

The Mystery and the Covenants

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While it is of the utmost moment to remember that the death of Christ is the only possible basis of divine blessing in a world ruined by sin, yet has it pleased God, for the display of His divers perfections, to make many spheres, the centre of which will ever be found to be His Son, Christ the Lord. Our wisdom then is to distinguish these things that differ; that so we may grow thereby in holy familiarity with all the ways in which the various glory of Christ is developed unto the praise of our God. So led, we shall be kept, through His mercy and unerring word, from the many and opposing currents of human feeling which strongly tend to distract us from the paths of His calm and happy guidance. His glory steadily kept in view solves all difficulties, and is the best answer to all questions of the due place for Enoch, Abraham, and other elders, as compared with the church of the first-born. Our secret of blessing is more and more to learn and adore the grace of Him Who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will.

The Christian can understand and sympathise with the jealousy which takes fire at the idea of preaching any other gospel than that which an apostle preached; as if there could be salvation save by grace through faith, and that not of ourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast. But if we heard one quoting Gal. 1 to show that the very same thing was meant by the gospel there, by the gospel of the kingdom (Matt. 24: 14), by that which was preached to Zacharias (Luke 1: 19), to Abraham (Gal. 3: 8), to Israel in the wilderness (Heb. 4: 2), to Paul (1 Thess. 3: 6), to God's servants, the prophets (Rev. 10: 7), as well as by the everlasting gospel in Rev. 14: 6, we should feel that εὐαγγέλιον and εὐαγγελίζω were unscripturally limited through our conventional usage of the word "gospel" in English; and so the profit was missed of the distinct force in each of the applications of the term in the perfect word of God.

The truth of the case beyond question is, that the word "gospel" is used there in a far wider manner than is common with us, who confine it to the word of salvation through the faith of the Lord Jesus Christ. In that sense there can be none other; and such is the meaning in Gal., where the apostle utterly denies a different gospel which is not another. There can be none, save that of the grace of Christ Who gave Himself for our sins. To insist even on so apparently slight a matter as the circumcision of a Gentile believer, as well as on his faith of Christ, is in effect to frustrate the grace of God; and so Christ is dead in vain. Make circumcision, along with believing in Christ, to be the necessary means of the blessing, and Christ is become of no effect to you. You have slipped from the only tenure of the liberty wherewith Christ emancipates. You may have become far more "religious"; you may rival the Jews in observing days, and months, and times, and years; you may have fallen into no outward immorality; but you have done that which is infinitely worse, for you are severed from the root both of real holiness and of salvation by Christ. "Ye are fallen away from grace."

But, that the word εὐαγγέλιον* (gospel) and the corresponding verb are applied in scripture to many other glad tidings, besides those of salvation through the death and resurrection of the Saviour, is beyond a doubt to an unprejudiced mind. The scriptures, already referred to, set this at rest. It is true, on the other hand, that what is called the "promise" to Adam is really no such thing (Gen. 3: 15). It was part of the judgment on the serpent; and, so far as it can be said to be a promise, it was such to the Second, and not to the first, Adam. As to all the promises of God, in Him is the Yea, and through Him the Amen, to God for glory by us (2 Cor. 1),

* Another word which has been unduly restricted, in modern thought at least, is the word

"church." The simple force of the Greek word ἐκκλησία is "assembly" or "congregation," a word applied to many other assemblies beside the body of Christ. Thus the confused meeting of the Ephesians in Acts 19: 32 cannot mean the church of God, yet is it called ἡ ἐκκλησία so "the church in the wilderness" (Acts 7: 38) ought rather to have been "the congregation" there. It means unquestionably not the church of God, but the congregation of Israel, almost all of whose carcasses fell in the wilderness, and to whom He swore that they should not enter into His rest. Again it may be well to press that the Lord in Matt. 16 treats of His church as a thing yet future. "Upon this rock I will build my church." So far from being built, the foundation was not even laid. He had to die, to rise, and to be exalted on high, in order to be the corner-stone of this new and heavenly building. Further, one does not hesitate to say that the apostles, though designated to their office, were not yet in a position to be the foundation of the building, until the Lord had ascended. (Compare Eph. 2: 20, Eph. 3: 5, and Eph. 4: 8, 11.) When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive and gave gifts unto men . . . and he gave some, apostles, and some, prophets, etc. In their relations with Israel, the apostles had their appointment before; as the foundation of the church, they are the gifts of Jesus already ascended on high.

