Israel, which constitutes the secret. First, in relation to God and their celestial allotment, we read in 1:13: In Whom *you* also...are sealed with the holy Spirit... which is an earnest of... *our allotment*. The nations are joint enjoyers of an allotment with select Israelites *because they, too, have been sealed* with the spirit of promise, which is its earnest. In relation to Christ the joint body is explained in 2:1-5: And *you* being dead... *we* also... God... *vivifies us together*... and *rouses us together* and *seats us together* among the celestials, in Christ Jesus. The nations belong to the joint body because *they, as well as those of Israel* whose lot was in Christ among the celestials, are vivified, roused, and seated jointly. In the coming eons our bodies will be literally raised together and He will display His transcendent grace through us. The nations form a joint body with Pauline Jews because they are vivified, roused and seated together.

In relation to each other, their joint participation is set forth in 2:11: once *you*, the nations in flesh, and 2:13-18: now...*you*...far off...near...*our* peace... *both* one...the *two*...into one...into *one* new humanity...*we both* have had access. The nations participate with selected Israelites *in spirit* because they are no longer shut out from access to God on account of their *physical* relationship.

BOTH BLESSED TOGETHER IN JOINT BODY

Let us, then, confine the figure of the joint body to our union with the Circumcision, and let us revel in the transcendence of the grace which is thus revealed. It would have been a great mercy had we been blessed as subordinates of Israel, on the earth. Quite unthinkable would be the favor had we been made their equals in the

Kingdom. Much higher than this would have been our blessing had we been put beneath them among the celestials. But how unsurpassable is the grace that blesses us *together* and makes us a *together* or *joint* body in the highest sphere in all the universe!

THE THREE ASPECTS OF THE EPHESIAN SECRET		
I GODWARD	II CHRISTWARD	III MANWARD
our lot cast by God 1:3-14	our union with Christ 1:20-2:10	our participation with the saints 2:11-22
expectation of God's calling 1:18	transcendent greatness of God's resurrection power for Christ and for us - 1:19	riches of glory of the enjoyment of God's allotment among the saints 1:18
joint enjoyers of God's allotment 3:6	the joint body of Christ 3:6	all the saints: joint partakers of the promise 3:6

BOTH BLESSED *TOGETHER* IN A *JOINT* BODY

"Who makes *both* [groups, Uncircumcision and Circumcision] *one* . . . creating the two, in Himself, into one new humanity, making peace . . . reconciling *both in one body* to God through the cross" (Eph. 2:14-16).

IN THE PRECEDING chapter of this study, we have shown that there was "an allotment from God" (Rom. 8:17) for believers among the nations long before Ephesians was written. Even in those days, long before Paul came to Rome, the same believers were known to be *members* of the body of Christ (Rom. 12:5; 1 Cor. 12:12-31).

Also that the believers among the nations were all partakers of His promise in Christ Jesus through Paul's evangel, was made known early in his ministry. It is the burden of the latter half of the book of Acts. Writing to the Roman saints (Rom. 1:7) speaking of the contribution about to be taken for the Jerusalem saints (15:26), Paul declares: "If the nations *participate* in their spiritual things, they ought to minister to them in fleshly things also" (Rom. 15:27).

Since the Ephesian secret evidently did not consist in being an "heir" or allottee, or in membership in the body of Christ, or in participation in the promise, wherein does it lie? Its whole point and force is found in that thrice-repeated word *TOGETHER*, *fellow*, or, as we have rendered it, *joint* (Eph. 3:6). The joint body, as we have pointed out before, is the result of vivifying, rousing and seating *together*, among the celestials, *both groups* of believers, those from among the nations, and the Pauline Jews (Eph. 2:5, 6). The apostle refers to

the two groups as "nations" (or "Uncircumcision") and "Circumcision" respectively (Eph. 2:11).

The believers among the nations could not have been *joint* allottees before because the allotment was on the earth and Israel must have the supreme position there. They must always be aliens from the earthly commonwealth. They could only be guests (Eph. 2:12). The Jew was first (Rom. 1:16; 2:9). The nations were Israel's debtors (Rom. 15:27).

The secret reveals that the believers among the nations as a group have been accorded an allotment, a membership in a body, and a partnership in the promise which Paul had preached, all *in equal measure, in as high degree, and in every way the same* as that given to the group of Pauline Jews to whom they are united. This is the message of the small but emphatic prefix *joint*.

These three distinct items of the secret are each elaborated in the first two chapters of the Ephesian epistle. Ephesians 1:3-14 deals with the first item, the allotment or "inheritance," and concludes by giving the nations the same seal, the same spirit, hence the same allotment, as Paul and his fellow Israelites. Ephesians 1:20—2:10 deals with the second item, the one body, and shows that the nations are blessed in it equally with the Jews. Ephesians 2:11-22 shows that the physical inferiority of the nations no longer bars them from the fullest participation in the promise of Paul's evangel, which is the third item.

Each of the three unfoldings of the secret is concerned with a different relationship*. The *Godward* side is seen in connection with the celestial allotment. It is concerned with our place in His predestination and plan and purpose. The *Christward* side comes before us in dealing with the joint body, of which He is the Head. The *manward* side of the mystery is developed in dealing with our joint participation with all believers.

* cf chart on page 25.

JOINT ALLOTTEES

The *Godward* aspect of the mystery comes before us first (Eph. 1:3-14). It is divided into two sections. In the first (1:3-12) the allotment of Paul and the Israelites associated with him is transferred from earth to heaven. The blessedness of this group is among the celestials. They reign, not on earth, but in the wider sphere of the universe. In the other section (1:13, 14) the nations as a group—"you also"—are accorded the same allotment because they have received the same spirit, and have the same pledge. Hence they are joint enjoyers of these celestial honors.

THE JOINT BODY

The *Christward* side of the secret is developed next (Eph. 1:20-2:10). First He, as the Head of the whole universe, is given His place above all. Then His body is introduced as the universal complement. Hitherto redemption had provided only for earth's lost blessings. Heaven, where sin started, was not, it seemed, to be reached by the work of the cross. The greater part of the universe was still unprovided for. Israel will be His instrument in earth's redemption. The ecclesia which is His body will supply what is needed in the heavens. Thus it is the complement of the One Who is completing the entire universe (*cf* Eph. 1:23). Christ, including the members of His body, will administer the government of the empyrean.

What place will the nations have in this? On earth they must be the subjects of Israel. In the heavens, however, the celestials are the subjects. The body was made up of both Jew and Gentile. In this new sphere, are the Jews to keep their superior place? They are not. First, the apostle addresses the believers among the nations—"And you" (2:1). In the third verse he turns to the Israelites—"among whom *we*." But both groups are included when He

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vivifies us together (2:5),
rouses us together (2:6) and
seats us together (2:6)

among the celestials, in Christ Jesus. Hence the two groups are of equal rank. Both are blessed *together* in a *joint* body.

