

Present Truth

A magazine dedicated
to the restoration
of New Testament Christianity
in this generation

Sola Gratia Solely by Grace
Sola Christo Solely by Christ
Sola Fide Solely by Faith

SEPTEMBER 1974
Vol. 3, No. 4

Special Issue

JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH AND ESCHATOLOGY

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Present Truth

Present Truth is a magazine dedicated to the restoration of New Testament Christianity and committed to upholding the great Reformation principle of justification by faith.

Editor: Robert D. Brinsmead
Publishing Editor: Norman Jarnes

Publishers: A group of Christian scholars and businessmen without denominational sponsorship who have united to uphold the objective gospel amid the present deluge of religious subjectivism. Multitudes are being caught up in the popular and frantic effort to find satisfaction in some sort of religious experience. *Present Truth* is a voice in this barren wilderness of groveling internalism, a voice which boldly proclaims those great principles upon which the Reformation was founded—namely:

1. *Sola gratia.* God's saving activity outside of us in the person of Jesus Christ is the sole *ground* of our salvation.

2. *Solo Christo.* Christ's doing and dying on our behalf is the sole *basis* of our acceptance and continued fellowship with God.

3. *Sola fide.* The Holy Spirit's gift of faith through the hearing of this objective, historical gospel is the sole *means* whereby Christ's substitutionary life and death are imputed to us for justification unto life eternal. He who is thus justified by faith and filled with God's Spirit will glory only in Christ's cross and make God's saving work in Christ the central affirmation of his Christian witness. Though he will be careful to obey God and please Him in all things, he will continue to repent rather than glory in the feeble attainments of his own Spirit-filled life.

4. *Sola Scriptura.* The Bible and the Bible only is the Christian's objective and infallible rule of faith and practice, alone sufficient that he may "be established in the present truth" (2 Peter 1:12).

Present Truth is not only committed to the task of upholding these founding principles of the Reformation, but it believes that we today must allow these principles to call all that we do and all that we teach into question. These principles call all traditions into question and all statements about the truth into question—even the ones set forth in this magazine. Our vision is a new Reformation that will recover what the Reformers bequeathed us and complete the restoration they so nobly began.

To Contributors: Since truth is above the preferences and prejudices of any denomination, the editors welcome contributions from anyone and will judge them on their merit alone. If you wish a manuscript returned, please send a self-addressed, stamped envelope.

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Tweed Heads, N.S.W. 2485
Australia

Present Truth is supported solely by freewill offerings. Gifts are tax deductible in the U.S.A. Published by New Reformation Fellowship.

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Dedicated to the memory of John A. Slade (December 29, 1932 - April 21, 1974), the late chairman of The Australian Forum, whose commitment to a revival of the Reformation principle of justification by faith alone and whose vision for a new Reformation in this generation helped to launch the publication of this new magazine two years ago.

The editor wishes to acknowledge the special editorial assistance given by this beloved man. Much valuable research work for the article, "Justification by Faith and the Identity of Antichrist," was done by John, and the presentation therein is largely his. He now rests from his labors, but his works follow him (Rev. 14:13).

Editorial Introduction

It was two years ago that we promised our readers an issue on *eschatology*.¹ Since then we have received many letters inquiring about this promised issue.

We have not forgotten our promise. For two years *Present Truth* has been contending for the supremacy of the gospel (the Christ event) over preoccupation with subjective experience. For two years we have been hammering on the theme that *justification by faith* rather than the new life of the believer must become the central affirmation of the church.

Someone may then ask, "What does that have to do with eschatology?" To which we reply, "It has everything to do with eschatology." The prophetic portions of Scripture are inseparably bound to the evangelical. Too often eschatology is studied as if it were a field of separate interest. What is needed more than anything else is that we allow the gospel to determine our view of eschatology. If we do not allow the gospel or New Testament to determine our view of Old Testament prophecies, then we might as well admit that we have other things to preach about besides the gospel of Christ.

On last fall's itinerary through the United States, The Australian Forum was confronted by a theology student who frankly highlighted the great fallacy of separating the gospel and eschatology. "But surely," he said, "there must be other things to preach about besides the gospel." To which Professor Paxton replied, "Tell me of one subject from Genesis to the Revelation which you can preach about that does not deal, directly or indirectly, with the central theme of God's redemptive activity for His people." The young man was unable to give one instance.

When the disciples were anxious to know many things about Israel and the kingdom (Acts 1:6), Jesus told them that their sole preoccupation was to be the gospel (see Acts 1:7, 8). The apostle Paul also said, "For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified." 1 Cor. 2:2. Jesus and Paul were not telling us that when we know the gospel of Christ's cross, we will not need to know anything else. They were telling us that to know the gospel of Christ's cross is to know *everything* else.

Today's religious scene is preoccupied with things other than the gospel. The number one preoccupation is religious experience, the "gospel" of the Spirit-filled life of

the believer. (This takes many forms but has one basic motif.) The number two preoccupation seems to be future earthly blessings "along the lines of a Moslem paradise on the improved Damascus model." — J. E. Fison, *The Christian Hope* (London and New York: Longmans, Green & Co., 1954), p. 42. The burning passion to preach about our exciting religious experience now is very closely related to the burning passion to preach about an even more exciting experience in the coming earthly utopia.

The masthead of this magazine declares that the great truth of justification by faith alone must call all that we do and all that we teach into question. We must allow this great central article of the Reformation to call our views of eschatology into question. This is what we intend to do in this issue of *Present Truth*.

It would take an encyclopedia to discuss all the theories of the last things. We do not intend to attack this theory and that theory. It is better to light a candle than to curse the darkness. We simply want to uphold the gospel of Christ's righteousness in such a way that each reader can see if his own theories of eschatology square with it. Some have already written to us and reported that they have relinquished lifelong views on eschatology because those views were seen to be inconsistent before the clarifying principles of justification by faith. And this editor is not one who can write as if many people except him need to change their views. He also knows what it is to have deeply entrenched traditions uprooted and theological edifices come tumbling down before the onslaught of God's justification and its far-reaching principles. If the reader is faced with the challenge of abandoning the education of a lifetime for the claims of truth, then accept it joyfully, knowing that the only thing to suffer will be human pride. Be like the lover of truth who cried, "I would gladly exchange a thousand errors for one truth!"

At the outset we want to make it clear that the contention is not amillennialism versus premillennialism. Neither is it literal interpretation of prophecy versus spiritual interpretation of prophecy. The issue is: What is the gospel? What does it mean to be justified by faith? And will we allow this gospel to determine our view of eschatology?

In order to keep a unified, cogent theme in this special edition of *Present Truth*, the entire issue has been presented by the editor. We have included a bibliography at the end.
R.D.B.

¹The doctrine of the last things, i.e., the end of the world, Christ's coming, resurrection, judgment, etc.

Eschatology in the Light of the Gospel



The gospel must determine our view of eschatology. The reason is this: The gospel is the report about “the finished work of Christ.” And if “the finished work of Christ” is a reality rather than an empty slogan, it means that the last things are simply an unveiling of what has already been done. The Christian hope is nothing less than this and nothing more than this.

It is true that the church is presently deluged with a lot of apocalyptic literature on the end of the world, and in this all kinds of events are hoped for. But wherein those expected events are not an unveiling of what has already been done in Christ, they cannot properly be called the Christian hope.

How many books and sermons would have to be thrown into the fire as non-Christian if we would honestly and ruthlessly apply this gospel principle to eschatology! All sorts of fantastic ideas are entertained which have nothing to do with the gospel — that is to say, nothing to do with an unveiling of God’s finished work in Jesus Christ.

Promise and Fulfillment

God entered into a covenant with Abraham whereby He promised to do certain things for him and for his posterity. He renewed this covenant to Isaac, Jacob and Israel (Ex. 2:23, 24; 6:1-8; Ps. 105:8-10). He promised them a great inheritance. He promised to make His people great. He promised them wisdom. He promised them victory over their foes. He promised them peace. In short, He promised them all kinds of blessings (Deut. 28:1-13).

Many centuries later (about A.D. 50) a little company of Jews were huddled together on the Sabbath day in a strange city. They were still waiting for God to fulfill His promise (or promises) which He had made to their fathers. They were not a great people. They had no victory over their foes, for the iron heel of Rome was heavy upon them. They had no peace. They had no king and no kingdom. They had none of those things which their Scriptures promised God would do for them.

There were a couple of visitors in the synagogue that

The resurrection of Jesus from the dead was declared to be the fulfillment of what God had promised to Abraham, Israel and David.

day, apparently visitors from the home country who might bring them some encouraging news. When invited to speak, Paul stood up and said . . . (Are you listening? The news he brought to these people must have been the most astounding thing any congregation had ever heard. Listen!):

. . . we bring you the good news that what God promised to the fathers, this *He has fulfilled* to us their children by raising Jesus [from the dead] . . . Acts 13:32, 33, R.S.V.

The resurrection of Jesus from the dead was declared to be the fulfillment of what God had promised to Abraham, Israel and David. Here were these people still waiting for the fulfillment of what God had promised Israel, and the apostle came and told them the absolutely startling news that it had already been fulfilled.

Did God promise Israel victory over all her foes? The good news was that Jesus had obtained the victory for them. Did God promise He would give them peace . . . and wisdom? Jesus was their peace (Eph. 2:15) and their wisdom (1 Cor. 1:30). Did God promise to make Israel great? All power in heaven had been given to the King of the Jews, Jesus Christ. Did God promise them land — an inheritance? Christ had been resurrected and on their behalf had become “heir of the world” and “heir of all things.” Rom 4:13; Heb. 1:2. God, who fulfills His word in surprising ways, had fulfilled what He had promised to the fathers far abundantly above what any Jew had ever asked or thought.

If those Jews are to be considered backward for not realizing this about twenty years after Calvary, what might be said of Christians who are still waiting for God to fulfill His promises to Israel two thousand years later? Yes, Christians who say they meet once a week in honor of the resurrection are denying what God really did when He raised Jesus from the dead — namely, He fulfilled what He had promised to Israel. It took the Holy Spirit’s illumination to see it when Paul preached to the gathering at Antioch, and it takes the Holy Spirit’s illumination to see it now! The gift of Jesus and His resurrection from the dead was a *finished work*. In it God fulfilled what He had promised to the fathers. More than that, Christ was Heaven’s gift to the Gentiles — the whole human race. In Christ, God answered every true prayer, every worthy aspiration of every heart, as it is written, “Blessed be the

God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with *all* spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ . . .” Eph. 1:3.

Fulfillment Only in Christ

The blessings which God had promised to Israel were all given on condition — the condition of obedience:

Now therefore, if ye will obey My voice indeed, and keep My covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto Me above all people: for all the earth is Mine . . . Ex. 19:5.

And it shall come to pass, if thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to observe and to do all His commandments which I command thee this day, that the Lord thy God will set thee on high above all nations of the earth: and all these blessings shall come on thee, and overtake thee, if thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God. Deut. 28:1, 2.

And the Lord shall make thee the head, and not the tail; and thou shalt be above only, and thou shalt not be beneath; if that thou hearken unto the commandments of the Lord thy God, which I command thee this day, to observe and to do them . . . Deut. 28:13.

If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land . . . Isa. 1:19.