But the pre-evangelisation to Abram, that all the nations should be blessed in him, is a very different message from that which the Lord in the days of His flesh commissioned the twelve to preach, when He said, "Go not in the way of the Gentiles." Nor can the gospel of the grace of God, which now gathers Jew and Greek for heavenly glory, be rightly confounded with the everlasting gospel which the angel is by-and-by to preach, saying, "Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment is come." God will then send to the Gentile world the simple tidings of the bruised woman's Seed as the vanquisher of Satan, backed up by the message of judgment at the door. In fine, as a question of salvation, there can be but one gospel; while in another and in its place an important sense, repeatedly enunciated in God's word, there are many glad tidings, whose several bearings must be admitted, if we would be wise in the dispensations of God.

These observations may suitably enough precede our more immediate subject. For though one admits the connection, but not strict identity, of the Abrahamic covenant with the new covenant, which is to be made with the houses of Israel and Judah, it is impossible to show that the "mystery of Christ" (Eph. 3) is included in the oath to Abraham (Gen. 22). The difficulty arises from not seeing the proper distinctive position of the church, body and spouse of Christ, as now being formed and gathered by the Holy Ghost (sent down from heaven) into union with Christ the Head in the heavenly places.

To explain:-there are, besides types, many statements in the Old Testament which leave room for the church, and bear upon some of its circumstances and destiny, and thus are, or ought to be, full of light to us, now that its calling exists as a reality. On the other hand, the Holy Ghost is express in Eph. 3, not merely that the church did not exist, but that it was not even made known in other ages to the sons of men, as it is now revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets. From the beginning of the world this mystery of Christ was hid in God. The Seed of the woman was no secret, neither was the Son of Abraham, nor the Son of David. As such, Christ had been plainly revealed and looked for by faith. The blessings of the new covenant were in no way hidden, and it was clearly made known throughout the Psalms and the Prophets that the Messiah was to be forsaken of God, and all His waves to go over Him, that He was to be wounded for the transgressions and bruised for the iniquities of His people; that reconciliation was to be made, and everlasting righteousness brought in; that the sword was to awake against the Man Who is Jehovah's fellow; that He was to die, rise, and be seated at the right hand of Jehovah. Not all nor any of these things was the hidden mystery, wonderful and precious truths as they are. They had every one of them been unambiguously declared in the oracles which were

entrusted to God's ancient people. They knew that Messiah was to reign over a loved and loving people, judging the poor, saving the children of the needy, and breaking in pieces the oppressor. They learnt that not only would there be every eternal blessing for the righteous under His beneficent sway, but that the Spirit of God was to be poured out upon all flesh. They heard that, not the Jews only, but the nations blessed through them, will then praise Jehovah, and seek to Him Who is alike the Offspring and the Root of David.

"Behold, the days come, saith Jehovah, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch; and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he shall be called, Jehovah our righteousness" (Jer. 23: 5, 6). These truths are in no sense the mystery. From Moses to Malachi there was an unbroken stream of testimony to the mercy in store for the Jews, and also for the Gentiles, under the reign of the promised Messiah.

But, pursuing the same stream, it is equally evident that in all these arrangements of divine goodness connected with the earth, the Jews had secured to them, by the promise to Abraham, the first place. And that promise was irrevocable and inalienable. God would not repent of His gifts and calling; and certainly in the promises to Abraham it will scarcely be pretended that God gave no higher privileges to His friend than to the outside stranger Gentile. "In blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of heaven, and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." The nations are to be blessed in the Seed; but surely Gentiles are distinct from Abraham's seed, and the position of the latter superior to that of the former. But if it be so, they are not fellow-heirs and of the same body and joint-partakers of God's promise in Christ, whereof the Epistle to the Ephesians treats. It is another truth.