CREATING ONE NEW HUMANITY

The cross is the end of the old creation in regard to the *flesh* and *circumcision* and *approach to God*. In Galatia the apostle put the Judaizers in their place, who made much of flesh and the religious rites of Judaism. That belongs to the evangel of the Kingdom, which will flower during the millennium. But it has no place today, for, in spirit, we are already beyond that eon. In Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is anything, but a new creation (Gal. 6:15). The new creation is not a figure confined to Ephesians and applied to the "mystery" or the one body. It is never applied to these directly. It has to do with *mankind*, with the vanishing of the fleshly preeminence of the favored nation in its approach to the Deity, as will be the case in the literal new creation, after the thousand years.

Ephesians simply repeats and reapplies the figure of the new creation to the relation between those who were near and those far from God. Its two main and complementary occurrences (Eph. 2:15; 4:24) deal with the *new humanity* (in the third item of the secret), not with the joint body (the second item, Eph. 1:20-2:10; 5:21-6:9). Those who confound these two figures will never be able to see the truth of the joint body clearly. In Ephesians 2:13-18 the apostle is dealing with two classes of believers, those among the nations and those in Israel, two distinct groups. Just as it will be in the thousand years, those among the nations were far off even if they were believers, because of the central wall of the barrier which was made by the flesh and the decrees (Acts

15:20) of the apostles. They belonged to a humanity split into two by the rite of circumcision.

In the future the nations who were kept at a distance during the millennium will be brought near in the new creation (Rev. 21:1-4). They will not worship a distant God, shut up in a temple to which only the Circumcision have access. God will be with them Himself. There will be a new humanity. Religiously, the cleavage between Jew and Gentile will disappear. Priesthood will vanish. That is the message of Ephesians to believers now. The figure of the new creation which Paul had previously brought in to show God's relationship to all mankind at present, that is, the conciliation, he now uses afresh to show that the barrier keeping believers out of God's presence has been abolished and they enjoy the same access to God that Israelites have, not because of a creation confined to saints, but because of one affecting *all humanity*. Only the believers, however, enter this *new humanity* now, for it is a matter of *joint participation* in faith and spirit.

In fullest accord with this revelation concerning a new humanity in the doctrinal section of Ephesians, we find a similar statement in the second half, dealing with deportment. To see the exquisite symmetry of this, study the structure of Ephesians.* These two references to the *new humanity* in the new creation are in the complementary sections dealing with *joint participation* (the third item of the secret), not with the figure of the joint body (the second item). Putting on the new humanity (Eph. 4:24) deals with conduct, and is not nearly so limited in its scope as the figure of the new humanity in 2:15. The corruption and seduction of the old humanity go, and the righteousness and benignity of the new are to be put on, just as the millennial conditions, ending in the great apostasy, vanish and give place to a new creation in which righteousness dwells.

* page 9; cf chart on page 12.

INDIVIDUAL CREATION

Twice we have the figure of an individual new creation, once in Paul's earlier epistles (Gal. 6:15) and once in his perfection group (Eph. 2:10). In both cases the context deals with the same themes as the corporate creations. In Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is anything, but a *new creation*. After dealing with the conduct of Jew and Gentile, we read that we are His achievement, being *created* in Christ Jesus for good works, which God makes ready beforehand, that we should be walking in them. It is really a picture which will be fulfilled literally by those on the new earth, when religious distinctions will be done away. God has prepared only good works for them, and they are part of a new creation, hence sin will be almost unknown at that time.

ONE BODY AND ONE NEW HUMANITY

The figure of "one body" is also used in a variety of ways, as we shall see. In Ephesians 2:15, 16 the one body simply denotes that two groups of believers, those of the Circumcision and those of the Uncircumcision, are now changed into *one* body. Literally this cannot be done. Figuratively such things can be done, and often occur. The body of a *man* and a body of *people* are not subject to the same limitations, nor can they be made the object of the same reasoning. We cannot reason about figures as we do about facts. The creation of one new humanity (Eph. 2:15) is connected with the *reconciliation* of the two classes of believers, just as the creation in 2 Corinthians 5:17 was concerned with the *conciliation* of mankind. One is based on the other. The secret of the *evangel* flows from conciliation, and the *third* item of the secret (joint partakers) flows from this reconciliation of two groups of believers.

ONE BODY COMPOSED OF GROUPS

Let us seek to settle clearly in our minds what is

literally intended by the figure of a "body." This faded implication is used so freely in English that we apply the term to any aggregation of persons or things, or to the mass of anything. In the passage we have already considered (Eph. 2:16) it is used in this way. Two groups accepted Paul's teaching. The Circumcision were near, the Uncircumcision were far. The flesh separated them. In spirit, in Christ, these two became *one*. That is the *one* body. In this case the adjective *one* is prefixed to express the fact that there are no divisions among believers today, for we all have one spirit. There is only *one* body, *not* many groups, as there seem to be in Christendom today, humanly speaking.

In Ephesians 2:15, 16 it seems clear that the one body results from the union of two groups, a thought altogether foreign to the figure as used before in Romans and Corinthians. There there were *many* members and *many* functions. Here it is not a question of functioning, but of *peace* and *reconciliation* between two groups. These two aspects should be kept entirely distinct. It is the special message of Ephesians, which recognizes and adapts the body made of members, but *adds* to it the body made of differing or hostile groups. This is its peculiar and crowning revelation, which culminates in the secret that, in spirit, the nations are not only joint enjoyers and joint partakers, but a *joint body* (Eph. 3:6).

THE JOINT BODY

Mature reflection has convinced me that the force of the prefix *sun* (joint) does not refer to the many members of the body so much as to the two unequal *groups* of which it was composed, the Circumcision, who were near, and the Uncircumcision, who were afar off. Now that both are near, in spirit, the cleft between them is gone, and it has become a joint body, in which both are of equal rank; the two *groups* have been reconciled.

It is this special figure, one body composed of both

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Circumcision and Uncircumcision (or any other groups), which brings about peace or reconciliation among the believers (Eph. 2:16). By the cross all fleshly distinctions, and all attainments, privileges, pride, or other causes of division, are set aside, so that no strife has a right to raise its head. In entreating the believers, therefore, to keep the unity of the spirit with the tie of *peace*, the *first* unity is the *one body* (Eph. 4:4). No different or dissenting *groups* are to be in this body, or it will disturb this peace. And has the experience of well nigh two millennia not shown us that, where this unity is not kept, there is strife and contention?

ONE BODY COMPOSED OF INDIVIDUALS

But there is another aspect of this figure used especially in Paul's earlier epistles, which we ourselves have never clearly distinguished. That is, a body composed of *many individual members* (Rom. 12:4, 5; 1 Cor. 12:12-27). This is referred to as the body of *Christ*, for each member is anointed by the Spirit, and all together they form a living organism which is to Christ what our body is to us, the medium through which we operate. This is referred to in Ephesians 1:23: the ecclesia which is His body, the complement of the One Who is completing the All in all; 4:12, 13: the upbuilding of the body of Christ, unto the end that we should all...; 4:16: the entire body, being articulated together...making for the growth...for the upbuilding of itself in love; 5:30: we are members of His body.