Blessed are they that keep judgment, and he that doeth righteousness at all times. Ps. 106:3.

At Sinai Israel had pledged obedience, saying, “All that the Lord hath spoken we will do.” Ex. 19:8. Israel could inherit *all* the covenant blessings only if she rendered obedience to *all* the commandments of God. But the history of the nation was one sad record of falling short of the mark. At best she fell far short of perfect obedience, and at worst she fell disgracefully short.

At last the mysterious voice was heard in heaven, “Lo, I come (in the volume of the Book it is written of Me,) to do Thy will, O God.” Heb. 10:7. This was the prophesied “Servant of Yahweh,” the One in whom all Israel was represented.¹ He was the Messenger of the covenant (Mal. 3:1), the Surety of the covenant (Heb. 7:22), the

¹In Isaiah 42, 44 and 53 the Servant of Yahweh is sometimes called Jacob (the nation of Israel), and other times it is clearly the person of Christ who is referred to. This shows us that Christ, as the suffering Servant, was representing and acting for Israel.

Mediator of the covenant (Heb. 9:15), the One given “for a covenant of the people.” Isa. 42:6. That is to say, He would not only be the One through whom God would fulfill all His promises to Israel, but *He would be the One through whom Israel could fulfill all her promises to God.*

We will say this again: God had entered into a covenant with Israel—He had covenanted to do certain things for them. On the other hand, the people had entered into covenant contract with God—they promised to do certain things for Him. Now we must see that Christ was not only the means of God’s fulfilling His word to Israel; He was the means of Israel’s fulfilling her contract to God.

Standing as “a covenant of the people,” Christ fulfilled the promise of the people, “All that the Lord hath spoken we will do.” This obedient, suffering Servant stood before God as Israel, to do for Israel—in Israel’s name and on Israel’s behalf—that which Israel was utterly unable to do. “Then said He, Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God.” Heb. 10:9. He did the will of God when it was the delight of His heart, His daily meat and drink. He did the will of God when that will was an exceedingly bitter cup. Though confronted by apparent failure, defeat and, at the end, the darkness and blackness of eternal night, He plodded on. He “became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.” Phil. 2:8. Finally, with the full consciousness that He had drunk the cup of suffering on behalf of His people and had finished His work, He addressed His Father, saying, “It is finished.” He had kept covenant faith. In Him Israel had carried out all that the law (the terms of the covenant) demanded. In His life Israel had kept all the precepts of the law, and in His death Israel had born all the curses of the law (Gal. 3:10-13).

In dying, Christ had fulfilled Israel’s promises to God. His great work accomplished, He rested in Joseph’s tomb, waiting for God to fulfill His side of the covenant. In raising Christ from the dead and giving Him power and glory, God fulfilled His covenant promise. To the Jews Paul positively declared “that what God promised to the fathers, this He has fulfilled to us their children by raising Jesus.” Acts 13:32, 33, R.S.V. In his great Pentecostal discourse the apostle Peter declared that God raised Christ from the dead and gave to Him “the *promise* of the Holy Ghost.” Acts 2:33. Just as Jesus *gave* a life of obedience to God on behalf of His people, so in His resurrection He *received* the promise of the Holy Spirit on behalf of His people. So Peter declared to Israel, “. . . the promise is to you and to your children and to all that are far off, every one whom the Lord our God calls to Him.” Acts 2:39, R.S.V.

Thus, Christ is the Mediator of the covenant. Through Him and in Him Israel fulfilled all her promises to God. All this was completed by Christ’s death on the cross. Also, through Him and in Him God fulfilled all His promises to Israel. All this was accomplished in Christ’s resurrection from the dead.

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Shadow and Substance

By now it should be very clear that *the substance of every promise was Jesus Christ*. When God promised Abraham a seed, He was really promising Him Jesus Christ (Gal. 3:16). When He promised peace, wisdom and power, He was really promising Jesus Christ (see Acts 3:25, 26).

We say again, Beginning with Abraham, Christ was promised to the Hebrew nation, and it was their great privilege and responsibility to keep that hope alive in the waiting centuries.

Four hundred thirty years after God confirmed the promise of Christ to Abraham, another great event took place. God gave the Law to Israel. Since it was given through Moses, the Law is sometimes simply called "Moses." Moses (or the Law) embraced the whole corpus of instruction given for the existence and governance of Israel as God's special nation. It included laws that were ceremonial, judicial, hygienic and moral.

It is important that we correctly relate these two great events—the giving of the promise to Abraham and the giving of the Law to Moses. St. Paul says that the Law (Moses) added nothing to the promise (Gal. 3:17). The Law was given "because of transgressions, till the Seed should come." Gal. 3:19. Without the Law, Israel would have degenerated into a pagan state and lost the hope of Christ's coming. The Law was therefore necessary to help Israel nurture and keep alive the hope of the coming Messiah. How did the Law do that? In two ways:

1. Its stern, unbending moral requirements served as a constant reminder of sin and kept God's people sensitive to their need of redemption.

2. Its ceremonial aspects foreshadowed that needed redemption. For example, the Passover not only commemorated Israel's redemption from Egypt, but it pointed forward to the real redemption by the blood of Jesus Christ. Every offering at the tabernacle served to be a shadow of the one great offering of the body of Christ (Heb. 10:10-14). The giving of manna, the water from the rock, the healing by the brazen serpent and many other things which took place under Moses were a type of the coming Seed. They were a "shadow of good things to come." Heb. 10:1. These shadows and types of the coming Seed were what the writer to the Hebrews calls the "old covenant." The things under the old covenant could not be the reality or the fulfillment of the Abrahamic covenant. Aaron, the high priest, was only a shadow of Christ. The earthly tabernacle was only a figure of the heavenly reality (Heb. 8:1-5). The land of Canaan was only a type of that "better country, that is, an heavenly," which the worthies looked forward to (Heb. 11:16). Jerusalem and the kingdom of David were at best only a shadow of the "city which hath foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God." Heb 11:10.

physical descent, for Abraham was plainly told, "... in thy Seed [Christ—Gal. 3:16] shall all the families of the earth be blessed." Gen. 28:14; cf. 12:3. "... Gentiles ... being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise ... should be fellow heirs, and of the *same body*, and partakers of His promise in Christ by the gospel ..." Eph. 2:11, 12; 3:6. Thus, Paul declared to the Corinthians, "... all the promises of God find their Yes in Him." 2 Cor. 1:20, R.S.V. That is to say, when God raised Christ from the dead, He fulfilled not only His promises to Israel but every promise which He ever made to the human family since time began. In Christ He has blessed us with every conceivable blessing (Eph. 1:3).

Unless we can take out our pen and write "Fulfilled" across every one of the three thousand promises of the Old Testament, we deny "*the finished work of Jesus Christ*."

We say again: That which God gave to Israel in the Law and under the Law—tabernacle, Canaan, Jerusalem, kings, etc.—was the old covenant, and at best it could only point to something better. It was not the reality of what God promised Abraham. The Jews in Christ's day tried to turn the shadow into the reality, and not a few are still trying to do this today. Since the Seed has come, how can we go back to a temple ritual, blood of animals, Palestine or old Jerusalem as if these things were any part of reality? Now that the full light of the gospel has come, we must see that real circumcision is of the heart (Rom. 2:29), the real Jerusalem is "above" (Gal. 4:26), the real Mount Zion and the real Jerusalem are heavenly (Heb. 12:22), the real tabernacle is in heaven (Heb. 8:1-5), the real country promised to Abraham is not any part of "this present evil world" (Heb. 11:10-16), and the real children of Abraham (Jews) are those who believe in Jesus Christ (Gal. 3:29; Rom. 2:28).

Summarizing: The promise of Christ was given to Abraham. The Law (or old covenant) was given to help Israel keep the hope of Christ's coming alive. The Law was not the fulfillment of the promise but a shadow that pointed forward to its realization. To take anything of the Law (including Jerusalem and the land of Palestine) and call that the promise made to Abraham is to utterly miss the purpose of the Law.

When Christ finally came, the dispensation of the Law (Moses, or the old covenant) had fulfilled its function in history. The blood of animals, feast days, the Jewish temple, Jerusalem and the "holy land" had fulfilled their function, and any return to those things now is a denial of the reality brought to us by Jesus Christ. It is to exchange substance for shadows.

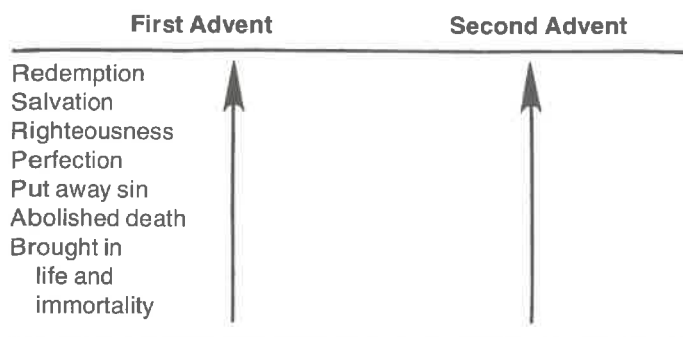
Correctly Relating the First and Second Advents

Correctly relating the gospel and eschatology means correctly relating the first and second advents of Jesus Christ. When we place these two advents side by side, we discover a remarkable parallelism. Namely:

First Advent. At His first coming Jesus "visited and redeemed His people." Luke 1:68. He saved His people from their sins (Matt. 1:21). He brought in everlasting righteousness (Dan. 9:24) and by one offering perfected forever them that are sanctified (Heb. 10:14). He put away sin (Heb. 9:26), "abolished death, and . . . brought life and immortality to light." 2 Tim. 1:10. Thus, through His redemptive act in Christ, God has given to His people redemption, salvation, righteousness and perfection. In Christ He has already done away with sin, abolished death and given to His people the gift of life and immortality. All this is plainly stated by the apostle's proclamation of the gospel.

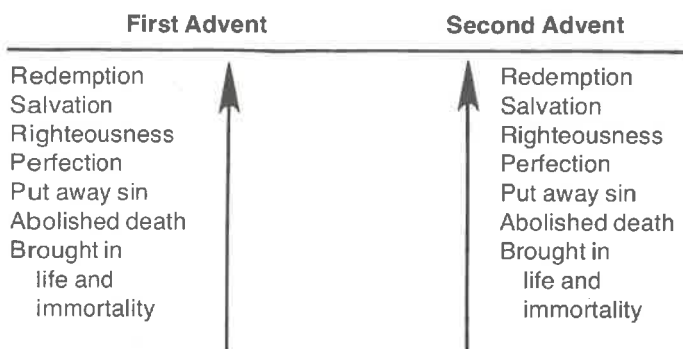
That which God gave to Israel in the Law and under the Law — tabernacle, Canaan, Jerusalem, kings, etc. — was the old covenant, and at best it could only point to something better.





Finished Work—All Blessings Given
in Christ

Second Advent. Now let us look at what the apostles tell us about the second advent. It is called the day of *redemption* (Eph. 4:30; see also Rom. 8:23). “. . . so Christ . . . will appear a second time . . . to bring *salvation* to those who are watching for Him.” Heb. 9:28, N.E.B. Here Paul and all who love His appearing will receive their “crown of *righteousness*.” 2 Tim. 4:8; cf. Gal. 5:5. Here believers of past ages together with those of the present age will be made *perfect* (Heb. 11:40; Phil. 3:10, 12). When Christ comes, God’s people will *put off the sinful, mortal state, the last enemy – death – will be swallowed up in victory*, and God’s people will put on *immortality* (1 Cor. 15:50-56). All this will take place when “Christ, who is our *life*, shall appear.” Col. 3:4. Thus, the very things that Christ did for us at His first advent (gospel) are said to be brought to us at the second advent (eschatology).