It seems incontestable then, that the privileges of the Abrahamic covenant are totally distinct from those involved in the mystery, the exact accomplishment of the one being in itself incompatible with the terms of the other. For if you make the nations to be blessed with the same privileges in all respects as the Jews, the marked honour and boasted prerogative of Abraham's seed is at once swept away as you reduce the standing of the favoured people down to that of the most distant Gentile. But if it be still allowed that for the seed of Abraham is reserved by their faithful God the most exalted seat on earth, above (though encircled by) the nations blessed in them (all blessed in Him Who condescended to take and secure these promises as the true Seed); then it is clear that the oft-repeated promise to Abraham, which distinguished and elevated his posterity above all nations, is entirely and manifestly different from the mystery hid in God, Whose eternal purpose it was, but revealed only when the Holy Spirit came down, consequent upon the exaltation of Christ in heaven.

In this mystery the distinctions disappear which the Abrahamic promises maintain. Jew and Gentile are now made one and the same body, the body of Christ. For earthly blessing this could not be, because the oath to Abraham, it need scarcely be said, was inviolable. But this was a new and heavenly mystery, which in not the slightest degree interfered with the ancient pledges; and thus Gentile distance and Jewish nearness alike are now eclipsed by the glory of Christ exalted on high, and gathering out of Jews and Gentiles a body for Himself. "By one Spirit were we all baptised into one body, whether Jews or Gentiles, whether bond or free."

Thus faith, eternal life, and saintship, though of the operation of the Holy Ghost, are not His baptism: those had been from the beginning; this was not until Pentecost. The disciples of Jehovah had as great, and even greater, privileges than any saints in previous ages; but they were not yet baptised of the Holy Ghost. Nay, even after His death and resurrection, they had not this blessing until the Lord

had ascended on high. Risen from the dead, the Lord breathes upon the disciples, and says "Receive ye the Holy Ghost." This appears to be the more abundant power of that life, life in resurrection, which He could now impart as the quickening Spirit.* But it was not yet the baptism of the Spirit. For immediately before His ascension we find Him with them, and commanding them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father (which, saith He, ye have heard of Me): for John truly baptised with water, but ye shall be baptised with the Holy Ghost not many days hence (Acts 1: 4, 5).

* Mark here the incidental testimony, so harmonious with the Gospel of John generally, to the Godhead of Jesus. In Genesis, Jehovah God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; but the Second man is Himself "out of heaven." Accordingly, while He is the last Adam, He is much more; He breathes on the disciples, as had been done with the first Adam of old.

They had long believed in God's Son; they had eternal life, as well as whatever accession of vital energy may be supposed to be conveyed by His breathing on them when He was determined to be the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead. That is to say, they had already as great, and (I think we may say) greater, privileges than any Old Testament saints had ever enjoyed; but they had not yet the promise of the Father. Jesus had to ascend on high, to go away, in order to send the other Advocate. The second chapter of Acts records this; and it is of great consequence to bear in mind, that while on the day of Pentecost many gifts of external testimony were imparted, this was neither all the blessing, nor the best blessing, which was given on that occasion by the glorified Lord. It was the Spirit in Person.

Beyond all doubt, what the Jews saw and heard then was a witness to the reality of His presence Who was given; but the powers of the world to come are not identical with the promise of the Father. The *χαρίσματα** and the *δωρεαί*† of the Holy Ghost are not to be confounded: the former expression refers to those manifestations of the Spirit given to each for the profit of all; while the latter implies the Holy Ghost Himself as given to be in the disciples according to Jehovah's promise in John 14: 16, 17. On that day began the accomplishment of the words their Master had spoken to them before He was taken up; they were then baptised with the Holy Ghost.

* Rom. 12: 6. 1 Cor. 1: 7; 1 Cor. 12: 4, 9, 28, 30, 31. 1 Tim. 4: 14, 2 Tim. 1: 6. 1 Peter 4: 10.

† Acts 2: 38; Acts 10: 45.

