FAR ABOVE ALL

or

The Church of the One Body

Charles H. Welch

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by

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Dispensational Truth
The Apostle of the Reconciliation
The Testimony of the Lord's Prisoner
Parable, Miracle, and Sign
The Form of Sound Words
Just and the Justifier
In Heavenly Places
etc.

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CHAPTER 1

THE PRISON EPISTLES

United, yet divided.

It is assumed in these pages that the reader is acquainted with the teaching of the Scriptures set forth in the booklet entitled *United, Yet Divided, A Key to Holy Scripture.* In that booklet the dispensational boundary of the Church of the Mystery was seen to be, not Acts 2, but Acts 28. In other words, the 'Church' DID NOT BEGIN AT PENTECOST.

The prison ministry.

The peculiar ministry of the apostle Paul, 'for you Gentiles', does not commence until Israel AS A NATION is set aside. It is with the object of opening up, as God enables, the distinctive teaching of those epistles of Paul written from prison after Acts 28 that the following pages are written.

The prison epistles.

The prison epistles are five, namely, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon and 2 Timothy. In each of these epistles Paul either refers to his bonds or calls himself a prisoner. In the remainder of his epistles he writes as a freeman, promising to visit churches, and speaking of his future plans for missionary enterprise. These five prison epistles are complete in themselves, but the historic facts of the Gospels are necessarily assumed, and the great doctrinal basis of Romans is fundamental.

The change which is observed in the prison epistles is not so much one of doctrine, as of *destiny.* The election there is not so much unto salvation, as to *position.* A new realm is opened, a new calling is announced, a church with a new constitution is formed. It is this which is the subject of the 'Mystery', and the Church of the One Body occupies the 'Dispensation of the Mystery' (Eph. 3:9 R.V.)

It will be found that the epistle to the Ephesians lays the foundation of this new revelation. Doctrine, dispensation and practice are there most fully taught. Philippians follows with its added teaching of the prize which is attached to this high calling. Colossians supplements Ephesians, and should be studied with it as an inspired commentary. 2 Timothy applies the teaching of Philippians to these closing days when fellowship has well-nigh ceased and the fight is solitary and the course lonely.

Perhaps some readers will find the following arrangement of the Epistles helpful as a means of visualizing this interrelationship:

The Epistles of the Mystery.

A Ephesians —	Speaks of Christ as Head. Speaks of Church as Body. Speaks of Principalities and Powers. Speaks of Heavenly Places. Speaks of Dispensation of Mystery. Speaks of Christ's Fulness.
B Philippians —	Speaks of Striving for a Prize. Speaks of Suffering. Does not speak of any of the items mentioned above in Ephesians.
C Philemon—	From Slavery to Equality.
A Colossians —	Speaks of every item mentioned above in Ephesians.
B 2 Timothy —	Speaks of Striving for a Crown. Speaks of Enduring and Suffering. Does not speak of any of the items mentioned above in Ephesians and Colossians.

The teaching of these epistles.

It will be readily seen that the teaching of these epistles is twofold, viz. (1) Ephesians and Colossians give the grand foundation, where all is of grace, and (2) Philippians and 2 Timothy lead on to the building which each believer will erect upon that foundation. Philemon is personal and for our present

purpose need not be included, although it is necessary to complete the full series of Paul's epistles.

In (1) 'works' are entirely ruled out as having no place in the doctrine of grace, but in (2) the theme is focussed in the words, 'Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling'.

While 'access with boldness and confidence' is the atmosphere of Ephesians and Colossians, 'fear and trembling' ('not as though I had already attained') is the atmosphere of Philippians, while 'I know', 'I am persuaded', 'I have finished my course', 'Henceforth ... a crown', is the blessed atmosphere of 2 Timothy.

The teaching of Ephesians.

We do not feel that it would be wise to attempt in one small booklet the double line of teaching contained in these four epistles. We, however, propose, in the following pages, to give in the first place an outline of the teaching in Ephesians, and then turn to Colossians, in order to gain further light upon the truth already discovered. The next chapters, therefore, will take up some of the outstanding features of the dispensation of the mystery.

CHAPTER 2

BLESSINGS UNIQUE IN SPHERE, TIME AND CHARACTER.

Some unique items.

The opening verses of Ephesians contain a series of items which testify to the unique character of the revelation given and of the company of believers called together under its terms. The first item which we note is the *sphere* of blessing.

> 'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings IN THE HEAVENLIES in Christ'.

While the word translated ‘heavenlies’ occurs in other parts of Scripture, the phrase ‘in the heavenlies’ is peculiar to the epistle to the Ephesians. Of no other company of believers is it said that their sphere of blessing is ‘IN the super-heavenlies’.

Why SUPER-heavenlies?

The special sphere of blessing which belongs alone to the Church of the One Body is mentioned five times in this epistle, and a study of these occurrences will supply us with valuable information.