The eschaton is simply an unveiling of what has already taken place. This unveiling will overtake the unbelieving world as a thief in the night. It will come to them as an overwhelming surprise. But it will be no thief in the night and no overwhelming surprise to the children of light (1 Thess. 5:1-4). They know that these things have already taken place in Jesus Christ. They have already had all these blessings reserved for them in heaven in the person of Christ (1 Peter 1:4). And by the gift of the Spirit they have an earnest of their inheritance, a taste of the powers of the world to come (Eph. 1:13, 14; Heb. 6:5). We may even say that eschatology has already been fulfilled in Jesus Christ. Says George Eldon Ladd in an excellent article published in *Christianity Today* (Nov. 19, 1965):

The very things that Christ did for us at His first advent (gospel) are said to be brought to us at the second advent (eschatology).

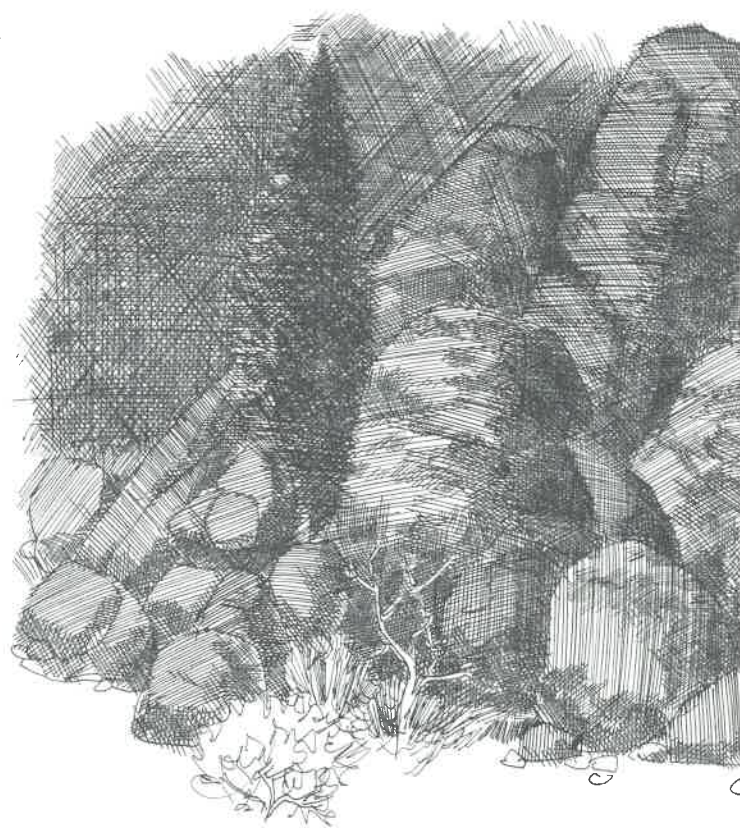
The early Christians proclaimed “in Jesus the resurrection from the dead” (Acts 4:2). It is strange that this message should have so grievously annoyed the Sadducees, for this doctrine was also held by the Pharisees. The point is that the early Christians were not teaching a doctrine of resurrection at the end of the age; they were proclaiming an eschatological deed that had occurred in history. They were not teaching a truth; they were witnessing to an event. The same idea is expounded more clearly by Paul, who speaks of the resurrection of Christ as the “first fruits” of the eschatological resurrection at the end of the age (1 Cor. 15:23). First fruits in an agrarian economy were the beginning of the harvest itself. The resurrection of Jesus was not an isolated event; it was not merely promise of a future event; it was itself the beginning of the future event. The first act of resurrection had already occurred in the resurrection of Jesus, and this placed the Christian proclamation in a new and startling light.

The same eschatological dimension is found in the gift of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. The prophecy of the outpouring of the Spirit in Joel belongs to the eschatological consummation of God’s redemptive purpose (Joel 2:28ff) at the Day of the Lord. When God finally redeems his people and makes himself known as God in all the world (Joel 2:26, 27), one of the gifts of his eschatological salvation will be the outpouring of his Spirit. This event, Peter declared, had now occurred in history (Acts 2:16ff), because Jesus has been exalted to heaven and enthroned at the right hand of God as messianic King (Acts 2:30ff). The blessings of Messiah’s reign no longer belong exclusively to the Age to Come and the Kingdom of God; they have come to men in history to bring into existence God’s new people—the Church. The Church is therefore an eschatological community, a people who not only are destined to inherit the consummated Kingdom but also have already experienced the powers and blessings of that Kingdom through the coming of the Holy Spirit in history. The Old Testament hope has been fulfilled before the consummation; eschatology has become history.

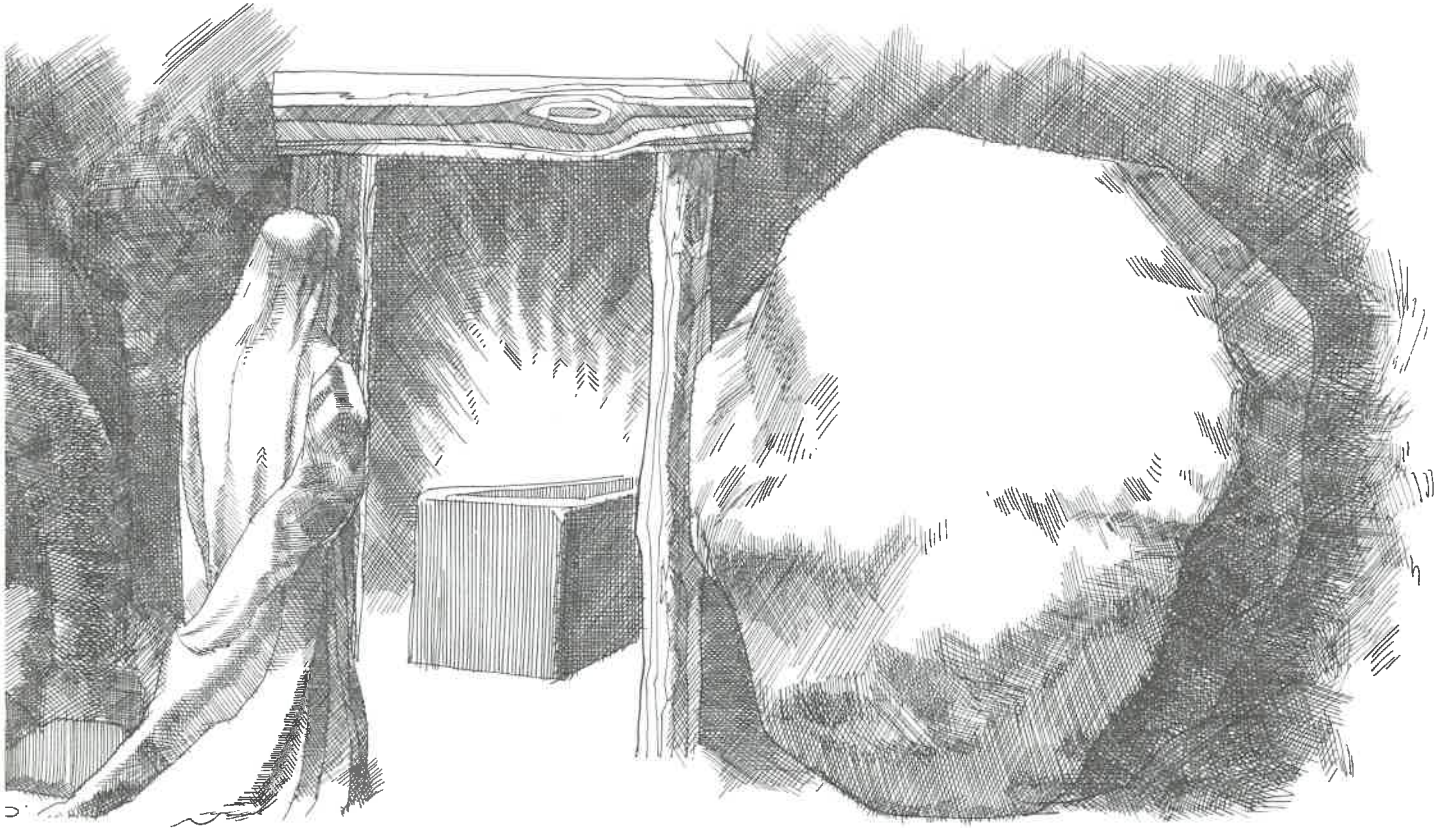
Paul interprets the significance of the eschatological event of Jesus Christ primarily in terms of justification by faith and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Here again, although in yet different terms, Paul expounds the meaning for believers of the eschatological dimension of what had happened in history in Jesus Christ.

Justification focuses attention upon the meaning of Jesus’ death. His propitiatory sacrifice on the cross is the ground of justification by faith. Justification, as we have seen, is the decree of the divine Lawgiver and Judge that a man is free from all guilt and condemnation. As such, it is an eschatological event that belongs to the day of judgment at the end of the world. This is clearly seen in a saying of Jesus: “On the day of judgment men will render account for every careless word they utter; for by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned” (Matt. 12:36, 37, RSV). Acquittal or condemnation in the eschatological day of judgment—this is the destiny of all men.

The death of Christ has provided the basis for the acquittal of men in history. Before the day of judgment, before the end of the age, the righteous Judge has rendered his decision. The man of faith is acquitted of all guilt; he is “justified by his [God’s] grace as a gift, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 3:24). In effect, the eschatological event has already occurred in history; the Judge has ren-



**“The Church is . . . an eschatological community, a people who not only are destined to inherit the consummated Kingdom but also have already experienced the powers and blessings of that Kingdom through the coming of the Holy Spirit in history.”
— George Eldon Ladd.**



dered his final decision. The man of faith is freed from all condemnation.

Accompanying this eschatological event is another: the indwelling of the Holy Spirit to impart new life. That this gift of the Spirit indwelling every believer is also an eschatological event is shown by the words Paul uses to describe it: first fruits and down payment. The Holy Spirit is the first fruits (Rom. 8:23) of the final redemption. Creation is in bondage to decay, and believers share the burden of pain, suffering, and death. Both await the eschatological glory of consummated redemption. But God has given more than hope and promise; he has imparted the Spirit of life in the midst of corruption and decay, thus providing a beginning of the eschatological consummation.

The Holy Spirit is also called a down payment. The King James Version renders the word "earnest," and the Revised Standard "guarantee." The word 'arrabon' in popular Greek meant a down payment that not only guaranteed the final full payment but also provided an actual but partial payment. Thus the Holy Spirit is a partial experience of the believer's eschatological inheritance until he will finally acquire full possession of it. (Eph. 1:14; see also II Cor. 1:22; 5:5). This means that everything that the Holy Spirit does, both in the fellowship of the Church (Acts) and in the lives of individual believers, is a real anticipation of the life of the Age to come. The Old Testament hope has been fulfilled. Eschatology has become history.