Turning to 1 Cor 12: 13, we see the consequence of this. "By one Spirit were we all baptised into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and were all made to drink of one Spirit." It is not therefore faith merely which introduces into this one body, the church; it is the baptism of the Spirit. No soul was ever quickened apart from the second Person, and enlightened otherwise than by the third Person, of the Trinity. But the Spirit, though He had from the beginning quickened souls and given faith, had not been sent down to baptise believers into one body before the day of Pentecost; and therefore this one body, the church, did not and could not exist, until the Spirit came personally to baptise. When the day of Pentecost was fully come, He was thus given, and not before; and therefore it is impossible, if we would adhere to scriptural facts and language, to date the church, as a body actually existing here below, previously to that day.

We have exactly the same warrant for believing that the baptism of the Spirit began as a fact with the day of Pentecost (Acts 1, 2), as we have for believing that the body of Christ commenced as a fact at the same epoch (1 Cor. 12). The word of God is precise as to both facts, treating the formation of the body as a thing contingent on His baptism; and therefore it is inconsistent, as well as incorrect, to admit

the one and deny the other. "There is one body and one Spirit." For the Holy Ghost, although He had always acted, and will ever act unto the end, was not yet given for this new and blessed work until Jesus was glorified (John 7). For Jesus is not the Lamb of God only: the same is He Who baptises with the Holy Ghost (John 1). And it is expressly revealed in 1 Cor. 12 that, though there are diversities of gifts, of ministries, and of operations, and though the manifestations of the Spirit are given to profit withal to each one (*i.e.* in the church), "all these worketh that one and the self-same Spirit, dividing to each man severally as He will. For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of the body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. For by one Spirit were we all baptised into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and were all made to drink of one Spirit" (1 Cor. 12: 12, 13). Is it not plain from thence, and from the entire context, that we are on ground totally new, which pre-existed nowhere? yea, which could not exist, until God made the crucified Jesus both Lord and Christ, and the Spirit was sent down as He never was until Jesus departed and sent Him?

Where, before Pentecost, do we see a body composed of Jewish and Gentile believers wherein the word of wisdom was given by the Spirit to one; to another, the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; to another, faith by the same Spirit; to another, the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; to another, the working of miracles; to another, prophecy; to another, discerning of spirits; to another, divers kinds of tongues; to another, the interpretation of tongues? Nowhere. But we can go much farther. We can say, not only that these characteristics, as they are here described, did not mark any previously traceable society, but that the "one body" was yet in the womb of the future, because the one Spirit had never baptised believers before the day of Pentecost. "For by one Spirit were we all baptised into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles," etc.

It is of all moment to say that it was by none of the ancient, and in this sense ordinary, operations of the Spirit that the one body was formed. From of old He had given faith and life, and all the holy and gracious paths of the elders were formed under His plastic hand. But the baptism of the Spirit was a new work, and without His baptism the one body could not be. It required His personal presence on earth; and this could only be when Jesus died, rose, and ascended. The baptism of the Spirit and the body of Christ are indissolubly bound together; for by Him it is that we were all baptised into one body. Will any one, who admits the foregoing, dispute in the face of the chapter, and especially of verses 12, 13, 18, 27, 28, that this body is the church? If not, the entire question is ceded. The body of Christ is the peculiar privilege of saints baptised of the Holy Ghost after the ascension of the Lord Jesus to heaven. They constitute the assembly of God, in total contrast with the congregation of Israel.

This truth is entirely confirmed by a comparison of the Epistles to the Ephesians and the Colossians, which so peculiarly and richly dwell, the latter upon the glory of Christ the Head, and the former upon the blessedness of His body. But I would not at this time do more than refer to Eph. 4: 7-16, and put the following questions: 1. Is it not beyond a doubt that the entire calling, framework, nature, walk, etc., of the body of Christ here detailed, are based upon the grand facts of accomplished redemption, of Christ's headship exercised from on high, and of the presence of the Holy Ghost here below? "Unto each one of us was given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. Wherefore He saith, when He ascended up on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts," etc. 2. Have we not inspired authority for counting upon the continuance of all those gifts which are needed for the perfecting of the saints etc., till we all come in the unity of faith, etc.? 3. Have we any scriptural warrant for supposing that this kind of ministry, viz. apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers, will be continued in millennial times? And if not, is it not a collateral proof that the then state of things is wholly changed. For the body of Christ will be completed at the coming again of the Lord