First of all, we translate the word ‘super-heavenlies’ in recognition of all that belongs to the word *epouraniois*; secondly, because the word is found in Ephesians 4:10, where ‘far above all heavens’ is *huperano panton ton ouranon*; and thirdly, because the information supplied by the five references demands some such translation.

Passing, therefore, to the second reference, we find, in Ephesians 1:20,21 that this sphere of blessing is:

(*a*) At the Father’s right hand.
(*b*) Far above all principality and power.

That this tremendous height is the destined sphere of the Church of the Mystery Ephesians 2:6 declares. There the believer is associated with the risen Christ, ‘made to sit together in the super-heavenlies in Christ Jesus’. Christ the Head and the Church His Body are blessed together THERE.

The next two references, Ephesians 3:10 and 6:12, show the super-heavenlies as the abode of principalities, powers and rulers. Be it noted that angels are not mentioned. Angels are heaven’s messengers. The Church of the One Body is blessed even above heaven’s nobility. Dominions and thrones are beneath it in its super-heavenly sphere.

While the word *epouraniois* is found in many passages in the New Testament, such as Hebrews 12:22: ‘The

heavenly Jerusalem', nowhere else than in the epistle to the Ephesians do we read the phrase *en tois epouraniois.* These words do not reveal the *nature* of our blessings — they are 'all spiritual' —but they reveal *where* they will be enjoyed — 'in the heavenlies', which, because of their uniqueness, and in order to recognise the 'far above' position intended by the phrase we translate 'in the super-heavenlies'.

A comparison.

It may be useful to place the opening words of the first epistle of Peter to the 'dispersion' (Israel) side by side with the opening words of the epistle to the elect company of the Gentiles (Author's translations):

The Church of the Mystery	**The Remnant of Israel**
PAUL	PETER
'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies (*en tois epouraniois*) in Christ: according as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world' (Eph. 1:3,4).	'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to His abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from among dead ones, unto an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven (*en ouranois*) for you' (1 Pet. 1:3,4).

The Third Sphere.

The Church of the Mystery is the only company that occupies this exalted position. The three spheres are indicated as follows:

(1)	The earth—	'The meek shall inherit the earth'.
(2)	The heavens —	'The inheritance reserved in heaven'
(3)	The super-heavenlies —	The Church of the One Body

While *epouraniois* is used outside Ephesians, no other company of believers is blessed IN these exalted regions as their sphere. The blessings of the Church of the One Body are not only 'heavenly', but 'up in heaven'.

‘Before’ and ‘Since’.

Not only is the sphere of blessing unique, but the *time* with which this purpose is connected is unique also. Speaking of the *kingdom*, the Lord said:

> ‘Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you FROM (or SINCE) the foundation of the world’ (Matt. 25:34).

The expression ‘BEFORE the foundation of the world’ occurs but three times, twice with reference to Christ Himself, and once with reference to the Church of the One Body:

> ‘Thou lovedst Me BEFORE the foundation of the world’ (John 17:24).
>
> ‘Christ, as a Lamb ... foreordained BEFORE the foundation of the world’ (1 Pet. 1:19,20).
>
> ‘According as He hath chosen us in Him BEFORE the foundation of the world’ (Eph. 1:4).

Here is, therefore, the second item which is unique. This time period is further explained in 2 Timothy 1:9:

> ‘Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus BEFORE the world began’.

Seeing that this booklet is intended for those who are mere beginners, we have eliminated, as far as is possible, references to the original, and alterations of the Authorized Versions. We would simply remark that the words ‘before the foundation of the world’ would be more accurately rendered ‘before the *overthrow* of the world’, referring to Genesis 1:1,2; and ‘before the world began’ is more literally rendered ‘before *age times*’. While these differences are important, we do not intend pressing them here, our point being equally maintained by the existing versions. The blessings concerning the Church of the One Body are related to a unique time period — *Before* the foundation of the world, and *Before* the world began.

All spiritual.

To conclude this first set of distinguishing features, it but remains to observe that these blessings have a peculiar character; they are ‘all spiritual’.

CHAPTER 3

NO MIDDLE WALL

The Jew first.

From the days of Abraham until the writing of the epistle to the Romans ‘The Jew first’ is a noticeable characteristic of God’s dealings with men.

During the earthly ministry of Christ He limited His ministry and that of His apostles to ‘the lost sheep of the house of Israel’. The Gentiles at that period were ‘dogs’ (*see* Matt. 7 and 15).

No Gentiles at Pentecost.

Peter, on the day of Pentecost, addressed his words to ‘Ye men of Judaea’, ‘Ye men of Israel’, ‘All the house of Israel’ (Acts 2:14,22,36). The God in Whose name he spoke to the people was ‘The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers’ (3:13). The Christ Peter preached was One Who had been raised from the dead ‘to sit on David’s throne’ (2:30), and Who had been sent to Israel ‘first’ (3:26) and Who had been ‘exalted a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance unto Israel’ (5:31).

Peter still a Jew in Acts 10.