Even in this aspect we can see vast differences in the figure, according to its application. In Romans and Corinthians the point is *variety in unity*. One body, but many *members* with varying *functions*. In Ephesians 1:23 the body is the *complement* of Christ in His Headship of all. In 4:12, 13, 16 the picture is altogether different, for there the vital union serves for *growth*. In 5:30 the scene changes once again to the *nourishing*

and *cherishing* which we humans accord the physical frame.* Almost every occurrence of the figure of the "body" has a setting of its own, and we ought always to regard it in our expositions.

Let us always keep the many aspects of this figure distinct. Let us never confuse the body *of* Christ, and Christ as the Head of the body. The figures are very different, even if the word "body" is used in both. In one, Christ is one of the members of the body, the Head, and the rest is *subject* to Him. In the other *all* the members, including the eyes in the head, are Christ's body, through which He works, and which He cherishes.

THE SEX OF THE BODY

Among the most humiliating aspects of my early effort to clear up the question of the body and the bride was the attempt to fix the sex of the body. I read some most remarkable statements on both sides. I now see how utterly inane it all was. If Paul could be both father and mother of the Thessalonians (1 Thes. 2:7, 11), then the ecclesia could be a bride as well as a body. Reasoning is most illogical here. Yet it may help some if we give the facts of the case, and point out some of the pitfalls into which we fell before we knew how to handle figures of speech.

The word *body*, in Greek as well as in English, has no sex at all. It can be used of the body of Dorcas (Acts 9:40) who was a woman, as well as of a man. Of course, when it is specifically used of Christ, we might infer that it is the body of a male. But this is utterly beside the point, and worse than useless. Much was made, at one time, of the fact that the word *ekklêsia*, in Greek, is *feminine*, and this was used to prove that the body is *female*! From this was deduced that it was the bride of

* While the term "members" occurs 16 times in 1 Corinthians, we find it only twice in Ephesians, in 5:30 (as quoted before), and in 4:25 where "speaking the truth" is the point in view.

Christ! By similar mental processes we could prove that it has no males but is composed entirely of females!

One of our favorite methods was to bring in some other figure to show that the body is male. We thought that the "one new *man*," of course, must be identical with the body of Christ, hence this was a favorite proof until we found out that *anthrōpos*, though masculine, simply meant *human*, or *humanity*. The new humanity of the future will not be composed of males only. Neither is the present figurative one. That would exclude the sisters from participation in the grace of Christ!

The latest along this line seems to be based on Ephesians 4:12, 13, where we read of "the upbuilding of the body of Christ, unto the end that we should all attain to the unity of the faith and of the realization of the son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature of the complement of the Christ, that we may by no means still be minors..." Is it not evident that this passage deals with the *individuals* which compose the body, some of whom are minors and only some mature? The body at that time was evidently composed of both, and the gifts were given to make mature saints out of the minors. So that the phrase "mature *man*" is a *figure*, just as applicable to a woman as a man. It is not descriptive of the body as a whole, and cannot be used to determine its sex.

I understand that some go even further than this, in that they render the Greek word here (*anēr*) *husband*, and this is the status and goal of the church which is the body of Christ. This is so startling that it calls for investigation. But we must note first of all that the Greek of the Scriptures has no term for "husband." This word is simply *man*, that is, a man, not a child or a woman. How foolish it would be to translate it *husband* in all of its occurrences is evident from these samples: Jesus of Nazareth, a *husband* (Acts 2:22), I [Paul] am a *husband*, a Jew (Acts 22:3), or even this passage it-

self, unto a perfect *husband* (Eph. 4:13). The Greek usually says *own man* for *husband*. That is why we read of your *own husband* (Eph. 5:22). The word *husband* is only an idiomatic idiosyncrasy, and should not be made the basis of a new teaching such as this.

But why stop reasoning, once we have begun? If the body is a husband, it must have a wife. Who can this be? I suppose the bride, believing Israel, is the only one in view. But if our destiny is the heavens and theirs the earth, there is much ground to fear for our future felicity. They would be absent from each other most of the time! They would not be congenial. Their interests would be quite different. More than that, we would come into conflict with the real husband of the restored nation—Jehovah. They are not the bride of *Christ*, but of Jehovah. And we are not Jehovah. Our reasoning will not carry us that far. Into what absurdities do we fall when once we desert faith for fallible, foolish reasoning!

The rendering *husband* reminds us of a remarkable rendering in our Authorized Version, which the Revisers did not change. There we read that Paul had *espoused* the Corinthians to one *husband*! (2 Cor. 11:2). This may have been understandable when the Authorized Version was made, but now it would be a crime to betroth a pure virgin to a man who is already a husband. I am inclined to regard the word rendered *espoused* or *betrothed*, not as *married*, but *engaged* to be married, and I find that the best German versions so render it. This is the real figure. Not a marriage, but the condition of a virgin before marriage, calls for singleness and purity in a special way. Literally, Paul wished the Corinthians to be wholly and altogether for Christ. They could be this without literally becoming Israelites or taking a place in the Kingdom. We, members of the body, should be like this. Even if we should illustrate it by means of the marriage relation, that would not take us out of the

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body and put us in the bride. Figures are not facts.

The attempt to force the figure of the bride of Jehovah into one of Paul's epistles seems to me to be most unfortunate and reprehensible. A "proof" seems to be needed that the Corinthians were "Jewish," and since none can be found, one must be invented. Would we also lose our membership in the body of Christ and be joined to the bride of Jehovah if we should be *single* and *pure* toward Christ? This is all that the figure conveys.

ALIENS—FELLOW CITIZENS

In the preceding era, in flesh, the believers among the nations were aliens, having no civil rights, as it were, in the Kingdom which is Israel's (Eph. 2:12, 19), but at the crisis when the epistle was penned they became fellow-citizens, not, indeed, of Israel, but of the Jewish believers. Philippians takes up this figure and locates our citizenship above. It does not belong to the earth but to the heavens. Let us not confuse this figure with facts. Paul had a Roman citizenship in Tarsus (Acts 21:39; 22:28). There was no conflict between the two. One was for his body, the other for his spirit. In due course we will enjoy our celestial rights and drop our earthly ones.

GUESTS—MEMBERS OF THE FAMILY

In the era before Ephesians, the Uncircumcision had rich *spiritual* possessions, but could not enter the family circle of Israel on account of their *fleshly* disabilities. They could only take the place of a *guest* at Israel's board. This is a beautiful figure of the place of the nations when they participated in *Israel's* spiritual blessings. Now, however, our status is different. We have become members of God's family. We are not proselytes, or full-fledged Israelites, but, on another basis, not of the flesh, we are *bona fide* members of God's great family. A figure, not a fact. We do not need to desert

our families, a wife or children, in order to enter this relationship. We retain both (Eph. 2:12, 19).

THE WIFE AND THE ECCLESIA

The husband is head of the wife, even as Christ is Head of the ecclesia (Eph. 5:23). For years after I had fought myself free from the teaching that the church is the bride, I was very loath to consider any feminine figure for the ecclesia. Now I have no fear. The facts are clear. We must be *subject* to our Head. And why should not a wife learn from this subjection to find her true place in relation to her husband? If we go on and inflate this figure beyond its legitimate bounds, as we did with other figures, then there is cause for fear. Then we will come into conflict with the wife of Jehovah and of the Lambkin. But if we leave it without artificial additions, as it stands, all is well. There is not even any infringement on the fact that the husband is to love his wife as his *own* body—as Christ loves His ecclesia.