Jesus. In that day another work begins; and a different instrumentality, suitable to it, will be provided of God. Hence, though doubtless it belongs to future ages to realise in its fulness of blessing the oath of Jehovah to Abraham, yet is it evident, from the right scriptural answers to these questions, that the mystery of Christ is a glorious work of God *sui generis*, into which none was brought before the ascension, and none can be brought after the return, of our Lord Jesus Christ.

All can agree therefore, that God's promise to Abraham will operate first upon the houses of Judah and Israel, and afterwards upon all the families of the earth. It is the restitution of all things. But that which is not generally seen, even by some spiritual persons, is that between the rejection and the owning again of God's ancient people, an entirely novel edifice is being reared upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets (of the New Testament), a building of which Jesus Christ Himself, having reconciled to God Jew and Gentile in one body by the cross, Jesus risen and glorified in heaven is the foundation corner-stone.

Previously, as all admit, there had been scattered children of God, hidden units among the Israelites and the nations; but their faith did not in any way break their Jewish or Gentile connections. They lived and died separately, though they might be believing Jews or Gentiles. But now Jesus had died, not for that nation only, but that also He should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad (John 11: 51, 52). The blessings resulting from His death for that nation await the times and seasons fixed of God, when the Jews, or at least a believing remnant of them, shall say, Blessed is He that cometh in the name of Jehovah; and God shall send Jesus Christ, who was fore-appointed unto them. Meanwhile the heavens receive Him; and it is precisely during His session there that the gathering in one of God's scattered children goes on, founded as we have seen upon His death, and effected on earth by the Holy Ghost personally sent down.

This one body, we repeat, is the church or assembly of God, of which Christ is the Head and object, and of whose unity the presence of the Holy Ghost sent here below is the power. The life of the members of this body, no one can doubt, is hid with Christ in God; but those who possessed it were known as a manifested holy people, as separate (though in a different way) from both Jews and Gentiles, as the Jews themselves had been distinct from the Gentiles. This is the church parenthesis; and evidently it turns upon the baptism of the Holy Ghost come down from heaven, after Jesus had taken His seat as Head at God's right hand. Acts 1: 5 is decisive that even the disciples themselves were not baptised of the Holy Ghost until Pentecost; while 1 Cor. 12: 13 is equally decisive that what scripture calls the one body (*i.e.* the church) could not begin till the baptism of the Holy Ghost was a fact.

The Old Testament saints looked for a Saviour, and their faith was counted for righteousness; for God ordained Christ Jesus a mercy-seat through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the passing over of sins that are past in His forbearance. But never had been propounded to their faith that there was to be a body of Christ on earth composed of Jew and Gentile, all distinction being blotted out, and both built together for a habitation of God through the Spirit. Not only did they experience nothing of the sort in their day, but it was a secret which we know, on divine warranty, was from the beginning of the world hid in God. It was for the first time revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit, and in a pre-eminent way through Paul. Here it is that the post-apostolic Catholic church, the medieval Romanists, the Protestants, Lutheran or Reformed, the Moravians, the Puritans, and in short Christendom in general, have been profoundly in error.

God, by Isaiah, had predicted that upon the land of His people should come up thorns and briers, because all should be desolate until the Spirit be poured on them from on high, and the wilderness be a

fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest. Christians may perhaps apply the spirit of this passage to the Pentecostal effusion; and for an indisputable application of a similar prophecy they may appeal to the authority of the apostle Peter in Acts 2. But it will hardly be disputed by the readers of these remarks that both predictions are to have a far more minute and complete fulfilment, when judgment shall fall on the Gentiles, and the divine favour, no longer veiled from the seed of Abraham, after long hours of thick darkness, shall shine out. Then will God pour out His Spirit on all flesh, accompanied by literal wonders in the heavens and on the earth, and a mighty deliverance in Mount Zion and Jerusalem.