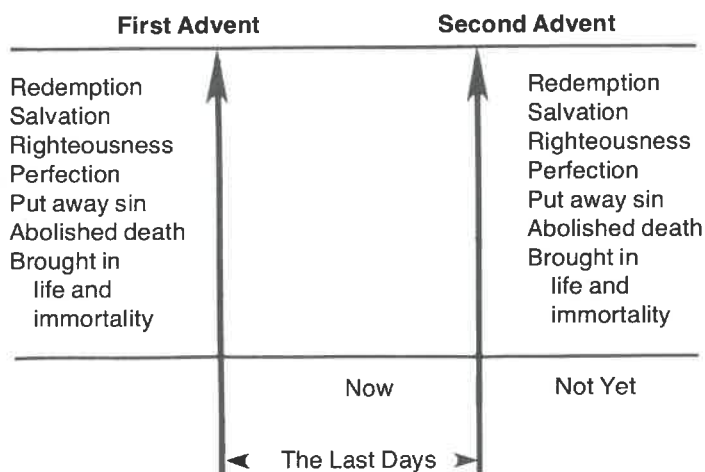
All New Testament writers look forward to an eschatolog-

ical consummation of all that was promised by the prophets. The Kingdom of God, eternal life, the resurrection of the dead, the vindication of the righteous in the day of judgment, and their transformation by the gift of the Holy Spirit (Ezek. 36:26, 27) all await the Age to Come. Yet because of the person, mission, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ, all these eschatological events have witnessed a fulfillment in history. The kingdom of God awaits the Age to Come; but it has invaded history in the person and mission of Jesus. Eternal life will follow the resurrection at the end of the age; but in the resurrection of Jesus, the eschatological event has begun and eternal life has come to mortal men in history. The day of judgment will introduce the Age to Come; but by virtue of the atoning death of Jesus, the judgment of acquittal has already been pronounced on men of faith. The eschatological redemption will mean "spiritual"—that is, Spirit-transformed—bodies for the redeemed (I Cor. 15:44; Rom. 8:23); but the transforming gift of the Spirit has already been given to men in history.—"Unity and Variety in New Testament Faith."

Conclusion

The eschaton (last things) is an unveiling of what has already taken place (gospel). Therefore, the gospel should determine our view of eschatology, and if it does, there will be no place for carnal speculations about things unrelated to the finished work of Jesus Christ.

Eschatology in the Light of Justification by Faith Alone



“The just shall live by faith.”

We have seen how God completed His redemptive work in Jesus Christ by His resurrection from the dead. At Christ’s second advent God will make a cosmic disclosure of what He has done.

We now live in the time between the Christ event and the eschaton (see preceding diagram). The apostles refer to the period between the advents as the “last days” or “the last time.” Heb. 1:2; 1 John 2:18. The reason for calling the present age the “last days” has already been discussed. God has given us every blessing in Christ—redemption, salvation, justification, perfection, life and immortality, etc.—but we possess these things *only by faith*. This means that we do not possess these things as qualities within ourselves, but they stand outside of us in the person of Christ. Christ Himself is our redemption, salvation, righteousness and life. He is in heaven at the right hand of God, and that is where this inheritance is reserved for us (1 Peter 1:4).

For instance, it is only by faith that we may know we are redeemed. Our senses or our surroundings may seem to deny our redemption. It is a matter of faith to confess that our sins have been abolished and our old man crucified with Christ (Rom. 6:6). We must believe this even when we see ourselves to be full of sin. Christ has abolished death. We know it only by faith, for Christians die as other men. It requires faith to confess that death has been destroyed when death still appears to triumph on every side.

And what of righteousness? It is here that the Reformation principle of *sola fide* reaches its high point. We are righteous before God only by faith. The righteousness that makes us acceptable before God is not a quality in us, but it is a quality outside of us—namely, Christ Himself. Through faith union with Him His life of holy obedience is counted as ours, so that in the midst of our human weakness and state of sinfulness we confess that our righteousness is in heaven and is counted ours in the merciful reckoning of God.

And what of security? How many look to their past

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As Luther forcefully stated, he whom God wants to talk to, either in love or in anger, cannot cease to exist. That concept is a far cry from the Platonic concept of natural immortality.

experience of conversion for security! But security is not found in any experience, however genuine, that the Christian might have enjoyed. Says Reformed scholar John Murray:

It is one of the most perilous distortions of the doctrine of grace and one that has carried with it the saddest records of moral and spiritual disaster, to assume that past privileges, however high they may be, guarantee the security of men irrespective of perseverance in faith and holiness.—John Murray, *Principles of Conduct* (London: The Tyndale Press, 1957), p. 199.

New Testament faith is not faith in our new birth experience but faith in Jesus. Our security is not in us but in Him.

And what of life and immortality? “. . . Christ . . . is our life.” Col. 3:4. Life and immortality have been brought to light in the gospel (2 Tim. 1:10), and it is therefore contrary to the gospel to speak of life being an inherent property in the nature of man. This is a hangover from Platonic philosophy, which has left such an imprint on the Christian church. If our redemption, perfection, righteousness and security are found in Christ alone, then we should confess that Christ alone is our life and immortality, and we possess this also by faith alone. Christ promises believers that they will never die, not because they have a death-proof substance in their nature, but because they are in fellowship with God. As Luther forcefully stated, he whom God wants to talk to, either in love or in anger, cannot cease to exist. That concept is a far cry from the Platonic concept of natural immortality.

When Christ shall come again, God’s people will no longer possess these blessings by faith alone. They will have them by empirical reality. They will then be redeemed, saved, perfected, righteous, secure and immortal. But they will possess these blessings in a different way than they possess them now. Let us not confuse the “now” and the “not yet.” God’s people are righteous before God *now*, and they will be righteous before God *then*—but not in the same way. Now they are fully righteous by imputation. Then they will be fully righteous inherently. Now their perfection and glory is hidden. Then it will be disclosed (Rom. 8:18). Now it is by faith. Then it will be by sight. Meanwhile, “The just shall live by faith”—which is to say, they must live in the tension of having and not having, of believing they are righteous yet confessing themselves sinners, of possessing all things yet having nothing (2 Cor. 6:10).

The Holy Spirit in Present Existence

And what of the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer? There are two points about the Spirit’s work which need to be brought out here:

1. The Spirit is sent to teach believers about the glory of Jesus Christ (John 16:13, 14) and to make them preoccupied with Him rather than the Spirit. In other words, “faith is the principal work of the Holy Spirit.”—John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1960), Bk. 3, chap. 1, sec. 4. Therefore, he who looks away from himself and trusts only in that righteousness outside of himself is a man who is “full of faith and of the Holy Ghost.” Acts 6:5.

It is an absolute contradiction to suppose that Spirit-filled men could make the new life of the believer the center of their attention. There are some who have contended that St. Paul’s doctrine has two focal points—justification by Christ’s righteousness and the new life of the Spirit. This cannot be. The apostle has one focal point—in Christ—and he bends all his energies that men’s eyes may be enlightened to see the unsearchable riches of Christ. Says George Eldon Ladd, “Reformed theologians have made justification by faith the center of Paul’s thought, while the modern tendency has been to place the emphasis upon Christ’s indwelling the believer through the Holy Spirit.”—“Unity and Variety in New Testament Faith,” *Christianity Today*, Nov. 19, 1965. Catholic scholar Louis Bouyer rightly calls this modern trend “a rediscovery of Catholicism” within the Protestant movement (Louis Bouyer, *The Spirit and Forms of Protestantism* [Cleveland: World Pub. Co., 1964], p. 189).

2. In the present gift of the Holy Spirit, believers enjoy only the “firstfruits,” or “down payment,” of what will be consciously, inherently and visibly theirs at the return of Jesus Christ. Through His imparted presence and power believers here and now begin to be actually righteous, they press toward perfection, but hampered by the wretched body of this death (Rom. 7:24) and having tasted of the powers of the world to come, they long for the consummation at the appearing of Jesus Christ. Says the apostle:

And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body. Rom. 8:23.

Justification by Faith and Eschatological Hope



... whom He justified, them He also glorified. Rom. 8:30.

... being justified by faith, we ... rejoice in hope of the glory of God. Rom. 5:1, 2.

Justification and the eschaton are closely related. Those who are justified by faith are characterized by eager expectation of the coming of Christ (Heb. 9:28; 1 Thess. 1:10). The New Testament church is on tiptoe, waiting for the return of the Lord. And so ardent and expectant is its hope, some have to be reminded that daily work is not to be neglected (2 Thess. 3:10, 11).

It is not hard to imagine those Thessalonians who were so keen for the Lord to come that they had put their properties in the hands of the agents and were sitting outside on their suitcases, waiting for Jesus to return. We may smile at their simple and naive faith, but with all its immaturity, it was far more pleasing to God than a faith that does not stir the heart to watch for the return of the Master.

The early church soon lost the truth of justification by faith, and with it they lost sight of the hope of Christ's return. In the medieval church there was no bright hope of

Christ's coming—eschatological vision had disappeared. But with Luther and the revival of the truth of justification, the New Testament hope reappears, and the Reformer waits expectantly and longs for the end of the world. Instead of judgment day being the doomsday of the medieval church, a day to be pushed into the future as far as possible, it is for Luther "the happy, last Day." There is in Luther an irrepressible, exultant joy in the prospect of judgment day.

Let us look at the reasons why justification by faith illuminates the last things with joy, hope and expectancy.

1. The righteousness by which the believer stands justified is imputed (see Rom. 4), but at the eschaton it will be disclosed. The believer possesses it now only by faith, but by the sustaining power of the Spirit he "wait[s] for the hope of righteousness." Gal. 5:5. That is to say, his righteousness does not yet appear, but in the midst of affliction it hangs in hope. He longs for the time when he will be fully righteous in fact.

Luther rightly warns against the error of those who are in too great a haste to become pure and sinless saints. With imprudent and excessive zeal they try to break down the door to get into the room where they see and feel no

People who get caught up in this false holiness trip become more interested in their “second blessing” than the “second coming.”

sin. People who get caught up in this false holiness trip become more interested in their “second blessing” than the “second coming,” and if God would grant them their wish here and now, they would no longer groan with the apostles and saints for Jesus to come (Rom. 8:23). The righteousness of faith teaches us that we cannot find fulfillment within the historical process. We are complete only in Christ (Col. 2:10), and therefore we must patiently wait for the manifestation of the sons of God when He appears (Rom. 8:18; Col. 3:4). The righteousness of the faithful will be fully disclosed at the eschaton.

2. No one will really yearn for and hope for the coming of Christ unless he has confidence that he is ready for that great day. The clear ring of the New Testament is this: Justification by faith constitutes us ready for the coming of Christ.

... being justified by faith, we ... rejoice in hope of the glory of God. Rom. 5:1, 2.

Much more then, being now justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. Rom. 5:9.

... whom He justified, them He also glorified. Rom. 8:30.

... so that ye come behind in no gift; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ ... 1 Cor. 1:7. (This was written to a very imperfect, faulty congregation who in themselves came behind in many things.)

But the anointing which ye have received of Him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in Him. And now, little children, abide in Him; that, when He shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before Him at His coming. 1 John 2:27, 28. (Note: The Spirit teaches believers to “abide in Him,” and it is their being “in Him” which qualifies them ready for His coming.)