It is manifestly impossible to believe by the testimony of the chief speaker himself that a single Gentile had been admitted to the Church inaugurated at Pentecost. When constrained by a vision from heaven to yield to the request of Cornelius, he meets the man with the words:

'Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation' (Acts 10:28).

Peter, therefore, knew nothing of a Church where Jew and Gentile were all one in Christ. Further, by his own confession he would have classed Cornelius with *dogs* and *swine* up to the time of the vision at Joppa.

'But God hath showed me that I should not call any man common or unclean' (10:28 with 14).

Peter, therefore, knew nothing of the tradition that the '*Church*'* *began at Pentecost.* Peter's attitude was not personal, it was the attitude of all believers at the time:

'They of the circumcision which believed were astonished ... because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost' (10:45).

words which absolutely forbid the idea that a single Gentile received the baptism of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost.

The Church at Jerusalem were equally ignorant of this tradition:

'When Peter was come up to Jerusalem, they that were of the circumcision contended with him, saying, Thou wentest in to men uncircumcised, and didst eat with them' (11:2,3).

Truly the Church of the One Body is hard to find in these chapters.

Finally, the testimony of 11:18,19 is conclusive. For the first time the Church at Jerusalem recognize the possibility of a Gentile being saved:

'Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life'.
'Now they which were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen ... preaching the word to none but unto the Jews only'.

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* The Church which is His Body- Ed.

The Jew first in Romans.

Space will not allow us to traverse the whole field of the Acts and the epistles of the period; it will suffice, however, to discover the dispensational position of Jewish and Gentile believers in the last epistle (Romans) written by Paul to Gentiles before the crisis in Acts 28:

In Romans 1:16 the gospel is to *the Jew first.*

In Romans 2:9 judgment is to *the Jew first.*

In Romans 2:10 blessing is to *the Jew first.*

In Romans 3:1,2 advantage and profit are admitted as pertaining to the Jew, although on the basis of sin there is no difference (3:9).

So tenaciously did the Jewish Church hold to their privileged position, that the apostle had to ask the question:

'Is He the God of the Jews only? Is He not also of the Gentiles?' (3:29).

In Romans 9:4,5 the advantages and privileges of the circumcision are detailed, every item of which is exclusive to Israel according to the flesh.

The wild olive.

In Romans 11:17-25 the position of Gentile believers dispensationally is set forth under the figure of an olive tree. Israel is the olive (Jer. 11:16,17), but 'some of the branches' had been broken off. The Gentile believers who 'stood by faith' were 'wild olive branches graffed in among them'. There was no such thing as perfect equality, however:

'Boast not against the branches. But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee'.

When we come to the epistle to the Ephesians, we find a completely different state of affairs.

The middle wall abolished.

'For He is our peace, Who hath made the both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition' (Eph. 2:14).

It will be of service if we make clear to every reader what 'the middle wall' really is. There has been discovered at Jerusalem a slab of stone bearing an inscription, the translation of which is somewhat as follows:

> *No one being a foreigner may enter within the enclosure around the holy place. Whoever is apprehended will himself be to blame for his death which will certainly follow.*

The reader will remember the violent attempt made by the Jews upon Paul, because they believed he had taken Trophimus, a Gentile, into the Court of Israel.

While that middle wall stood, the Jew was first. At the setting aside of Israel at Acts 28 the dispensational superiority of the favoured nation ceased. In the risen and ascended Christ a new sphere was found, no longer in the flesh, but in the spirit and in the super-heavenlies. The *Gentiles* 'in the flesh' were 'without hope' (Eph. 2:11,12). The *Jews* 'in the flesh' had the advantage (Rom. 9). In the Church of the One Body there is perfect equality (Eph. 3:6). In the new sphere all distinctions vanish, and one NEW MAN is created (Eph. 2:15).

The both one.

Notice the emphasis upon the unity here made:

'He is our peace, Who hath made THE BOTH ONE.
(Middle wall broken down).
(Jewish distinctive ordinances abolished).

To create in Himself of THE TWAIN ONE new man, so making peace:

And that He might reconcile THE BOTH unto God in ONE BODY
(Enmity slain).
(Peace preached).

Through Him we THE BOTH have access by one Spirit unto the Father' (Eph. 2:14-18).

Instead of being excluded from an earthly temple the Gentile believer is himself built together as a holy temple in

the Lord. Instead of the Jew having a prior place access now is for the both by one Spirit unto the Father.

The threefold equality.

The apostle sums up the new position in 3:6,7. Here the most important word is that which is expressed in English by ‘Co’ or ‘Joint’. It occurs three times:

> ‘That the Gentiles should be —
> (1) Joint heirs, and a
> (2) Joint body, and
> (3) Joint partakers of His promise in Christ by the gospel, whereof Paul was made a minister’.

Here is the charter of equality for every member of the One Body. It is higher and deeper than the covenant of Abraham. It goes beyond the inheritance either of the promised land, or the New Jerusalem. It is essentially linked with a new creation, a new man, a super-heavenly sphere, and a purpose antedating the foundation of the world.