MINORS AND MATURE

Since “perfection” or maturity came with Paul’s latest revelations (1 Cor. 13:10), it is open to all believers to attain it. This figure has to do chiefly with the *disposition*. The Authorized Version rendering “in understanding be men” (1 Cor. 14:20), should read “in disposition become mature.” It was possible for some to whom the apostle Paul taught wisdom to be mature, because he divulged to them the secrets about to be revealed (1 Cor. 2:6, 7), yet the believers as a rule were immature minors, except in relation to the law. The mere revelation of the present secret administration does not guarantee the *attainment* of maturity, but *makes it possible*. Paul admonished and taught in order to present every man mature in Christ Jesus (Col. 1:28). The apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers were given to adjust the believers to the present era of

maturity in order that they should not remain minors, surging hither and thither and being carried about by every wind of teaching... (Eph. 4:11-14). Judging by this test, few have attained maturity yet. They are disposed to the playthings of childhood, religion, rites, self-righteousness, displays, power, and all that is not found in the cross of Christ. Those who are mature will find their disposition set forth in the Philippian letter (3:1-16).

ROOTED AND GROUNDED

Figures are by no means confined to the realm of which they speak. Some of the most magnificent figures in the Hebrew Scriptures represent the Lord as a wild beast. Here we have the saints pictured by a plant with roots sunk in the ground. The thoughts seem to be *sustenance* and *steadfastness*. A plant well-rooted lives and grows. Properly grounded, it stands sturdy and strong. Love is the soil in which we may thrive and stand. All *flesh* is grass, because it soon fades and vanishes. We are not in flesh but in spirit, and, with love as our garden bed, we will not emulate the grass, but grow and stand firm.

And now we pray that God will graciously grant the reader the spirit of patient and quiet investigation. It may be painful to forsake much that we have held dear, and which may have cost us much to gain and to maintain. But let us weigh these things before God. Let us take years to ponder our position, and to adjust ourselves if necessary to the divine message of the Ephesian epistle.

JOINT PARTAKERS OF THE PROMISE

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. (Eph. 2:12)

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. (Eph. 3:6, 7)

JOINT PARTAKERS

THE manward aspect of the mystery is the last to be elaborated (Eph. 2:11-22). The distinction between Israel and the nations was a matter of flesh, summarized in the rite of circumcision. This left them, even after they believed the evangel, ineligible to the citizenship of Israel. Thus believers among the nations were aliens, mere guests of the covenants, with no expectation or God of their own, *as far as flesh is concerned*. But now that they are joint allottees and members of a joint body, and all their blessings are spiritual, the fleshly disabilities vanish. As a result they are *fellow* citizens, and members of God's family and built *together* for God's dwelling place *in spirit* (Eph. 2:19-22).

It is of prime importance that we note the channel through which this grace flows. It is not that we are made "partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel" (Eph. 3:6 AV), but "*joint* partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus, *through the evangel of which I [Paul] became the dispenser*" (CV). The apostle is not so absurd as to inform the Ephesians, or any other believers to whom this epistle was sent, that he was a minister of

the gospel! He is not telling them that they are joint partakers through the evangel of the Circumcision, which was proclaimed by the twelve, for they never can be blessed on equal terms with Israel in her earthly Kingdom. He is rather telling them that this grace comes to them through *the* evangel which *he* had been preaching to them, which he called "my evangel" (Rom. 16:25), including the great truths of justification, conciliation, and glorification (Rom. chapters 3 to 8), which they had received, but which gave them a place subordinate to Israel in the flesh.

Hitherto they had a standing "in flesh," or on the physical plane. They were the Uncircumcision, and as such must take a lower place than the Circumcision. They were bidden to remember that time (Eph. 2:11, 12). This does not refer (as the translators evidently thought, judging by their rendering) to that time when they were unbelievers or "unsaved." It refers to the time when they were partakers, but not *joint* partakers. Then they were *guests of* (not *strangers to*) the covenants of promise. This they could not be before they believed. *From the physical standpoint* (not from the spiritual) they had no expectation, for Israel monopolized that. They even had to acknowledge the Deity as the God of Israel. If they should be physically present in Jerusalem, all of this would be painfully apparent to them. No matter how great their spiritual attainments, they dared not enter the temple precincts beyond the court allotted to them. They were emphatically not *joint* partakers.

But now that the secret is revealed, the Jew is not shut out of the holy places nor is the gentile kept at a distance, but both, *in spirit*, enter into the holiest of all. The fact that a Jew is not of the seed of Aaron cannot keep him out. Though the gentile is not of the seed of Israel, that does not bar his approach. Physical disabilities vanish before spiritual graces.

IN SPIRIT

We must not fail to emphasize the fact that every one of the three items of the mystery is modified by the introductory phrase, *in spirit*. All other translations I have ever seen join this with the preceding verb "revealed." They tell us that it was revealed "by the Spirit." There is little point to this, as that is the ordinary mode of revelation. Standing, as the word does, between two statements (Eph. 3:5, 6), either ending one or beginning another, it must be emphatic. Once we see how important it is as applied to the secret, we cannot but connect it with the mystery.

The nations are not joint allottees in flesh; they are not members of a joint body in flesh; they are not joint participants in flesh. It is only *in spirit* that all this is true. Physical preeminence belongs to Israel. Physically the nations can claim no equality. Fleshly blessings have no place in Ephesians. They are not involved in the secret. We are blessed with all *spiritual* blessings among the celestials, hence the threefold divisions of the secret are all dominated by the opening phrase: *in spirit*.

The nations are joint enjoyers of the allotment because they were sealed with the holy Spirit of promise, which was its earnest. They had a spiritual pledge of a spiritual portion (Eph. 1:13). They are in the joint body because of the purely spiritual grace of being vivified and roused and seated together with a faithful remnant of Israel (Eph. 2:5, 6). The believers among the nations, once the Uncircumcision as to flesh, kept at a distance from the material temple at Jerusalem, now have access, together with Pauline Jews, *in one spirit*, to the Father (Eph. 2:18).

PAUL'S EVANGEL

Now that we have seen that the secret consists in a change from a subordinate place to a position of equality we will be able to judge its effect on previous revelation.

As the allotment to Israel in the land will not brook any equality with the nations, an *entirely new allotment* is revealed, among the celestials. As the body of Christ was already in existence, a new body was unnecessary, but it was *modified into a joint body*. As the evangel Paul had preached was almost exclusively spiritual in its blessings it merely needed to *drop a few physical phases* to be the channel of the mystery.

As we are distinctly told that joint participation comes through the evangel Paul had been preaching, it is of the utmost importance that we give it a place in the administration of the mystery. *It continues in force*. The promise it brought is *not set aside*, but is definitely incorporated into this secret economy. There are only such minor modifications as the secret itself demands, due to the new destiny and the changed relations of the Jews and gentiles who come into its embrace.