The New Testament clearly teaches that those who are justified by faith are complete, unblamable and perfect in Jesus Christ (Col. 1:22, 28; 2:10), and therefore they may have boldness on the day of judgment (1 John 4:17) if only they maintain this faith firm unto the end (Col. 1:23; Heb. 6:11).

The New Testament exhorts the elect community to purify themselves, to follow after holiness, to live righteously, temperately and charitably as they wait for the Lord’s coming (1 John 3:3; 2 Cor. 7:1; 2 Peter 3:11, etc.). Many have seriously distorted these exhortations to sanctification by making such sanctification the ground of believers’ being able to stand before the Son of Man when He comes in power and great glory. This error miserably cheats people out of the joy and confidence they may have in the truth of justification by faith alone. Instead of looking to the righteousness of faith for the assurance of their readiness for the day of God, they look to their own faltering progress in sanctification as their hope. When final salvation is made conditional on a certain degree of

sanctified attainment, there can be no assurance of being ready for Christ to come and certainly no rejoicing in the imminence of His coming. People thus wear themselves out *getting ready* instead of *being ready* (Matt. 24:44). They wretchedly work toward becoming blameless instead of being "preserved blameless." 1 Thess. 5:23. Naturally, they are no more ready for Christ's coming after years and years of this miserable program. These souls will find no rest until they commit their full weight to the efficacy of Christ's imputed righteousness.

The apostles remind the elect community of the all-sufficiency of God's justification and show them that this standing gives them a sure hope of glorification at the end of time. Then out of the joy of this hope, they make their appeal to godly living. The apostolic order is:

1. The blessing of justification
2. The firm hope of glorification based on justification
3. The appeal to sanctification

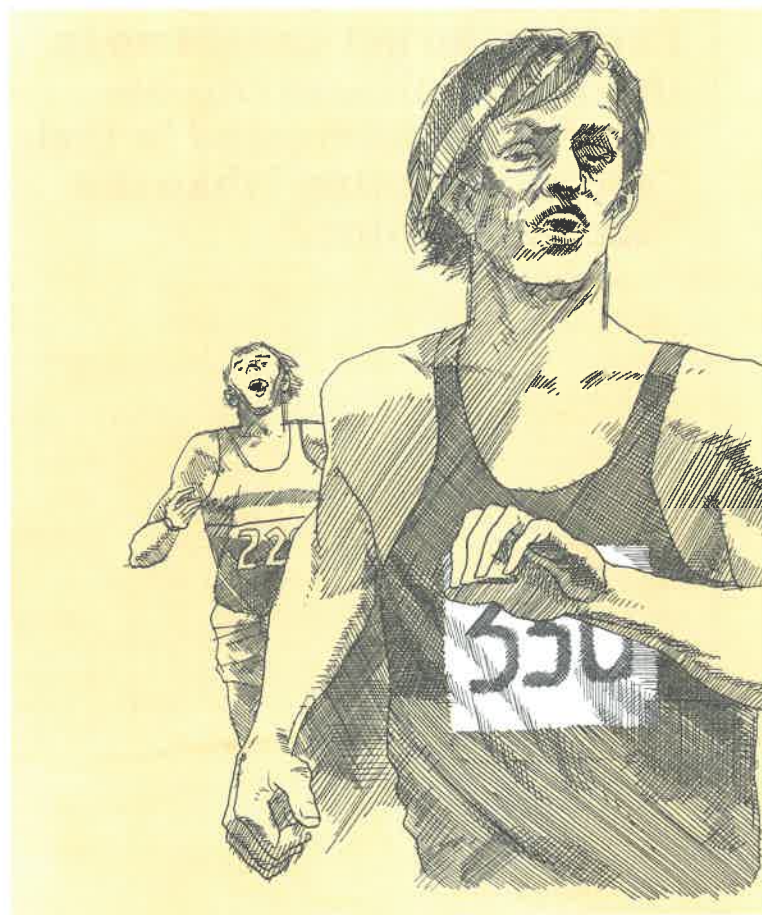
Notice:

Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew Him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God [1. Justification], and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is [2. Glorification]. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as He is pure [3. Sanctification]. 1 John 3:1-3.

For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God [1. Justification]. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory [2. Glorification]. Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry [3. Sanctification] . . . Col. 3:3-5.

We are not exhorted to a life of sanctification *in order that* we may find therein a hope of being glorified when Jesus comes, but we are exhorted to a life of sanctification *because* we have this hope. He who runs the way of sanctification *to obtain* hope runs with great uncertainty, for how can he know whether he is good enough or runs well enough to satisfy God? He who runs the way of sanctification *because* he has a firm hope is like Paul, who said, "I therefore so run, not as uncertainly [as the athletes who are not sure of the prize]; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: but I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway." 1 Cor. 9:26, 27. But the man who presumes that he need not run the way of sanctification because justification is by faith will one day learn that his hope is vain, for ". . . every man that hath this [genuine] hope . . . purifieth himself."

3. We have said that the hidden righteousness of the justified will be disclosed at the eschaton. We have shown



We are not exhorted to a life of sanctification *in order that* we may find therein a hope of being glorified when Jesus comes, but we are exhorted to a life of sanctification *because* we have this hope.



that the hidden righteousness of the justified prepares the believer for the eschaton. We must now see that in a very certain sense the eschaton has already broken into history and into the experience of all who are justified by faith. This may be seen from three different points:

a. The eschaton is the day of judgment. Justification is a judicial word. It is a verdict of the Judge. Judgment day is the day when the righteous will be justified and the wicked condemned. Yet because of Christ the believer already has the verdict of acquittal and vindication of the Judge. The decision of the Court has already taken place. The believer is pronounced justified. And the coming of judgment day will disclose it openly. Thus, we can say that eternity has broken into history, and the believer now lives as one who has entered into judgment and has passed from death to life. For him "the hour of His judgment is come," and by faith he holds to the righteousness of Christ, which vindicates him before the law that judges him. So judgment day is not only future but present, as it is written, ". . . the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God . . ." 1 Peter 4:17.

b. The gift of justification is the gift of eternal life (Rom. 5:18). Although eternal life is something that belongs to the eschaton and eternity, this blessing is enjoyed by believers even now. They have actually begun to enjoy eternal life (John 3:16; 1 John 5:13). Eternity has already broken into history, so that believers have already tasted

Justification by faith, as nothing else can, brings eternity into immediate focus and confronts the church with the eschaton.

"the powers of the world to come." Heb. 6:5.

c. At the eschaton God will pour out His Spirit to glorify and immortalize His people (Rom. 8:11, 17, 18; Col. 3:4; Phil. 3:21; 1 Cor. 15:50-55). But since Jesus is already glorified, the Spirit is already given to believers in Jesus (John 7:39). Therefore, the apostle says they already have the "firstfruits" of their inheritance (Eph. 1:13, 14).

Just as the wagons bearing the king's seal convinced Jacob that the time had come to take his journey to meet Joseph, so justification by faith, with its verdict of acquittal, gift of eternal life and first fruits of the Spirit, is to us the "wagons" of the eschaton. The last days have therefore begun, and we therefore wait in eager anticipation for the open disclosure of these things.

Justification by faith, therefore, as nothing else can, brings eternity into immediate focus and confronts the church with the eschaton. It puts the church on tiptoe, waiting for the speedy coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Individual and Cosmic Eschatology

We have seen that the truth of justification by faith brings the eschaton into sharp focus. If the central article of justification is lost or becomes indistinct, the New Testament message of the second advent is blunted.

There is something else which has eroded the absolute importance which the New Testament gives to the return of Jesus. This is the development in the church of a concept of a private, or individual, eschatology. To simply state that at death the believer departs to be with Christ (Phil. 1:23) or that the spirit returns to God, there to be preserved (Eccl. 12:7), is one thing, but to build from these undetailed references to the intermediate state a whole scheme of individual eschatology is another thing altogether. It is often claimed that at death the believer enters his reward quite apart from the second coming of Jesus Christ. Since the believer is supposed to receive all that is decisively important before and quite apart from the coming of Christ and the resurrection, the events of the last day are relegated to an insignificant appendix.

Some, being aware of this problem, have tried to strike a balance between individual eschatology (at death) and cosmic eschatology (at the coming of Jesus). John Calvin made an admirable attempt to uphold individual eschatology and at the same time to preserve an important place for the resurrection. But as the history of the Reformed church has demonstrated, individual eschatology tends to eat up cosmic eschatology. The ordinary man in the pew thinks far more about his *going* than Christ's *coming*. Thanatology¹ has taken the place of eschatology.

In the interests of upholding the focus of New Testament eschatology, we shall make the following observations on this problem.

1. The overwhelming focus of the New Testament is on Christ's coming. There are over three hundred distinct references to Christ's return, and this, this alone, is called the "blessed hope." Titus 2:13. The emphasis is overwhelmingly placed on Christ's *coming* rather than our *going*.²

¹The "ology" of death—from the Greek word *thanatos*, meaning *death*.

²Christ's coming for us is therefore an act of grace (1 Peter 1:13) since it implies that we have no ability to go to Him.

The ordinary man in the pew thinks far more about his going than Christ's coming.

2. The return of Christ at the eschaton is appealed to again and again as a great motive for ethical action among the redeemed community, e.g.:

When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory. Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry . . . Col 3:4, 5.

Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as He is pure. 1 John 3:2, 3.

But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God . . . 2 Peter 3:10, 12.

Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ . . . 1 Peter 1:13.

Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh. Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned: behold, the Judge standeth before the door. James 5:8, 9.

And now, little children, abide in Him; that, when He shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before Him at His coming. 1 John 2:28.

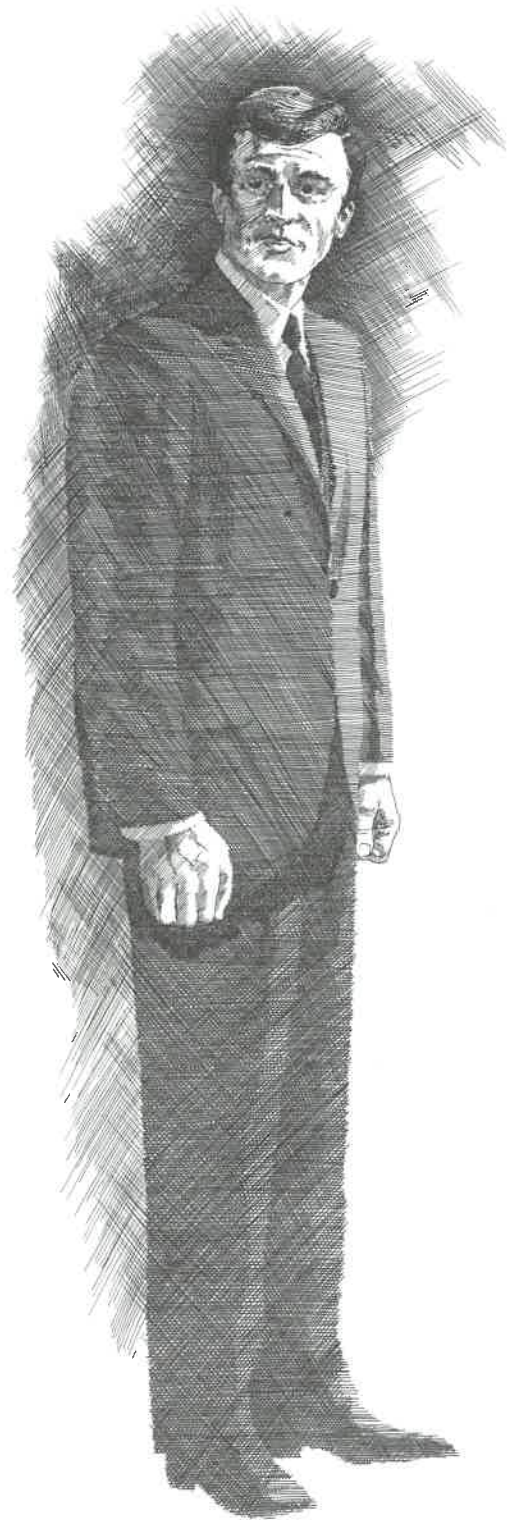
These scriptures are only a sample of what is found all over the New Testament. In contrast, let the reader see how many scriptures he can call to mind which focus on the believer's day of death as a factor in ethical motivation. To be true to the New Testament, we should place the emphasis where the New Testament places it.