This doctrine is a special revelation. It was a mystery hidden by God until the time came to make it known. That time was after Acts 28, and during Paul’s imprisonment at Rome. It is found with all teaching essential to it in the four prison epistles, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians and 2 Timothy, and these epistles become the standard whereby the applicability of other Scriptures is tested. For example, some Scriptures teach the observation of the Sabbath. Colossians 2:16 is the passage which decides this question for the member of the One Body. And so with all questions.

CHAPTER 4

THE DISPENSATION OF THE MYSTERY

Paul's dispensation.

The peculiar position of the Gentiles in the Church of the One Body is the subject, not of inference, but of revelation. The position is so unique that a dispensation is allotted to it, called 'The Dispensation of the grace of God to you-ward' (Eph. 3:2), and 'The Dispensation of the Mystery' (3:9 R.V.). This dispensation was committed to one chosen vessel, the apostle Paul:

> 'Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; and to make all men see what is the dispensation of the mystery, which since the ages has been hidden by God' (Eph. 3:8,9 Author's translation).

Two mysteries, linked yet distinct, are spoken of in this third chapter:

(1)	THE mystery	**a** Received by revelation. **b** By Paul alone. **c** Made known by Paul to all.
(2)	The mystery of CHRIST	*a* A progressive revelation. *b* Known now more fully than before. *c* Known by apostles and prophets and not by Paul alone.

When Paul expounded the fuller teaching which he had of the mystery of Christ, he preached 'the unsearchable riches of Christ', His present exaltation above principalities to the right hand of God, and His present Headship over all things to the Church which is His Body.

When Paul expounded the new revelation of the Mystery, he enlightened all men as to its constitution. This centred upon the threefold equality which we have noticed already, and was the subject of a mystery which till then was unknown. Colossians 1:25 supplements Ephesians 3 by saying that the dispensation received by Paul 'for you' 'FILLED UP the *Word of God*'.

At the setting aside of Israel a crisis was reached. The people did not repent. Christ did not return. The kingdom was not restored to Israel. The restitution of all things was postponed. The interval is occupied by the ministry of 'the mystery'. When that ministry has accomplished its purpose, God will resume His dealings where He left off. Israel will again come into prominence together with the city of Jerusalem. The present dispensation will then have ceased, and the Church which is His Body will have been completed.

CHAPTER 5

THE PRACTICE OF THE TRUTH

Doctrine and practice.

The epistle to the Ephesians is divided into two sections, the first being the doctrinal portion and a revelation from God, the second being the practical out-working of the revelation given.

The student of Scripture will know that the epistles of Paul abound in quotations from the Old Testament. It is in striking contrast with his earlier epistles that we notice the absence of quotation in the prison epistles. No direct quotation from the Old Testament is found in Ephesians until 4:8. It is obvious, therefore, that a system of teaching and a dispensational position so unique as that of the One Body must of necessity be accompanied by a practice that will differ in many essentials from that which was enjoined upon believers under other dispensations.

Walk worthy.

The fourth chapter opens the practical section of the Epistle, and its dominant note is WALK:

> 'I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye arc called'.

A walk that was right under the law cannot be fitting under grace. To come closer, a walk that harmonised with the doctrine of the Kingdom cannot equally harmonize with the doctrine of the Church. Closer still, a walk which was right for Gentile believers during the Acts while Israel remained and miraculous gifts abounded will not be a walk worthy of the super-heavenly calling. The 'Acts' with its Baptism, the 'Corinthians' with its Lord's Supper, are not necessarily guides for those who were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world.

Ephesians itself will tell us what to do, and rid us from undispensational doctrines and ordinances.

After speaking of the lowliness and the meekness which should ever characterize the recipients of such marvellous grace, the apostle proceeds to define their walk:

(1) *Ecclesiastically*, as a result of their Church position.
(2) *Morally*, as a result of doctrine.
(3) *Socially*, as a result of their relation to Christ.
(4) *Martially*, in connection with their super-heavenly calling.

The Unity of the Spirit — The walk ecclesiastically.

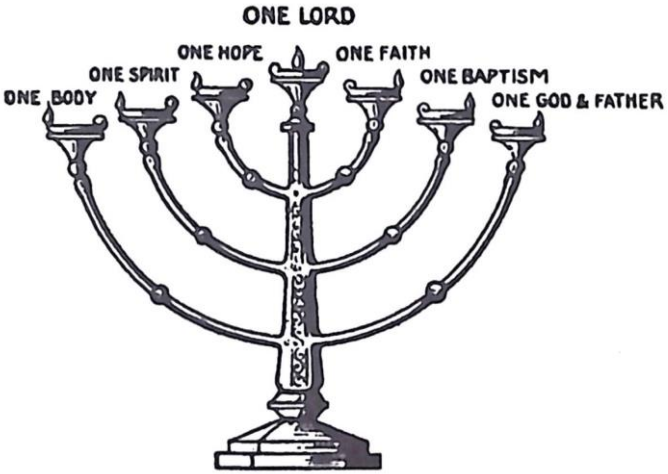
Let us look at these four aspects separately:

(1) ECCLESIASTICALLY.— While the churches of Christendom are sinking their differences and drawing nearer to a federation and a fusion, the Church of the One Body is directed to endeavour to guard as a sacred trust 'The unity of the Spirit in the bond of the peace'. All true practice springs out of doctrine. This unity and bond are the result of chapter 2. There we have 'the both in ONE BODY', 'ONE NEW MAN', 'access by ONE SPIRIT', 'so making peace'. This is the unity of the Spirit. Here is the bond of the peace. Here is no unity which man is called upon to make; IT is ALREADY MADE. We walk worthy of our calling when we are diligent to guard this sacred trust.

Should membership of the various sects and denominations militate against this supreme endeavour, the

member of the One Body can have no choice in the matter. Arguments as to open doors for service, for preaching the gospel, are vain. God does not depend upon our service or our preaching, but He *does* look for a walk that is worthy.

While the types of the Old Testament know nothing of the mystery, the unity of the Spirit may be likened to the seven-branched lampstand of the Tabernacle, the central shaft holding the other branches together and supplying them with oil.



Each member of this unity helps to explain its corresponding member. The '*One Body*' is balanced not only by '*One God*', but '*One God and Father*'. Turning back to chapter 2 we find that the 'One Body' as a whole has been reconciled to God, and that 'the both' by one Spirit have access to the FATHER.

The '*One Hope*', is echoed by the '*One Faith*'. The risen and ascended '*Lord*' stands central. He it is from Whom the whole Body derives nourishment and receives direction. The '*One Spirit*' is echoed by 'One *Baptism*'.

Those readers who have not realized the necessity of leaving behind the instructions concerning practice that pertain to previous dispensations will probably find cause for objection here. First of all, the parallelism leaves us with no alternative but to believe that that baptism which is the echo of the one Spirit will be baptism of the *Spirit* and not of water.

Secondly, if we agree that the baptism here is that of the Spirit, we are obliged to admit further that there is no room in this unity for the baptism in water, for the statement is that there is ONE baptism. If *one* baptism may mean two, *one* God may mean two. There may be two or more bodies or Spirits, and the Church of the One Body may entertain any number of hopes. The reader must not misunderstand this usage of the term 'baptism of the Spirit'. It has no reference to 'gifts' or 'Pentecost', but refers to the vital union of the believer with the death, resurrection and ascension of the Lord.

This seven-fold unity forbids addition or subtraction. And the member of the One Body who seeks to walk worthy will leave results with God.

Ministry of the Ascension.

Ecclesiastical practice involves ministry: the next item, therefore, of Ephesians 4 deals with this. One of the phases of the subject which is often omitted or blurred is that Christ has not only risen but ASCENDED. The Church of the One Body is essentially the Church of the ascended Christ. When Christ ascended up 'far above all heavens', He gave the following gifts:

(1)	APOSTLES	Inspired, and a foundation (2:20).
(2)	PROPHETS	
(3)	EVANGELISTS	Gifts succeeding to that of Apostles and Prophets.
(4)	PASTORS AND TEACHERS	

The apostles Peter, James, John and the rest were NOT given by the ascended Christ; they were appointed during His *earthly ministry.* Matthew 10 will supply their names. Paul, by his own testimony in 1 Corinthians 15:1-8, was not one of the 'twelve': he was an apostle of the new order. The apostles and prophets of this new order were a foundation ministry: 'And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets' (Eph. 2:20). They had no similar successors. All subsequent apostles and prophets are false and frauds. Their *true* successors are evangelists and teachers.

This we have confirmed in 2 Timothy. There the apostle, drawing near to the end of his course, gives his last message to Timothy, bidding him 'do the work of an EVANGELIST, make full proof of thy ministry' (4:5). Timothy further is told:

> 'The things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to TEACH others also' (2 Tim. 2:2).

The work of the apostles and prophets was for the perfecting of the saints. 'Perfecting' here means 'mending' or 'adjusting', and the setting aside of Israel demanded an inspired explanation. This was given. The evangelists and teachers are for the 'edifying of the Body of Christ'. There are no class distinctions, however, in this Church. The modern *Ecclesiastic* is absent. The ministry is that of one member serving another member, and all drawing from the One Head:

> 'From Whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying (building up) of itself in love' (4:16).

The Temple and the Body.

Here again practice answers to doctrine. God is building up a temple 'upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone'. This temple is spoken of as being 'fitly framed together' (2:21). The very same word is translated in 4:16 'fitly joined

together'. True ministry is along the lines of God's purpose. A ministry worthy of our calling seeks to build up the One Body — the practical echo of the heavenly and spiritual reality, the holy temple.

The perfect man and childhood.

Yet again, we must draw attention to another important echo of truth. In chapter 2 we read of the creation of 'ONE NEW MAN', and so in chapter 4 we read that the unity of the faith leads on to the 'perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of the Christ'; and immediately it is added, 'that we be no longer children'.