In his itinerant ministry Paul deemed it necessary to speak to the Jews first (Acts 13:46). The priority of the Jew is recognized, even in his previous writings (Rom. 1:16; 2:10; 3:9). It is necessary to insist that this is no longer true, for it is contrary to the very essence of the secret now revealed. His previous teaching is modified by the addition of a celestial allotment and the withdrawal of all physical distinctions and blessings, for this is essential to the administration of the mystery.

Paul's previous proclamations, as presented in his Preparatory and Promise epistles, may be summed up in three words, Justification, Conciliation, and Glory. All three are the subjects of Romans, and its companion epistles, Corinthians and Galatians. The Thessalonian epistles also bring in the future glory in connection with the coming of our Lord. The revelation of the mystery does not involve a reconsideration of these great doctrines, but assumes them, amplifies them, glorifies them. As they were all given to Paul after his separation from

the rest, and in preparation for the secret economy about to be revealed, they are incorporated in it.

JUSTIFICATION

The grand doctrine of justification is not repeated in Ephesians, rather it is recognized. In the panoply provided for us in our conflict with the spiritual forces of wickedness among the celestials is the cuirass of righteousness (Eph. 6:14). True, this is composed of our actual conduct. But apart from the enjoyment of justification such conduct is impossible.

Philippians, the companion epistle of Ephesians, written to correct the conduct of those who come into the light of the mystery, clearly sets forth our connection with justification. There Paul eagerly grasps this grace. He had striven to attain to righteousness under the law. But now, "Things which were gain to me, these I have deemed a forfeit because of Christ. But, to be sure, I am also deeming all to be a forfeit because of the superiority of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, my Lord, because of Whom I forfeited all, and am deeming it to be refuse, that I should be gaining Christ, and may be found in Him, not having my righteousness, which is of law, but that which is *through the faith of Christ*, the righteousness which is from God for faith" (Phil. 3:7-9). Here we find the aged apostle, who doubtless apprehended the mystery as no one else ever did or could, resting on the firm foundation of justification by faith. It not only fails to conflict with the latest revelation, but is in fullest accord with it. It supplies the only basis on which it can be built.

THE CONCILIATION

Romans records the great truth that God's attitude toward the nations has changed since Israel refuses to convey His blessing to them. God is conciliated to all mankind. Those who receive this are reconciled (Rom. 5). Second Corinthians deals with the ministry of the

conciliation (2 Cor. 5:18-20). It is our point of contact with the world, for our feet are to be sandaled with the readiness of the evangel of peace (Eph. 6:15). It also is a secret, "the Mystery of the Gospel" (Rom. 16:25). The Colossians had accepted it and were reconciled (Col. 1:21). Eventually it will be enjoyed by the whole universe (Col. 1:20).

In Ephesians this truth is amplified to accord with the mystery. Those near (the Jews) and those far off (the gentiles) are reconciled with God in one body (2:16). To both He preaches "the evangel of peace" (2:17). Even the Israelite was shut out of the inner courts of the sanctuary and could not enter the temple building. Only the chief priest could enter the holiest of all. So that this evangel of peace, this conciliation, now has a message for them as well as for the nations. Both are brought nigh, in spirit, into the very Presence of the Father (2:18).

FUTURE GLORY

The rendering "who first trusted in Christ" (Eph. 1:12, AV) has practically eliminated all reference to the Lord's coming from the Ephesian epistle. Change "trust" to "expect" or even "hope," as the Revisers have it, and we have an important link which connects the mystery with the advent of our Lord as revealed in the Thessalonian epistles. It was the Circumcision who first trusted in Christ, not the nations. And of these Paul was among the last, not the first. But he and the believers among the nations expected the return of Christ before His coming to the earth. They had a prior expectancy. This is revealed in Thessalonians.

Peter and James and John show conclusively, by their epistles, that they never received the truth contained in Paul's writings. The advent of our Lord for them was just the same as the prophets had foretold, and our Lord had predicted, and as they themselves had proclaimed in the Acts. It was to be a glorious manifestation to His

people Israel, resulting in the millennial Kingdom. Such an expectation leaves no place for a celestial destiny such as Ephesians unfolds.

But those to whom Paul had gone with his evangel did not expect to wait until Messiah should come in glory to the Mount of Olives. Paul had said to them *by the word of the Lord*, that they would be assembled to Him (2 Thess. 2:1) when He shall be present in the air *before* His wrath is visited upon the earth (1 Thess. 1:10; 4:15-18; 5:9). That it was "by the word of the Lord" shows that it was one of those truths which enabled him to speak of "my evangel," and so is included in the third item of the mystery. This surely was a "promise in Christ Jesus, through the evangel" of which *he* became the dispenser (Eph. 3:6, 7).

The nations are now joint partakers of this promise (Eph. 3:6). But were they not joint partakers when Thessalonians was written? The key lies in the title used. It is the coming of the *Lord* (not Christ). Peter makes this distinction when speaking to Cornelius. "Of the word He dispatches to the sons of Israel, bringing the evangel of peace through Jesus *Christ* (*He is Lord* of all), *you* are aware." Here we find the nations connected with Him as *Lord*, just as in the prophets they are connected with Adonai, and not Jehovah. So we find that *Messiah*, or *Christ*, is connected with Israel. At that time the nations, in flesh, were *apart from Messiah*, or *Christ* (Eph. 2:12).

In keeping with this lower plane of blessing, the Thessalonians were told of the coming of the *Lord* to the air (not heaven). The fifteenth of first Corinthians adds to our knowledge of this event. It initiates us into the secret of the resurrection. In it we are told that our bodies will not only be *raised*, but *changed*—changed to a celestial body. Why is this? Philippians supplies the answer: Our realm has all along been in the heavens, out of which we are awaiting a Saviour also, the Lord,

Jesus Christ, Who will transfigure the body of our humiliation, to conform it to His body glorious. Resurrection, change, ascension, transfiguration, glory.

In describing his ministry the apostle compares himself with Moses. Moses put a veil on his face that the sons of Israel should not see the *consummation* of that which is vanishing. He did not hide the glory from them, but the fact that it was a fading glory. It changed from glory to gloom. Paul's ministry does not do this. It leads in the opposite direction. It is continually gathering new glory. "Now *we* all, with uncovered face, viewing the Lord's glory as in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as from the Lord, the spirit." (2 Cor. 3:18).

So it was with our precious expectation. It began in *grace*. All were to be snatched away, whether watching or drowsing (1 Thess. 5:10). It will change our bodies from soilish to celestial at the sound of His trump. But even celestial bodies vary in glory. There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars, for star excels star in glory (1 Cor. 15:41). Not content with mere celestial glory, we are to excel the very sun itself, even as the glorified Christ outshone its Syrian noonday brilliance when Paul first met Him on the Damascus road. We are to be transfigured into the body of His glory.