3. Although it has become popular (and alas, sentimentally popular) to speak of the day of the believer's death as the day of his reward, is it Scriptural? A. J. Gordon has well said:

Let us not, through a false humility, reject the doctrine of rewards, which Scripture so strongly emphasizes. But when and where? are the all-important questions. Constantly do we hear it said of one deceased, "He has gone to his reward". But, from the testimony of the Word, tell us where the believer is directed to look for his recompense at death? He is taught to aspire to a crown. But we are not to infer, because it is said, "Be thou faithful unto death", — that is up to the point of suffering martyrdom for Me, — "and I will give thee a crown of life", that our dying day is our crowning day, and that St. Sepulchre has been especially commissioned to preside at our coronation. To those who share Christ's travail and sorrow in the present life, for the rescuing of souls, a coronet of joy is promised. And when? "For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming?" (1 Thess. 2:19) To those who have chosen the portion of suffering with Christ in this world, as a little flock, it is written: "And when the Chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away" (1 Peter 5:4). To the steadfast soldier, who has fought the good fight, and finished his course, and kept the faith, the assurance is: "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous judge shall give me *at that day*; and not to me only, but *unto all them also that love His appearing*" (2 Tim. 4:8). Of that other crown — the fourth — the time of the bestowal is not mentioned: "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation; for when he hath been approved *he shall receive the crown of life*, which the Lord promised to them that love Him" (James 1:12, R.V.). But since it is the "corona vitae", it is evident that it will be given at Christ's advent, when forever "death is swallowed up in victory," and not at our decease, when for the time life is swallowed up in defeat . . .

"Thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just", said our Lord, speaking concerning the good deeds done to the poor. But, in the light of other Scriptures, we may say that there is no promise that has so general an application. If death be the payment of the debt of nature, the first resurrection, at our Lord's appearing, will be the full repayment of the debt of grace. For this event will give us back all that we have lost: our friends in Christ, looking and speaking as they were wont; our inheritance in an earth renewed and glorified; and the temple of our body, no longer a house divided against itself through the conflict of sin, but raised up and re-dedicated with surpassing glory. Christ's redemption is not a compromise with Death, but a reimbursement for all of which he has robbed us, — a full refunding, exacted by the lawsuit of the atonement, of our defrauded inheritance. — A. J. Gordon, *Ecce Venit* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1890), pp. 30-43.

4. If we are to think in Biblical categories, we must look at man *wholistically*. God created a whole man. It was the whole man that sinned, and it is the whole man who comes under the judgment of death. On this point Dr. Helmut Thielicke expresses the opinion of much



It was the whole man that sinned, and it is the whole man who comes under the judgment of death.

modern scholarship which has returned to more Hebraic anthropology:

It follows that I dare not regard my death, even under the aspect of biological mask, as something that no longer strikes the real me, since I am immortal, but moves on bypassing my soul. No, all of me goes down into death. Nothing gives me the right to reject the totality of man, which the Scriptures proclaim in connection with the disaster of death, and suddenly split him into body and soul, into a perishable and an imperishable I-segment. But as a Christian I go down into this death with the complete confidence that I cannot remain therein, since I am one whom God has called by name and therefore I shall be called anew on God's day. I am under the protection of the Resurrected One. I am not immortal, but I await my own resurrection . . .

At this point the reformers' biblical understanding of justification reaches, as it were, its high point. Just as I stand with empty hands before God and remain standing, just as I can only beseech God nevertheless to accept me, in just this fashion do I move into my death with empty hands and without any death-proof substance in my soul, but only with my gaze focused on God's hand and with the petition on my lips, "Hand that will last, hold thou me fast!" — Helmut Thielicke, *Death and Life* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1970), pp. 198,199.

Christ died to redeem the whole man. Redemption is not consummated until "the resurrection of the dead." Says Lutheran scholar Dr. Paul Althaus:

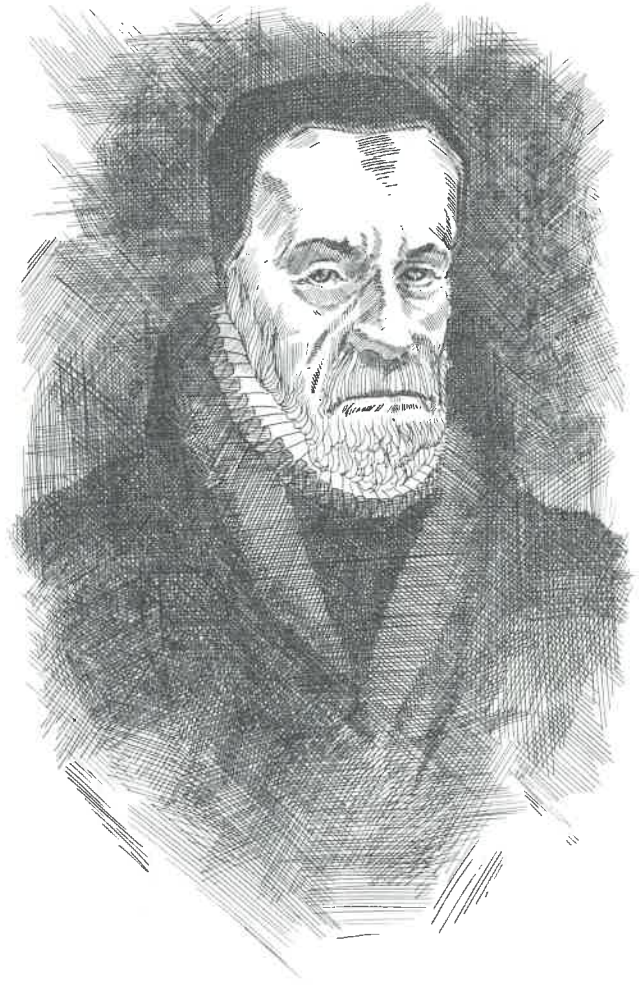
The hope of the early church centered on the resurrection on the Last Day. It is this which first calls the dead into eternal life (1 Cor. 15; Phil. 3:20f.). This resurrection happens to the man and not only to the body. Paul speaks of the resurrection not of "the body" but of "the dead." This understanding of the resurrection implicitly understands death as also affecting the total man . . .

Thus the original biblical concepts have been replaced by ideas from Hellenistic gnostic dualism. The New Testament idea of the resurrection which affects the total man has had to give way to the immortality of the soul. The Last Day also loses its significance, for souls have received all that is decisively important long before this. Eschatological tension is no longer strongly directed to the day of Jesus' coming. The difference between this and the hope of the New Testament is very great.

. . . the decisive New Testament insights reappear in Luther and once again become the dominating elements in his thinking.—Paul Althaus, *The Theology of Martin Luther* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966), pp. 413, 414.

Says respected Biblical scholar William Barclay:

The word for resurrection, *anastasis*, occurs about forty times in the New Testament. It is used eight times of the resurrection of Jesus. When it is used of men it appears simply as the resurrection fourteen times; eleven times it is accompanied by *nekron* or *ton nekron*, which means the resurrection of the dead; twice it appears as the resurrection *ek nekron* or *ek ton nekron*, which means the resurrection



from the dead or from among the dead. On five occasions it has descriptive phrases attached to it: the resurrection of the just (Luke 14:14); the resurrection of life and the resurrection of judgment (John 5:29); the resurrection of the just and of the unjust (Acts 24:15); the first resurrection (Revelation 20:5, 6). Typical occurrences of the words are resurrection alone, Matthew 22:23, 28, 30; Mark 12:18, 23; Luke 20:27, 33; John 11:24, 25; Acts 17:18; 23:8; 2 Timothy 2:18; resurrection of the dead, Matthew 22:31; Acts 17:22; 23:6; 24:21; 26:23; 1 Corinthians 15:12, 13, 21, 42; resurrection from the dead, Luke 20:35; Acts 4:2. Scripture does not speak either of the resurrection of the body or of the resurrection of the flesh. — William Barclay, *The Plain Man Looks at the Apostles' Creed* (London & Glasgow: Collins Press, 1967), p. 334.

As William Tyndale, English Reformer and father of the English Bible, pointed out, St. Paul did not comfort the bereaved with an ethereal doctrine of spirit existence, but he led them to fasten their hope on the coming of Christ and the resurrection (1 Thess. 4:15-17).

Finally, we cite *A Theological Word Book of the Bible*, edited by Alan Richardson, D.D. (art. F. J. Taylor, "Immortality"):

The Bible writers, holding fast to the conviction that the created order owes its existence to the wisdom and love of God and is therefore essentially good, could not conceive of life after death as a disembodied existence (“we shall not be found naked”, 2 Cor. 5:3), but as a renewal under new conditions of the intimate unity of body and soul which was human life as they knew it. Hence death (qv) was thought of as the death of the whole man, and such phrases as “freedom from death”, “imperishability” or “immortality” could only properly be used to describe what is meant by the phrase the eternal or living God (v LIFE, LIVING), “who only hath immortality” (1 Tim. 6:16). Man does not possess in himself this quality of deathlessness but must, if he is to overcome the destructive power of death, receive it as the gift of God, “who raised Christ from the dead”, and put death aside like a covering garment (1 Cor. 15:53-4). It is through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ that this possibility for man (2 Tim. 1:10) has been brought to light and the hope confirmed that the corruption (Rom. 11:7) which is a universal feature of human life shall be effectively overcome. (V also HELL, RESURRECTION.) — pp. 111, 112.

5. There is one more reason why the New Testament focuses on a single cosmic day of redemption. The believer is only a part of the body of Christ, which along with all creation must be released from the bondage of suffering and decay. As long as one member of the body suffers, all must suffer. (Even the great Head of the church is afflicted in all the affliction of His people [Isa. 63:9].) When this great fact is grasped, it will exorcise the selfishness of hoping merely for our individual day of redemption. Redemption cannot be consummated for me until it is consummated for all my brethren. I cannot get to the desired inheritance before them, and my brethren cannot go over into the “promised land” unless they carry the bones of Joseph with them.