It will be remembered that the church at Corinth was in the period of childhood, that which was perfect not having then come (*see* 1 Cor. 13:8-13). The Church of the One Body is in contrast with this period, and consequently differs in many features. Associated with the 'childhood' condition of Corinthians were miraculous gifts (1 Cor. 12 to 14). These, however, were to *cease* and *vanish away*, as having no place in the *perfect* or full-grown manhood stage.

We do not intend by this that Ephesians is a development of Corinthians (far from it), but the parallel remains for our guidance. If we belong to a church which is a 'perfect man', then those things which belonged to the 'childhood' period of another church can be no guide for us.

The truth.

We now consider for a moment the walk that corresponds to the doctrine of the epistle. The apostle urges that the believer shall no longer walk as the benighted Gentile, saying:

> 'Ye have not so learned Christ; if so be that ye have heard Him, and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus' (Eph. 4:20,21).

This truth is the echo, once more, of chapter 2. There the believer is viewed as having been quickened, raised and seated with Christ, a member of a NEW MAN, and a new creation (2:5,6,15). Here he is taught the corresponding practice:

> 'That ye put off concerning the former conversation the OLD MAN, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts ... and that ye put on the NEW MAN, which after God is created in righteousness and holiness of truth. Wherefore putting away THE LIE, speak every man TRUTH' (4:22-25 Author's translation).

The glorious doctrine of chapter 2 is expanded point by point in the worthy walk of chapter 4.

The walk morally

(2) MORALLY.— The subject is continued in chapter 5. There the moral walk is threefold:

(a) Walk in love (2-7).
(b) Walk in light (8-14).
(c) Walk circumspectly (15,16).

These fifteen verses are replete with instruction for the present day. They are neglected to the shipwreck of faith. They are written that we who have *doctrinally* been awakened from the dead may do so *practically*, and they say to us:

> 'Awake, thou that sleepest, and ARISE FROM THE DEAD, and Christ shall give thee light'.

The walk socially

(3) SOCIALLY.— Human society is three-fold, and every member of the One Body will fill one or more of these relationships in life:

(a) Wives and Husbands.
(b) Children and Parents.
(c) Servants and Masters.

The Church of the One Body in its different aspects is in view, particularly in the relations between husband and wife. Wives submit, because the Church is subject unto Christ.

Husbands love, because Christ loved the Church, even to the extreme of giving Himself up for it.

Children cannot be regulated by that which would constrain adults. Children are not told to obey their parents because of grace, or because of the truth of the One Body, but because it is *right*! and for their guidance the Law is quoted. What a deal of anxiety and mismanagement would have been avoided had these simple words been taken as a guide.

Fathers are warned not to provoke their children to wrath, but to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Slaves even may bring the high doctrine of Ephesians 1 to 3 into their fettered service, and feel the chains grow easier as they render their obedience 'as unto Christ'. Masters also would temper the treatment of their slaves, remembering that they also had a Master in heaven.

What a home that must be where the pattern is Christ and His Church! What feelings of amity and goodwill would exist between employer and employed if only this truth were applied! Of course we do not dream for a moment of applying these things to the godless world; such rules are only possible to those who have received the calling.

Finally the fight

(4) MARTIALLY.— 'Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might' (Eph. 6:10). The words are repeated from 1:19, 'and what is the exceeding greatness of His power which He wrought in Christ'. Nothing short of the power of His resurrection can avail in the conflict with the principalities and powers, the spiritual wickednesses in the super-heavenlies.

This final section introduces the question of overcoming. It is the parallel with the faithful following of Caleb and Joshua, who went up into the land where their blessings were, and overcame the wickednesses that clung to their forfeited inheritance. We touch here, lightly, upon the great theme of

Philippians, which will be separately dealt with should occasion demand it. The link may be observed in 6:13, the words ‘having done all’ being the same as that rendered ‘work out’ in Philippians 2:12.

CHAPTER 6

THE EPISTLE TO THE COLOSSIANS

The two witnesses.

God has seen fit to confirm the testimony to the One Body under a double witness. The Epistle to the Ephesians was written by ‘Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ, by the will of God’, but Colossians was written by ‘Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ, by the will of God, and Timothy our brother’. The third verse of each epistle commences with thanksgiving to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. In Colossians the apostle alludes to the spiritual blessings in heavenly places, in the words:

> ‘The hope which is laid up for you in the heavens, which you heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel ... as you learned from Epaphras’ (1:5-7 Author's translation).

Walk worthy.

While the words ‘walk worthy’ do not come in Ephesians until we reach chapter 4, this is the next feature of Colossians 1: ‘that ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing’ (verse 10). In Ephesians 4 that ‘walk worthy’ leads on to ‘the knowledge of *the Son of God’*; and the ‘increase’ is ‘the increase of the Body’ (Eph. 4:13,16).