Some expositors do not believe there is any secret in this epistle at all because Paul assured the Ephesians, on his last visit to them, that he did not shrink from informing them of anything which is expedient (Acts 20:20). The last word is usually rendered "profitable" in this passage, though the Authorized Version itself often translates it "expedient" (John 11:50; 16:7; 18:14; 1 Cor. 6:12; 10:23; 2 Cor. 8:10; 12:1). This word is the key to the fact that the secret was withheld until after Paul's imprisonment and the setting aside of Israel. So long as God was still dealing with the nation

of His choice, he could reveal much of His grace to the nations in preparation for the transcendent revelations which were to follow. But it would have been most confusing and unwise, as well as unfair to Israel, to announce the new administration while the hope of the Kingdom was still held out to them. Paul could not reveal this secret when passing by Ephesus, and it is for this reason that he qualifies his statement by this expression; he did not inform them of everything, but everything *which is expedient*.

A little later, in the same discourse, he almost repeats himself. He did not shrink from informing them of the entire *counsel* of God (Acts 20:27). God's counsel is always distinctly limited to His public revelation. When the Pharisees and those learned in the law repudiated the counsel of God for themselves (Luke 7:30), they were concerned only with what was open to all. They could not reject a divine secret which had not been revealed. So Paul fully expounded so much as was due of God's counsel. The secret was not yet due. It was not yet true. In Acts Paul takes the believers up to it. In Ephesians he takes them through it.

This question resolves itself into a simple matter of faith. Shall we believe both Acts and Ephesians, or shall we pit one against the other and thus destroy both? Ephesians refers to a later time. There Paul says it is a secret. Faith immediately concludes that he did not make it known before. Faith then examines his words in Acts and finds that he did not claim to divulge the secret then, but was speaking of the truth which was applicable to that era.

In order to prepare the believers among the nations for the secret it was expedient that they be fully informed of God's dealings with Israel and the nations up to the time when the mystery itself could be made known. While Israel was apostatizing they lost their hold on God's counsel. They were being prepared for

dismissal. But the believers among the gentiles were taken into God's confidence as far as possible under the circumstances. This is what Paul speaks of on his last journey past Ephesus.

To sum up: The "mystery," or secret, of the present administration is not the revelation of "the one body," sometimes called "the mystical body" of Christ. It is concerned with this in one of its three aspects. It changes it from a body with members of various rank to a joint body with two groups of equal rank. After the revelation of the celestial allotment for those associated with Paul's ministry, the status of the nations, or gentiles, is changed from subordination to the Circumcision to full equality. Together, both groups of believers are raised to the highest place in the universe. "To Him be glory in the ecclesia and in Christ Jesus for all the generations of the eon of the eons! *Amen!*"

WHO RECEIVE THE MYSTERY?

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus...to all the saints ...who are pre-expectant in Christ. (Eph. 1:1, 12)
I do not cease giving thanks for you, making mention in my prayers that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may be giving you a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the realization of Him...for you to perceive...what the riches of the glory... (Eph. 1:16-18)

THE SECRET that, in spirit, the nations are to be *joint* allottees, and a *joint* body, and *joint* partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus, through the evangel of which Paul was the dispenser (Eph. 3:6) was not made public until after he was a prisoner at Rome. It is evident that it was neither sent to the twelve apostles nor received by them. The epistles of James, Peter, and John, although they may have been written afterward, do not acknowledge it at all. Peter may have hinted at it, since he found "some things" in Paul's epistles "hard to apprehend" (2 Pet. 3:16).

It is quite evident that those to whom Peter wrote did not receive the mystery. The salvation which they received was that which the prophets had foretold (1 Pet. 1:10). This was by no means a secret. They prophesied concerning the grace which was for them. They were a "chosen race," a "royal priesthood," a "holy nation" (1 Pet. 2:9; Ex. 19:4-6). Every one of these expressions is a direct negation of the truth of the mystery. In the present administration there is no chosen race. All races are on the same footing. There is no royal

priesthood. We need no priests, for we all have access to the Father. There is no holy nation. All nationalities are equally blessed in Christ.

Peter, in his epistles, is upholding the prior place of Israel over the other nations, in flesh, on the earth. Paul reveals the equality of the nations with them, in spirit, in the heavens. Not only Peter, but all of the Circumcision epistles, from Hebrews to Jude, and including Revelation, are saturated with Israel's superiority and base almost all blessing on a physical relationship to Messiah. Paul himself, in his earlier ministries, had "known Christ according to flesh" (2 Cor. 5:16). It was not until the conciliation was revealed that the physical was entirely removed from his ministry. In his epistles—not in Acts—we find his distinctive message.

Who, then, received the mystery? If it was not meant for all, what were the distinguishing characteristics of those to whom it came? As might be expected, the answer is plainly given by God Himself, but men have dimmed its clearness by a defective version. The third item of the mystery should read: "*in spirit* the nations are to be...*joint* partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus, through the evangel of which I became the dispenser..." It would be very trite, indeed, to say that this grace came through the evangel. It would be still more trite for Paul to inform the Ephesians that he was a minister of the gospel. But to assure them that this new favor is conveyed through *his evangel* (and not that of the twelve) is most instructive and needful.

It is not true that the nations are, or ever will be, *joint* partakers of the promises contained in the gospel which Peter preached. Almost every promise in that evangel, apart from personal pardon, is based on the very opposite. The believers among the nations cannot be incorporated in the holy nation, the chosen race, or the royal priesthood, for these are dependent on the presence of faithful gentiles for their existence. Priests

must have people in order to officiate. For some time the apostle Paul fulfilled this function in relation to the believing gentiles (Rom. 15:16), but, now that the nations are *joint* partakers, priesthood is impossible.

We have the choice of two distinct lines of ministry, one for the Circumcision and one for the Uncircumcision. To one the very thought of copartnership is repugnant. To the other it is the logical and necessary sequel. Only those who had received the evangel Paul proclaimed were prepared for the reception of this secret. To them it was sent and to no one else. There are many considerations which confirm this. Let us see if we cannot discover the points of contact between Paul's previous preaching and the secret as revealed in Ephesians.

There is much significance in the titles of our Lord. "Jesus Christ" lays the emphasis on His humiliation and physical relationship. "Christ Jesus" is the title of His exaltation. As Paul was first introduced to Him in glory, his ministry is associated with his celestial dignities rather than his rejection on earth. The fact that the promises of his evangel are in Christ Jesus, clearly cuts out the Circumcision evangel. The twelve apostles seldom used this title, for they were well aware of its significance. Until the Kingdom comes they must proclaim Jesus Christ, the lowly One, the suffering One, and now still the rejected One, so far as the Kingdom is concerned.

The refusal and increasing failure of the Kingdom proclamation was accompanied by the gradual introduction of Paul's evangel, which is based on His exaltation at God's right hand among the celestials, hence is associated with the title Christ Jesus. The significance of the title is in fullest accord, not only with Paul's preparatory evangel, but especially with its sequel, the secret now revealed. We do not wait for the Kingdom to be set up on earth. Our Head is already glorified in heaven. He is not despised or rejected there as He is on

earth. And our destiny is that celestial realm, where He is exalted as Christ Jesus.

The promise in Christ Jesus included such transcendent blessings as justification, reconciliation, and glorification, and all flow from unforced favor. It also includes a future salvation from coming indignation (Rom. 5:9), and our assembling to Him before the day of indignation should set in (2 Thess. 2:1; 1 Thess. 1:10; 4:13-18; 5:9). The Circumcision were never promised such immunity, but some of them will be carried through the time of trial. The hundred forty-four thousand will be protected in it.