In Romans 8 Paul shows that the elect all groan together that all might come to that great final redemption together (Rom. 8:18-23). This spirit of corporate oneness and concern pervades the Old Testament as well. Daniel the prophet prayed for the restoration of Israel from captivity. What would an individual release have meant to him unless all his people were released? Jesus also taught us to pray, “Thy kingdom come.” St. Paul tells the Thessalonians that those who are alive at the time of Christ’s coming will not have a head start over those who have died (“... shall not prevent [precede] them which are asleep” — 1 Thess. 4:15). Neither shall those who die in the Lord and rest from their labors (Rev. 14:13) have a head start over those who live on. Says the writer to the Hebrews, “. . . only in company with us should they [who have died] reach their perfection.” Heb. 11:40, N.E.B.

This brings us to the matter of “the intermediate state.” Really, what does the Bible say beyond that those who have died in the Lord are “with Christ,” that their spirit — their individual character, or identity — has returned to God to be preserved, that they “rest from their labours” and “sleep in Jesus”? Rev. 14:13; 1 Thess. 4:14. One

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thing is clear. They are not redeemed as an empirical reality until Jesus comes.

It is interesting to compare and contrast the views of Calvin and Luther at this point. Calvin defended the doctrine of the innate immortality of the soul, using without apology the classical arguments of Greek philosophy. Yet he approached the subject of the intermediate state with commendable caution. In his *Institutes of the Christian Religion* he said:

Meanwhile, since Scripture everywhere bids us wait in expectation for Christ's coming, and defers until then the crown of glory, let us be content with the limits divinely set for us: namely, that the souls of the pious, having ended the toil of their warfare, enter into blessed rest, where in glad expectation they await the enjoyment of promised glory, and so all things are held in suspense until Christ the Redeemer appear. — (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1960), Bk. 3, chap. 25, sec. 6.

To Calvin the blessedness of this intermediate state was only of a precursory nature. There is still waiting in expectation for the crown to be attained. Many who have followed on from Calvin have not been willing to hold these departed souls in such "agonized" suspense, so they have proposed that they enter their reward immediately. This illustrates what we mean when we say that individual eschatology eats up cosmic eschatology.

Luther's viewpoint was quite different. He rejected the medieval church's concept of the soul being inherently immortal, calling these ideas "monstrous opinions" out of the "Roman dunghill of decretals." — Martin Luther, *Assertion of All the Articles Wrongly Condemned in the Roman Bull*, Nov. 29, 1520. Like righteousness, Luther viewed immortality as something which stood outside of man. This did not mean that he concluded that a dead man ceases to exist. He whom God wishes to speak to, either in love or in anger, cannot cease to exist. The immortality does not reside in the nature of man but in Christ and in His word of promise.

As for the popular notion that the souls of the righteous have the full enjoyment of heaven prior to the resurrection, Luther whimsically remarked, "It would take a foolish soul to desire its body when it was already in heaven!" — *D. Martin Luthers Werke*, ed. Tischreden (Weimar, 1912-1921), p. 5534, cited by Althaus, *op. cit.*, p. 417. He said further:

Now, if one should say that Abraham's soul lives with God but his body is dead, this distinction is rubbish. I will attack it. One must say, The whole Abraham, the whole man, shall live. The other way you tear off a part of Abraham and say, "It lives." — *Table Talk*, cited by Althaus, *op. cit.*, p. 447.

As Althaus points out, "Luther generally understands the condition between death and the resurrection as a deep, dreamless sleep without consciousness and feeling." — Althaus, *op. cit.*, p. 414. Said Luther:

For just as a man who falls asleep and sleeps soundly until morning does not know what has happened to him when he wakes up, so we shall suddenly rise on the Last Day; and we shall know neither what death has been like or how we have come through it. — *Ibid.*

We are to sleep until he comes and knocks on the grave and says, "Dr. Martin, get up." Then I will arise in a moment and will be eternally happy with him. — *Ibid.*, p. 415.

Yet Luther could still speak of the departed being with the Lord as fully redeemed men. This is because he saw God as above and outside of our time. When a man dies, he passes out of time and arrives at the last day. In this sense there is no time between death and the resurrection. Yet all will reach the last day together.

With his rejection of man's innate immortality and his emphasis on justification by an outside righteousness and death and resurrection of the total man, Luther, more than any other Reformer, brought the eschaton into sharper and more urgent focus.

He whom God wishes to speak to, either in love or in anger, cannot cease to exist. The immortality does not reside in the nature of man but in Christ and in His word of promise.

Justification by Faith and the Identity of Antichrist

Justification by faith is not only that great New Testament light which illuminates the meaning of the eschaton; it is the only light to expose and identify the great antichrist who precedes the *parousia*. Apart from the light of justification by faith, men invent all sorts of speculations about last day events. So too, they look for an antichrist who is drawn by carnal speculations.

The early church scanned the future in anticipation of the coming antichrist who was depicted so strikingly by Daniel, Paul (2 Thess.) and John the Revelator. It was generally thought that he would appear on the scene after the fall of the Roman Empire. It is not surprising that the early church had indistinct ideas about the great antichrist.

It is most significant that the evangelical church¹ did not come to any distinct or united conviction about the identity of antichrist until the clear gospel light of justification by faith began to chase away the shadows of the dark ages of the papacy. Not only did the church of the Reformation come to a united understanding of justification by faith, but at the same time it came to a united understanding about the identity of antichrist. It is important, indeed most urgent, that we realize this relationship between the light on justification by faith and the identity of antichrist.

Now we do not contend that the Reformers were without fault in their theology. There were points on which they could not agree among themselves. But we had better give serious consideration to the points on which the evangelical church reached total and united agree-

It is important, indeed most urgent, that we realize the relationship between the light on justification by faith and the identity of antichrist.

ment. Such unity is evidence of the Holy Spirit's endorsement. Says James Buchanan:

Few things in the history of the Church are more remarkable than the entire unanimity of the Reformers on the subject of a sinner's Justification before God . . . and can only be accounted for by ascribing it to a copious effusion of the Holy Spirit. — James Buchanan, *The Doctrine of Justification* (republished London: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1961), pp. 165, 166.

The same thing may be said about the Reformers' united testimony as to the identification of antichrist. With one united voice they said that the "man of sin" was the office of the papacy.

Nowadays many want to dismiss the Reformers' view of antichrist as mere "polemics of a bygone era." But it was not a matter of ill will in the midst of theological controversy. "This understanding of the position and function of the papacy became an important part of Luther's theology. It was not merely part of his polemic but apart from all personal animosity a sincere theological conviction." — George W. Forell, *Faith Active in Love* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Pub. House, 1954), p. 171. Said

¹We use this term to distinguish the true Christian community as a whole.

Luther, "You must be armed with Scripture so that you cannot only call the pope the Anti-Christ but also know how to prove it so clearly that you could die with this conviction and stand against the devil in death." — Cited by Forell, *ibid.*

The reason why so many today cannot appreciate the united view of the Reformers as to the identity of antichrist is that they do not see the importance of justification by faith as the Reformers did. They do not regard this doctrine as the great central article, as the very air which Christians breathe. They do not recoil with horror to see this doctrine adulterated or relegated to a position of only relative importance.

To the Reformation church the papacy was the very antichrist, the prophesied "man of sin," because it committed the ultimate impiety by making war on justification by faith alone. Dr. F. Pieper expresses the view of the Reformation when he writes in *Christian Dogmatics*:

There can be no greater enemy of the Church of God than the Papacy. In and by the doctrine of justification the Church lives . . . Can anything worse befall the Church than being robbed of the doctrine of justification, by which alone she lives and exists? When the enemy takes my earthly life, he can do me no greater harm in earthly matters. And when the Pope has taken away the spiritual life of the Church by robbing her of the doctrine of justification, the climax of harm has been reached.—(St. Louis: Concordia Pub. House, 1950), Vol. 2, pp. 553, 554.

Said the renowned English expositor of the nineteenth century, Dr. H. Grattan Guinness:

From the first, and throughout, that movement [the Reformation] was energised and guided by the prophetic Word. Luther never felt strong and free to war against the papal apostasy till he recognised the pope as antichrist. It was then he burned the papal Bull. Knox's first sermon, the sermon which launched him on his mission as a Reformer, was on the prophecies concerning the Papacy. The Reformers embodied their interpretation of prophecy in their confessions of faith, and Calvin in his "Institutes". All the Reformers were unanimous in the matter . . . And their interpretation of these prophecies determined their reforming action . . . It nerved them to resist the claims of that apostate church to the uttermost. It made them martyrs, it sustained them at the stake. And the views of the Reformers were shared by thousands, by hundreds of thousands. They were adopted by princes and peoples . . . —H. Grattan Guinness, *Romanism and the Reformation* (Toronto: S. R. Briggs, [n.d.]), pp. 250-260.

The United Testimony of the Reformers as to the Identity of Antichrist

Let us now hear the united testimony of the Reformers, for their system of prophetic interpretation became unchallenged in the Protestant movement for three hundred years and actually became known as "the Protestant system" of prophetic interpretation.

Martin Luther

We are convinced that the papacy is the seat of the true and real Antichrist — *D. Martin Luthers Werke*, ed. Briefwechsel (Weimar, 1930-1948), Vol. 2, p. 167, cited in *What Luther Says*, ed. Ewald M. Plass, Vol. 1, p. 34.

You should know that the pope is the real, true, final Antichrist, of whom the entire Scripture speaks, whom the Lord is beginning to consume with the spirit of His mouth and will very soon destroy and slay with the brightness of His coming, for which we are waiting. — *D. Martin Luthers Werke*, ed. Kritische Gesamtausgabe (Weimar, 1883-), Vol. 8, p. 554., cited in Plass, *op.cit.*, Vol. 1, pp. 36, 37.

John Calvin

Daniel and Paul had predicted that Antichrist would sit in the temple of God. The head of that cursed and abominable kingdom, in the Western church, we affirm to be the Pope. When his seat is placed in the temple of God, it suggests, that his kingdom will be such, that he will not abolish the name of Christ or the Church. Hence it appears, that we by no means deny that church may exist, even under his tyranny; but he has profaned them by sacrilegious impiety, afflicted them by cruel despotism, corrupted and almost terminated their existence by false and pernicious doctrines; like poisonous potions, in such churches, Christ lies half buried, the gospel is suppressed, piety exterminated, and the worship of God almost abolished; in a word, they are altogether in such a state of confusion, that they exhibit a picture of Babylon, rather than of the holy city of God. — John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1960), Bk. 4, chap. 2, sec. 12.

Heinrich Bullinger

By the little horn many understand the kingdom of Mohammed, of the Saracens and of the Turks . . . But when the apostolic prophecy in Second Thessalonians 2 is more carefully examined, it seems that this prophecy of Daniel and that prophecy of the apostle belong more rightly to the kingdom of the Roman pope, which kingdom has arisen from small beginnings and has increased to an immense size. — Trans. from Heinrich Bullinger, *Daniel Sapientissimus Dei Propheta (Daniel the Most Wise Prophet of God)*, chap. 7, fol. 78v.

Nicholas Ridley

The head, under Satan, of all mischief is Antichrist and his brood; and the same is he which is the Babylonical beast. The beast is he whereupon the whore sitteth. The whore is that city, saith John in plain words, which hath empire over the kings of the earth. This whore hath a golden cup of abominations in her hand, whereof she maketh to drink the kings of the earth, and of the wine of this harlot all nations hath drunk; yea, and kings of the earth have lain by this whore; and merchants of the earth, by virtue of her pleasant merchandise, have been made rich.