So, from Ezekiel 36, it is plain that when Israel are thus sprinkled with clean water and have God's Spirit put within them, they shall dwell in their land, the increase of their fields shall be multiplied, the waste cities shall be filled with men, the land that was desolate shall become like the garden of Eden, and the heathen, or Gentiles, shall know that their God is Jehovah when He is sanctified in Israel before their eyes. Evidently here are blessings which were not given at Pentecost nor since. But the apostle cites the prophet Joel to vindicate the wonderful effects of the presence of the Spirit from Jewish cavil, proving that such an outpouring was no more than God had promised should come to pass in the last days.

On the other hand, there were blessings at Pentecost which will not characterise the future millennial outpouring of the Spirit, as there were other dealings common to His working in men's souls since the fall, such as producing repentance and faith. For instance, it is nowhere said in the scripture that the Holy Ghost will, in the new age, baptise Jew and Gentile into one body. The Jews are to enjoy the most marked supremacy. "And many nations shall go and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of Jehovah, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths. For the law shall go forth out of Zion, and the word of Jehovah from Jerusalem In that day, saith Jehovah, will I assemble her that halteth, and I will gather her that is driven out, and her that I have afflicted; and I will make her that halted a remnant, and her that was cast far off a strong nation: and Jehovah shall reign over them in Mount Zion from henceforth, even for ever. And thou, O tower of the flock, the hill [Ophel] of the daughter of Zion, unto thee shall it come, yea the first dominion shall come, the kingdom to the daughter of Jerusalem" (Micah 4: 2, 6-8).

"Yea, many peoples and strong nations shall come to seek Jehovah of hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before Jehovah. Thus saith Jehovah of hosts, In those days it shall come to pass, that ten men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you; for we have heard that God is with you" (Zech. 8: 22, 23). See Isa. 60: 1-4; Jer. 3: 17, 18; Ezek. 39: 25-29.

The Psalms like the prophets abundantly show that the distinctions of Jew and Gentile, which have no place in the intermediate period (or church parenthesis), are to be renewed and owned of God once more here below. Now in the church they do not exist, because the church, though on earth during the process of its formation, is characteristically a heavenly body. So that the church of God (for such is the scriptural equivalent of the body of Christ) is not the common title of all saints from the commencement to the close of time, but the title proper to that special corporation begun at Pentecost, still perpetuated by the Holy Ghost Who was promised to abide with us for ever, and completed at the coming of the Lord, when also all other saints who have slept in Christ shall arise, bearing the image of the Heavenly Man.

For I see no reason to doubt that the Old Testament saints will be made perfect when we are caught up to meet the Lord in the air; but this in no way interferes with what was said immediately

before, that God has provided some better thing for us (Heb. 11). It certainly does not exclude a difference of glory between us and them. Again, that we sit down (Matt. 8) with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven is certain, but by no means inconsistent with the place of the church as the body and bride of Christ. For what is to hinder our enjoying other spheres of glory beside these which are specially our own? Retrospectively, as to our earthly course, it has been so: Heb. 11 descants on the faith, deeds, and sufferings of other saints, in days before ours, who were pilgrims and strangers on the earth; and Rom. 11 shows that we follow Israel, even as Israel again will follow us, as branches of the olive tree and the depository of God's witness and promises here below.

Again, the blessings of the new covenant the church enjoys, because we are one with Him Who is the Mediator, and the cup which He gave us to drink in remembrance of Him is the new covenant in His blood. Millennial Israel will enjoy the new covenant in a still plainer and more literal way; but proper heavenly glory with Christ is not reserved even for converted Israel in that day. To the church alone is Christ head over all things. It is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all. Thus all these privileges and responsibilities are clearly distinct from the place which, I fully believe, pertains emphatically to the saints now being called out of Jews and Gentiles-that of being baptised by one Spirit into one body, the body of Christ, as Eph. and Col. clearly prove.