In Colossians we go further and look beyond this period of knowledge and increase to another, which is the goal of all the grace given us: ‘Increasing by’, or ‘up to’ (readings differ here) ‘the knowledge of God’ (verse 10).

The inheritance of the saints.

Ephesians dwells upon ‘the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints’ (Eph. 1:18). Colossians 1:12 gives the other aspect of the truth: ‘Giving thanks unto the Father, Who hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light’. Ephesians 1:18, therefore, must not be construed to teach that the believer has no inheritance personally. It merely emphasises the other and oft-forgotten side of the truth, that God Himself finds His inheritance in His redeemed people.

Accepted, delivered.

In Colossians 1:14 we read, ‘In whom we have redemption’. The same words come in Ephesians 1:7. Immediately before the words of Ephesians 1:7 we read, ‘Made us accepted in the BELOVED’. This is expanded in Colossians 1:

> ‘Who delivered us from the authority of darkness, and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of His LOVE ... in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreproveable in His sight’ (Col. 1:13-22 Author's translation).

Reconciliation.

The subject of reconciliation in Ephesians 2 is related to the great dispensational change that took place at the inauguration of the Church of the Mystery, and is limited to the Church, the words being ‘the both in one body’. Colossians still speaks of the mystery and those things which pertain to it — and, although the connection here is wider in its scope, it is really an expansion of Ephesians 2.

In the second case the change with which the reconciliation is connected is ‘translation out of the authority of darkness into the kingdom of God’s dear Son’. This kingdom is a foreshadowing of that time when, as Ephesians 1:10 indicates, Christ shall be Head over all things in heaven and in earth.

Thus, Ephesians 1 and 2 show:

Acceptance in the *Beloved.*

Redemption through *blood.*

Reconciliation of the *both.*

which in Colossians is repeated or amplified as:

Translation into the *kingdom.*
Reconciliation of all things in *heaven and earth.*

The comparison of the two epistles will prevent us from exceeding the inspired limits, and will teach us to interpret Ephesians 2 and Colossians 1 not universally, but in accord with the revelation of the mystery which is the centre and circumference of these epistles.

The Mystery.

In Ephesians 3 the apostle speaks of the present dispensation as a mystery, and claims that to himself alone had the revelation of this secret been given.

This truth and claim he supplements in Colossians 1. In both passages he uses the words, 'Whereof I was made a minister'. In Ephesians 3 he uses the expression in connection with that gospel which announced the glad tidings concerning the threefold fellowship of the One Body. Here in Colossians 1 the expression is used of the gospel which had as its object of ministry, 'the Church which is His Body' (Col 1:23-25). In both Epistles the apostle definitely claims to have received this special gospel and revelation in accordance with a 'dispensation', and in both cases that dispensation was 'for you Gentiles'.

A further word as to the place which the mystery occupies in the plan of the ages is given in Colossians 1:25. It 'fills up the Word of God'. It is the climax revelation. The hidden character of the mystery is repeated together with the fact that now, in this dispensation, the mystery is made known:

'The mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to His saints ... Christ in (among) you, the hope of glory' (Col. 1:26.27).

Dead, buried, and risen.

Colossians 2 and 3 are largely taken up with the doctrine and practical result of the union of the believer with the death, burial and resurrection of Christ. This subject is touched upon in the opening verses of Ephesians 2. Here it is expanded.

The section commences with the statement: 'Ye are complete in Him' (Col. 2:8-10). He is the Head both of the Church and of the Principalities and Powers. This emphasises the heavenly character of the Church. True circumcision, true baptism, true Sabbath-keeping are found in the Body — all else are 'shadows of things to come'.

Ordinances and days.

The member of the One Body is not called upon to observe any ordinance whatever, either those formerly imposed by God (Col. 2:11,12,16), or at the present time by man (Col. 2:20-23). To all these things the believer is dead and buried.

The Lord's Supper.

What is the relation of the Church of the Mystery to the observance of the Lord's Supper?

The Lord's Supper must not be lifted out of its context. It belongs to a dispensation of miracle. This can be seen by turning to the first epistle to the Corinthians. Every believer who partook of the Lord's Supper belonged to a church which was endued with miraculous gifts.

The Lord's Supper, moreover, is vitally connected with the new covenant. This is easily seen by turning to Matthew 26:26-30. Here we find the circumstances under which the Lord's Supper was instituted:

'And as they were eating (i.e., the Passover, see verses 17 and 19), Jesus took bread (i.e., a Passover loaf of unleavened bread), and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is My body. And He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; for this is My blood of the new testament (new covenant), which is shed for many for the remission of sins'.

1 Corinthians 5:7 tells us that Christ is the true passover Lamb, and consequently His death fulfilled the type, and the Lord's Supper fulfils the observance.

Israel and the New Covenant.