Thus the expectation set before those who receive Paul's evangel is to be fulfilled prior to that held by the Circumcision. They expect the Lord to come to the air before He descends to Olivet with His holy ones. This is referred to in the twelfth verse of the first of Ephesians, where the Authorized Version reads, "That we should be to the praise of His glory who first trusted in Christ." The Revisers changed this to "who had before hoped in Christ." This is still ambiguous, but much nearer the truth. Rotherham is much the same, "we who had hoped beforehand in the Christ."

The statement is not true as it stands in these versions. It is contrary to the facts. Paul and those with him were by no means the first to trust in Christ. Peter and those with him trusted in the Messiah long before Paul was called. The change from "trust" to "hope" does not help much. It would be more in accord with the records to put Paul among the *last*. He was the last to see Christ after His resurrection (1 Cor. 15:8). Paul had not preceded the other apostles in either trust or hope. This cannot be the meaning of the passage.

The CONCORDANT LITERAL NEW TESTAMENT reads, "who are pre-expectant [in a state of prior expectancy] in the Christ" (Eph. 1:12). The sublinear has it THE *ones-HAVING-BEFORE-EXPECTED* IN THE ANOINTED. The

Greek verb form is *proēlpikotas*. It is in what is called the "perfect" tense. It does not denote a specific act, but the state or condition resulting from an act. The state of those associated with Paul was one of expectancy. As they looked for the fulfillment of it before the return of the Lord to rescue His people Israel, it was a prior expectancy, in the sense that it was to receive a prior fulfillment. The "before" refers to the future, not the past. They were to be snatched away in clouds, for meeting the Lord in the air before the Circumcision would meet Him on the earth.

To such as had received this prior expectancy the message now comes that, not only was their immediate expectation to be different from that foretold for Israel by the prophets and our Lord, but their subsequent destiny also was to be changed. They were not to come back to the earth to receive an allotment down here, after meeting the Lord in the air. The gentiles among them were not to take a subordinate place to the holy nation on the earth. Instead, they were to be joint enjoyers of the celestial allotment with a few of the Circumcision who also had received Paul's evangel and who had this prior expectation.

It is evident, then, that, speaking broadly, the mystery was received by the nations, the Uncircumcision, and that remnant among the Jews, the Circumcision, who had become associated with Paul. Most of the Circumcision did not receive it, but followed the fortunes of the Kingdom. They either died in faith, not having received the promises, or drew back and apostatized. Almost all gentile believers did receive it, for the Circumcision reached only a few, such as Cornelius and the Ethiopian eunuch, who became proselytes of Judaism. The division between the two classes was clearly marked by their future outlook. Those who held to the Kingdom expectation could not receive the mystery; those who held the prior expectation could not do otherwise.

The entire context confirms this interpretation. Not merely are our blessings to be among the celestials (Eph. 1:3), but Christ Himself is given the place preeminent. He is to be the Head in the heavens as well as on the earth (Eph. 1:10). And this exaltation of His is the basis of our blessing, just as His suzerainty of the earth is the source of Israel's sovereignty.

The full force and special significance of "who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will" (Eph. 1:11) is lost if we do not see its peculiar application to the Pauline Jewish remnant. They are certainly entitled to a place in the millennial earth. Paul deserves the best place in the earthly Kingdom. What excuse has God to offer for changing his allotment to heaven and thus causing him to forfeit his place in the Kingdom administration on earth? It is this, that He is operating the universe, not only in accord with His revealed counsel, as proclaimed hitherto, but according to the counsel of His will, which includes the secrets now made known.

Of course, none of the Israelitish remnant can complain. The change is such a marvelous promotion, such a tremendous advance, so much grander and more glorious than the allotment they lose, that they not only acquiesce but exult. They do not murmur in disappointment but rejoice in His appointment. There is much to admire in what we may call the arbitrary graciousness of God. He gives, not merely what is expected, but what accords with His high intention.

The Uncircumcision had no promises, no allotment in the land. Yet they also had received the spirit of promise, which was the earnest received by the Circumcision. They had received this spirit, under Paul's preaching, simply on hearing and believing, without baptism or repentance (Acts 2:38) or the laying on of hands (Acts 8:17). Since they had the same pledge, they are entitled to the same possessions, hence are joint allottees.

It follows, then, that the mystery was received by a special company who had been prepared for its message by Paul's previous epistles, or by His personal ministry in accord with them. It had no appeal to the twelve apostles, no place in their public proclamations or epistles. It does not even make contact with Paul's Kingdom ministry as detailed in the latter part of Acts, which clears the ground, but does not lay the foundation. This is laid in his epistles to the four ecclesias in Thessalonica, Galatia, Corinth and Rome. On these the mystery is erected.

To put the matter briefly, we may say, then, that the key to this question is contained in the *written* name *Paul*. Those who received his written ministry also received the mystery. Paul, separated from the rest by the spirit (Acts 13:2), learning nothing from them (Gal. 1:12; 2:9), receiving added revelations (2 Cor. 12:1-4, etc.), the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the nations (Eph. 3:1), the fullest expositor of the mystery of Christ (Eph. 3:4), and the only one who can enlighten us as to the present secret administration (Eph. 3:9)—the name PAUL is the open sesame to the treasures of transcendent truth.

The Circumcision, represented by Peter, found these things "hard to apprehend" (2 Pet. 3:16), not because they lacked intelligence or spiritual understanding, but because the mystery is outside the sphere where their own blessings are found. If it needs a special spiritual enduement (Eph. 1:17) for *us* to perceive these great truths, how difficult and well-nigh impossible is it for those beyond the bounds of its operation to get more than a glimpse of the greatest of all of God's revelations!

Paul knew this secret when he wrote to the Corinthians. It seems that he even made it known in a private way to those who were mature (1 Cor. 2:6-10). What else could he refer to when he says, "but we are speaking God's wisdom in a secret, which has been concealed,

which God designates beforehand, before the eons, for our glory"? He plainly predicts its public revelation in the twelfth and fourteenth chapters, when not merely individuals would be mature, but the era of maturity should arrive.

It is more than probable that he had received the revelation of it fourteen years before (2 Cor. 12:2), when he was snatched away to the third heaven. He knew this secret before he had penned any of his epistles. Hence they were written with it in mind, and with the object of preparing the readers for its reception. God was ordering all of Paul's acts and words in view of the impending deluge of grace, which could not come until the full apostasy of Israel. Then, after the apostle warns the Jews that the salvation of God is dispatched to the nations, and that they will hear (Acts 28:28), he commits the secret to writing.

While, therefore, we are plainly warned that some matters in these epistles are temporary and some would cease, the great controlling themes, like faith, expectation and love, abide. This is the point in the thirteenth of first Corinthians. Many have been imagining that the maturity there alluded to referred to the resurrection glory of the individual. It is concerned with the great administrative change which is impending. Faith and expectation will not engage us in the glory. They will be replaced by sight and fulfillment. Love alone lingers there. But now, in this secret economy, the signs of immaturity vanish, and the tokens of maturity abide.