Without doubt it does seem to evince an inadequate apprehension of the glorious person of Christ, to see nothing in Him more or higher than the mediation of the new covenant, and the accomplishment of promises, let them be ever so exalted. It is to leave out, not only what is supremely adorable in Him, but also that which is most precious in His grace toward the church. The entire Gospel of John, for instance, though doubtless recognising the various positions which He deigned to occupy, is devoted as a whole to the exhibition of what was infinitely greater, His personal dignity. So the Epistles of Paul (although, wherever the occasion required it, they vindicate the promises and covenants given to Abraham from the exclusively Israelitish limitation to which some in his day would have restricted them) dwell as their main topic upon those treasures of grace in God's special dealings with the church, which are far above and beyond the patriarchal covenant or promises, while, at the same time, the church or Christian enjoys privileges in virtue of these also.

Does this disparage Israel, or push from his place their great forefather Abraham, of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came? The answer is, that the church wears as her badge, "Henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we had known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we Him no more." Our connection is with a Christ Who died for us and rose again. We are one with Christ in heaven. On earth, in the days of His flesh, Christ must have said and did say, Go not into the way of the Gentiles. "But now, in Christ Jesus, ye who were aforetime far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ." It is the accomplishment of no promise spoken to Abraham to make in Christ of Jews and Gentiles one new man, and reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross. One doubts not what God promised before the world began (Eph. 3: 6, 11; 2 Tim. 1: 9; Titus 1: 2); but nothing of the sort was revealed in the Abrahamic promises, covenant or oath, which expressed no more than blessings here below.

The proper privileges of the church are rather the contrast, "in heavenly places" (Eph. 1: 3), though all, heavenly and earthly, be secured in Christ, around Whom all the divine counsels revolve. So also it is clear that Christ, and not the oath to Abraham, is the channel of salvation. And if Christ were, as He surely was, the Seed, the true Isaac, He is very much more. What shadows are there, what typical personages, whose rays do not converge on Him, from Whom they derived all their brightness? It was a place He condescended to take, and not that which was His immediately and intrinsically. Even as regards the church it is the same: we are Abraham's seed as the consequence of being Christ's.

"If ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Gal. 3: 29). To be the seed of Abraham is a privilege of a far lower order than those elsewhere disclosed (*e.g.* in the Epistle to the Ephesians) as characteristic of the church.

All agree that the finished work of redemption was the ground of still clearer testimony from the Holy Ghost. See Heb. 10. Yet let us not be mistaken. The work of Christ is finished for millennial Israel as much as for the church of the firstborn. But there is a vast difference indeed between their positions, though it be the same Jesus Who died for both, and the same Spirit Who appropriates the result of His death to each. Israel, like the church, will be born of the Spirit; yet one is for God's glory on earth, as the other is for His glory in heaven. The sovereign hand of God has so ordered; and who shall say Him, Nay?

These considerations sufficiently prove the fallacy of the notion that the accomplishment of Christ's work was the hidden part of the mystery referred to in Eph. 3, although that was clearly necessary as a preparation for it. The truth is, as we have seen, that "the mystery of Christ" was unrevealed, not partially but as a whole, till the Spirit was sent down from heaven by the risen and ascended Lord; and this, not merely to render an inward witness more clear and vivid than heretofore, but to be the vicar of Christ, the ever-abiding Paraclete (John 14: 16). To confound Him with the "strong consolation" of Heb. 6 is virtually, though not intentionally, to reduce the person of the Holy Ghost to the effect which He produces. The other Advocate is quite distinct from the consolation which He administers through enabling us to lay hold on the hope which entereth into that within the veil. And as Heb. 6 is referred to, it may be added, that the context is assuredly decisive, not only that the promise and the oath are distinguished by the Holy Ghost, but that they are the two immutable things whereon the "strong consolation" is based. "For when God made promise He sware Wherein God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it (or interposed) by an oath; that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie," etc. Nor can I conceive with what propriety God Himself, the pledger, could be called an immutable thing, in which it was impossible for God to lie; whereas the phrase is perfectly applicable to the promise and the oath.

Lastly, the admission of the Gentiles to certain dispensational privileges (Rom. 11) is most plain. But it likewise is so large and important a subject, that one must reserve it, if the Lord will, for a more extended inquiry than can be given at present.

W.K.