Is the new covenant a part of that mystery which had been hidden from ages and generations? Listen to the Prophet Jeremiah:

'At the same time [i.e., the latter times (30:24)], saith the LORD, will I be the God of all the families of ISRAEL, and they shall be My people ... Again I will build thee ... O virgin of ISRAEL ... O LORD, save Thy people, the remnant of ISRAEL. Behold, I will bring them from the north country, and gather them from the coasts of the earth ... a great company shall return thither ... for I am a Father to ISRAEL ... He that scattered ISRAEL will gather him, and keep him, as a shepherd doth his flock. For the LORD hath redeemed JACOB ...

'Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a NEW COVENANT with the HOUSE OF ISRAEL, and with the HOUSE OF JUDAH: not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt (hence connection of the new covenant with the Passover) ... But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the HOUSE OF ISRAEL ...

'If those ordinances (sun, moon, and stars) depart from before Me, saith the LORD, then the seed of ISRAEL also shall cease from being a NATION before Me for ever' (Jer. 31).

Under no system of true interpretation can the Church of the Mystery be understood as referred to here. Both the first and the second covenants are closely connected with the Passover (Exod. 12; Deut. 29:25). There is no covenant mentioned in Scripture which pertains to the One Body.

'Till He Come'.

In 1 Corinthians 11 the apostle told the Church that in the Lord's Supper they did 'show forth the Lord's death, till He come'. The hope of the Lord's return was before the Church of those days as an event that would happen during the lifetime of its members. The *coming* which was expected was the *parousia*, the personal presence of Christ on the earth.

This *parousia coming is* explained for us in Matthew 24, where it is closely associated with all the signs of the end of the age, and it takes place immediately *after* the great tribulation (Matt. 24:27-30). It was for this coming that the Thessalonians waited.

The apostle Paul in the last chapter of the Acts sums up the expectation in the words, 'The hope of Israel'. Now the hope of Israel is one thing, and the hope of the Church of the Mystery is another. Peter in Acts 3:19-21 defines the hope of Israel:

> 'Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; and He shall send Jesus Christ ... Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began (ages)'.

The Condition.

The coming of Christ is here seen to hinge upon the repentance of Israel. 'Repent ye therefore ... WHEN ... He shall send Jesus Christ'. This hope obtained when Paul wrote 1 Corinthians. It still held good when Paul reached Rome. It ceased to hold good when Israel as a nation was set aside.

The Hope.

The revelation given in the four prison epistles is something perfectly new. The hope of the Church is not so much the coming of the Lord to the earth, nor to the air, but of being manifested with Him in glory. This manifestation will

take place at the moment when Christ Himself is made manifest — apparently at the first of the series of movements that culminate in His *parousia* on earth. This takes us back to Colossians 3:3,4, where we read:

> 'Ye died, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ Who is our Life, shall be made manifest, then shall ye also be made manifest with Him in glory' (Author's translation).

Parallel with this is Titus 2:13:

> 'Looking for that blessed hope, and the manifestation of the glory of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ' (Author's translation).

The hope of Israel according to Acts 3 was connected with a purpose made known since the ages; whereas the Church of the Mystery is connected with a purpose which had been hidden since the ages and not made known until Israel as a nation had been set aside.

In the case of baptism, Ephesians 4 teaches that instead of two baptisms (as there were during the Acts) there is now only one. Colossians 2 and 3 indicate that all ordinances and observances, being but shadows (for no enlightened believer will call the Lord's Supper anything more than a memorial), find no place in the dispensation of the One Body.

The Epistles of the fulness.

As the revelation of the fulness of Christ increased, so the external shadows and types, sabbaths, fasts and feasts decreased. Those who have realised their completeness in Him have need of none. Christ and His Word are all-sufficient.

Enough space has been devoted to this comparison of Colossians with Ephesians to enable the interested reader to continue the happy and enlightening task. To the prayerful meditation of these two epistles we commend the reader.

We will conclude these pages with a brief summary.

CHAPTER 7

A SUMMARY

We have endeavoured to show in the foregoing chapters of this booklet that the Church of the One Body of Ephesians has a special:

(1) SPHERE…….Super-heavenly.
(2) TIME-PERIOD... Before the foundation of the world.
(3) MINISTRY……. Paul, and those with him.
(4) DISPENSATION…..That of the grace of God to the Gentiles.
(5) UNITY…….One of the Spirit, where the middle wall has been abolished.
(6) STATUS..... That of a perfect man.
(7) REVELATION... That of a mystery never till then made known.

These seven peculiar features, coupled with the seven items of the unity of the Spirit, separate this company of the redeemed from all others.

God alone knows who they are whom He has chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world. He can use this little booklet to bring some of such to a knowledge of His wondrous grace, and to build up those who have realized their calling. Such a theme cannot be popular, and the writer and publishers are under no illusions in that direction.

As fellow-members of that joint body, we seek to minister to other members. We can quote no more fitting verse in conclusion than that of the apostle when he spoke to the Ephesian church in person for the last time. Some readers may catch the peculiarly prophetic hint in the apostle's words when the more literal rendering is given:

'*And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to* THAT WORD OF HIS GRACE, *which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified*' (Acts 20:32).