The question may arise as to what authority there is for believing that the faith of early believers was modified by later revelations. Can we be sure that the saints themselves are the same, and that the teaching changed? This is evident from Ephesians itself. Teachers were specially given for the *adjusting* of the saints to the new revelation (Eph. 4:12). The Authorized Version rendering, "perfecting," contains only a part of the

thought. They themselves, however, have rendered it *mend, fit, and restore*, elsewhere. The saints needed more than perfecting. They needed to be adjusted to these later disclosures. Some doctrines were dropped and others took their place. All matters were modified by the change in administration.

The same adjustment is needed today, and should be the chief function of a teacher who knows the truth, for many believers have not only failed to understand the mystery, but they cling to that which has been discarded by it, and even to that which never had a place in any of Paul's writings or ministry. Indeed, the word "adjusting" seems quite inadequate for some, who are almost wholly occupied with matters pertaining to Israel and the twelve apostles. But this does not affect their right to the blessings brought by the mystery, though, of course, they cannot enjoy them until they recognize and appreciate their transcendent treasures.

The question is often asked: "If the Acts does not deal with the body of Christ, who are those of whom James speaks, when the subject of the nations comes up at the apostolic counsel (Acts 15:14)? Is not God visiting the nations now, to take out of them a people for His name?" James is speaking of the place accorded the nations in the prophets. He refers especially to the preaching of the Kingdom by Peter, who was the first to go beyond the Jewish pale in his proclamation. The passage that he quotes has a specific fulfillment at the time of the end, when the tabernacle of David is rebuilt. After the nations are almost destroyed by the judgments, the *rest* of them will seek the Lord.

James and the other leaders of the Circumcision had then no inkling of the mystery. The nations themselves took the place of subordination to Israel. For the time being, they occupied the position which would have remained theirs permanently if Israel had repented and the Kingdom had come. The Pauline believers come be-

fore us in Acts only as they are related to the Kingdom with which the book is concerned. Therefore, while most of the *persons* immediately concerned probably later became identified with the present grace, they were not so then. They may, even then, have been members of the body of Christ, but it was not then a joint body, which was not known until the close of the Acts activities.

At such times of transition, we should not ask what "class" each company is in, as though that were fixed and changeless. Paul himself was probably in three different "classes" during his career. At first, though called for special service in an entirely different sphere, he was identified with the Circumcision. Later, in his ministry among the nations, he was separated from the Circumcision and in the one body, in its transitional aspect. Later, he lost his standing in the flesh entirely, and becomes a member of the joint body. There is, to speak accurately, no "body class" now. All are in the "joint body." The "body class" existed only during Paul's pre-prison ministry, and was merged into the present. Now there is only one "class," for grace has unified all who believe, by the Spirit of God.

The mystery embraces all who belong to Christ today. Whether Jews or gentiles, Circumcision or Uncircumcision, now all who believe God, are the recipients of its far-flung favor. We are well aware that the gospel of the Circumcision is more often proclaimed than the conciliation. We may almost affirm that the mystery is never made known. But this is a day of *grace*. And it is not the way of grace to withhold what is not apprehended or appreciated. Men may proclaim pardon now, but God gives justification. They may insist on a new birth, but He makes a new creation. They get what He gives, not what they believe He is dispensing.

It is the fashion today to make God's gifts a matter of reward for service, or knowledge, or some fancied

superiority. We trust that all who read these lines will enter into an exultant understanding of the secret we are unfolding. But may He ever shield us from the assumption that a grasp of His truth will give us a place superior to our brethren! As individuals we will receive rewards. But there are no divisions in the body of Christ, even though some, because of special enlightenment, will claim a different or a higher destiny. We are all one! In Christ the most ignorant and useless believer, by grace, has access to all of the treasures which the most intelligent and useful can enjoy.

Knowledge puffs up. Love builds up. Almost every advance in the knowledge of God has resulted in an arrogant, self-assertive division among His saints. We witness the sad spectacle of the followers of Christ divided into hostile camps, each proclaiming its own superiority and relegating the rest to an inferior position. Each claims a monopoly of His grace, because of some fancied attainment in faith or faithfulness. Let no one imagine that a knowledge of the mystery is requisite in order to receive its benefits. If that were so, how few would ever find the place prepared for them by God!

We trust that many will be led into the enjoyment of this marvelous mystery, and open their heart's eyes to apprehend this, the highest revelation given by God to mortal man. It is not only the grandest in glory, but also the greatest in grace. It is our earnest prayer that such a knowledge will be suffused with love. It is our fervent petition that no one will arrogate its benefits to himself and exclude others because they have not yet apprehended its message. *All who believe now* "receive" the mystery in the most potent and precious sense of the word. They may never have heard of it, they may not understand it, they may even reject and oppose it. Yet it is theirs, and they will receive it in due time, as determined by the despotism of grace.

Other administrations call for conformity in faith or

practice as a condition of participation. The coming era of indignation will have different "classes" to accord with degrees of faithfulness. But in this economy of purest grace, where the only requirement is to admit a lack of all deserts, the most elementary faith is the key which opens the portal to all of God's treasures. Having Christ, we have all. We can enjoy more as we explore what is ours in Him, but we can do nothing to add to our possessions. Hence we are all in the same "class," we are one in Christ Jesus.

If, however, we press the present aspect of our question, and ask "Who receive the mystery?", that is, who accept it, and enjoy it, and exult in its transcendent glories, the Scriptures give us a very clear answer. Two qualifications are necessary, according to Paul's Corinthian letter. He made this secret known to those who were *mature* (1 Cor. 2:6, 7), and could not reveal it to the fleshly (1 Cor. 3:1). Spirituality, as well as "dispensational" maturity, is a necessary condition for the enjoyment of the mystery.

Maturity is manifested in the rejection of human wisdom and philosophy, and a recognition of the rudimentary nature of the Kingdom activities. Those who follow a philosophy of human origin, though dealing with the Scriptures, effectually shut themselves up where they cannot receive God's secret. And those who, like the Corinthians, are occupied with the manifestations of minority, the affairs of spiritual childhood, will find it impossible to enjoy the mystery in its plenitude and preciousness.

Carnality is chiefly manifested in sectarian divisions, and in walking as men in the flesh comport themselves. In my own experience I have found the futility of even trying to teach the mystery to anyone whose heart cleaves to the confusion of man-made divisions, or even claims to be a follower of Christ in a sense peculiar to his own party. Sectarianism effectually destroys the possibility

of delving into the mystery. It is an impervious coating which truth cannot penetrate. The secret is only for the unsectarian and spiritual.

Indeed, so marvelous is this mystery that Paul prayed for the believers of his day, who may not have been either immature or unspiritual, for *a special spirit of wisdom and revelation* for its realization (Eph. 1:17, 18). I join with Paul in praying for all who wish to enter into the enjoyment of this surpassing secret, the summit of divine knowledge, wisdom and love, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father glorious, may indeed enlighten the eyes of their hearts, that they perceive its call, its allotment and its power.