Now what city is there in the whole world, that when John wrote, ruled over the kings of the earth; or what city can be read of in any time, that of the city itself challenged the empire over the kings of the earth, but only the city of Rome, and that since the usurpation of that See hath grown to her

full strength? — Nicholas Ridley, *A Piteous Lamentation of the Miserable Estate of the Church in England, in the Time of the Late Revolt from the Gospel*, in *Works*, p.53.

Philip Melanchthon

18. Since it is certain that the pontiffs and the monks have forbidden marriage, it is most manifest, and true without any doubt, that the Roman Pontiff, with his whole order and kingdom, is very Antichrist.

19. Likewise in 2 Thess. II, Paul clearly says that the man of sin will rule in the church exalting himself above the worship of God, etc.

20. But it is certain that the popes do rule in the church, and under the title of the church in defending idols.

21. Wherefore I affirm that no heresy hath arisen, nor indeed shall be, with which these descriptions of Paul can more truly and certainly accord and agree than with this pontifical kingdom . . .

25. The prophet Daniel also attributes these two things to Antichrist; namely, that he shall place an idol in the temple, and worship [it] with gold and silver; and that he shall not honor women.

26. That both of them belong to the Roman Pontiff, who does not clearly see? The idols are clearly the impious masses, the worship of saints, and the statues which are exhibited in gold and silver that they may be worshiped. — Trans. from Philip Melanchthon, "De Matrimonio," *Disputationes*, No. 56, in *Opera (Corpus Reformatorum)*, Vol. 12, cols. 535, 536.

John Hooper

Because God hath given this light unto my countrymen, which be all persuaded, (or else God send them to be persuaded!) that the bishop of Rome nor none other is Christ's vicar upon the earth; it is no need to use any long or copious oration: it is so plain that it needeth no probation; the very properties of antichrist, I mean of Christ's great and principal enemy, is so openly known to all men, that are not blinded with the smoke of Rome, that they know him to be the beast that John describeth in the Apocalypse. — John Hooper, *Declaration of Christ and His Office*, chap. 3, in *Works*, Vol. 1, pp. 22, 23 (early writings).

The Counter Reformation and the Origin of Futurism

Not only did the Reformers proclaim the mighty truth of justification by faith for the liberation of men's souls, but they nerved thousands to break from the tyranny of the dark ages of the papacy by clearly identifying the antichrist of Bible prophecy. The symbols of Daniel, Paul and John were applied with tremendous effect. The realization that the incriminating finger of prophecy rested squarely on Rome aroused the consciousness of Europe. In alarm Rome saw that she must successfully counteract this identification of antichrist with the papacy or lose the battle. She must present plausible arguments which would cause men to look outside the medieval period for the development of antichrist.

Jesuit scholarship rallied to the Roman cause by pro-

viding two plausible alternatives to the historical interpretation of the Protestants.

1. Luis de Alcazar (1554-1613) of Seville, Spain, devised what became known as the "preterist" system of prophetic interpretation. This theory proposed that the Revelation deals with events in the Pagan Roman Empire, that antichrist refers to Nero and that the prophecies were therefore fulfilled long before the time of the medieval church. Alcazar's preterist system has never made any impact on the conservative, or evangelical, wing of the Protestant movement, although in the last one hundred years it has become popular among Protestant rationalists and liberals.

2. A far more successful tack was taken by Francisco Ribera (1537-1591) of Salamanca, Spain. He was the founder of the "futurist" system of prophetic interpretation. Instead of placing antichrist way in the past as did Alcazar, Ribera argued that antichrist would appear way in the future. About 1590 Ribera published a five hundred page commentary on the Apocalypse, denying the Protestant application of antichrist to the Church of Rome. The gist of his futurist system was as follows:

a. While the first few chapters in the Revelation were assigned to ancient Rome in the time of John, the greater part of the prophecies of the Revelation were assigned to the distant future, to events immediately preceding the second coming of Jesus Christ.



b. Antichrist would be a single individual who would abolish the Christian religion, rebuild the temple at Jerusalem and be received by the Jews.

c. Antichrist's blasphemous work would continue for a literal three and a half years.

d. The locale of the conflict with antichrist would be the Middle East — i.e., Palestine.

Ribera's futurism was expanded and polished by later Catholic scholars and became the genuinely "Catholic" system of prophetic interpretation.

Roman Catholic author G. S. Hitchcock summarizes the genesis of futurism and preterism as follows:

The Futuristic School, founded by the Jesuit Ribera in 1591, looks for Antichrist, Babylon, and a rebuilt temple in Jerusalem, at the end of the Christian dispensation. The Praeterist School, founded by the Jesuit Alcazar in 1614, explains the Revelation by the Fall of Jerusalem, or by the fall of Pagan Rome in 410 A.D. — G. S. Hitchcock, *The Beasts and the Little Horn*, p. 7.

In 1898 English Protestant author Joseph Tanner made these observations on the beginnings of futurism and preterism:

Accordingly, towards the close of the century of the Reformation, two of her [Rome's] most learned doctors set themselves to the task, each endeavouring by different means to accomplish the same end, namely, that of diverting men's minds from perceiving the fulfillment of the prophecies of the Antichrist in the Papal system. The Jesuit Alcazar devoted himself to bring into prominence the *Preterist* method of interpretation, which we have already briefly noticed, and thus endeavoured to show that the prophecies of Antichrist were fulfilled before the Popes ever ruled at Rome, and therefore could not apply to the Papacy. On the other hand the Jesuit Ribera tried to set aside the application of these prophecies to the Papal Power by bringing out the *Futurist* system, which asserts that these prophecies refer properly not to the career of the Papacy, but to that of some future supernatural individual, who is yet to appear, and to continue in power for three and a half years. Thus, as Alford says, the Jesuit Ribera, about A.D. 1580, may be regarded as the Founder of the Futurist system in modern times. — Joseph Tanner, *Daniel and the Revelation* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1898), pp. 16, 17.

Ribera's futurism was polished and popularized by the great Catholic controversialist, Cardinal Bellarmine (1542-1621) of Italy. This astute prince of the church took up the battle against Protestantism and became the foremost apologist for Rome in the Counter Reformation. Bellarmine insisted that the prophecies concerning antichrist in Daniel, Paul and John had no application to the papal power. Between 1581 and 1593 he published the most detailed defense of the Catholic faith ever produced, called *Disputationes de Controversiis Christianae Fidei Adversus Huius Temporis Haereticos*. The third part of his *Disputationes* was devoted to showing

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Through the publication and dissemination of thousands of tracts, the Oxford movement leavened English Protestantism with the idea that the Reformers' understanding of antichrist was untrustworthy.

that antichrist is not the papacy but a single man who will appear at the end of time. Said Bellarmine:

For all Catholics think thus that Antichrist will be one certain man; but all heretics teach . . . that Antichrist is expressly declared to be not a single person, but an individual throne or absolute kingdom, and apostate seat of those who rule over the church. — Bellarmine, "De Summo Pontifici," *Disputationes*, Bk. 3, chap. 2, p. 185.

Bellarmino further said:

Nor can any one be pointed out who has been accepted for Antichrist, who has ruled exactly three and one-half years; therefore the Pope is not Antichrist. Then Antichrist has not yet come. — *Ibid.*, chap. 8, p. 190.

The Pope is not Antichrist since indeed his throne is not in Jerusalem, nor in the Temple of Solomon. — *Ibid.*, chap. 13, p. 195.

For nearly three hundred years the Protestant movement had no lack of expositors who very ably defended the "Protestant," or historical, school of prophetic interpretation. Until the nineteenth century, Protestantism stood unitedly on the historical principle of prophetic interpretation, and futurism therefore made no penetration within the Protestant movement.

Futurism Enters English Protestantism

Futurism first entered Protestantism in nineteenth century England by two seemingly widely separated developments.

1. The first was the appearance of a Romanizing tendency in the Church of England. Briefly, the development was as follows:

a. Dr. Samuel R. Maitland (1792-1866), curate of Christ Church at Gloucester and later librarian to the archbishop of Canterbury, was the first notable Protestant scholar to accept the Riberan interpretation of antichrist. Maitland held the Reformation in open contempt and freely admitted that his view of prophecy coincided

with Catholic interpretation. His views were first published in 1826 and received widespread study and interest.

b. James H. Todd (1805-1869), professor of Hebrew at the University of Dublin, studied and accepted Maitland's futuristic views. He strongly attacked the Reformers' historical system of prophetic interpretation. Todd's views were published and widely circulated among the theologians of his time.

c. John Henry Newman (1801-1890), famous High Church Anglican who was converted to Rome and became a cardinal, was one of the leading spirits in the renowned Oxford, or Tractarian, movement. Five years before he joined the Church of Rome, Newman advocated Todd's futurism in a tract called *The Protestant Idea of Antichrist*. Newman wrote:

We have pleasure in believing that in matters of Doctrine we entirely agree with Dr. Todd . . . The prophecies concerning Antichrist are as yet unfulfilled, and that the predicted enemy of the Church is yet to come.

Through the publication and dissemination of thousands of tracts, the Oxford movement leavened English Protestantism with the idea that the Reformers' understanding of antichrist was untrustworthy. It effectively diverted attention from Rome to some person to come in the future.

2. About the same time as the development of the Oxford movement, there was another development in England which played a decisive role in bringing futurism within the Protestant movement. There was a growing disenchantment with the deadness of the established churches, a reaction against the spiritualizing tendency of postmillennialism (with its tendency toward modernism and preterism) and a revival of hope in the soon coming of Christ and the last things. Two religious leaders played an important role in these developments:

a. Edward Irving (1792-1834), born in Scotland and a brilliant Presbyterian preacher, became a noted expositor in the British Advent Awakening. At first a historicist in his approach to the prophecies, Irving came to

adopt futuristic views. He despaired of the church being able to complete her gospel commission by the ordinary means of evangelism and began to believe and preach about the miraculous return of the gifts and power of the early church.

In 1831 the “gift of tongues” and other “prophetic utterances” made their appearance among his followers, first in Scotland among some women and then in London. Irving never detected the imposture and gave credence to these new revelations. Under the influence of these revelations of “the Holy Ghost” “by other tongues,” a new aspect was added to the expectation of a future antichrist — the rapture of the church before the advent of Christ. The novel origin of this novel theory has embarrassed some of its advocates, and in the face of certain lack of evidence heretofore, the defenders of this novel theory have tried to deny its historical beginning. But the recent discovery in a rare book of Rev. Robert Norton entitled *The Restoration of Apostles and Prophets; In the Catholic Apostolic Church*, published in 1861, establishes the origin of this innovative doctrine beyond all question. Norton was a participant in the Irvingite movement. The idea of a two-stage coming of Christ first came to a Scottish lass, Miss Margaret Macdonald of Port Glasgow, Scotland, while she was in a “prophetic” trance. Norton has actually preserved Miss Macdonald’s pretribulation vision and “prophetic” utterance in his book. He says:

Marvellous light was shed upon Scripture, and especially on the doctrine of the second Advent, by the revived spirit of prophecy. In the following account by Miss M. M.—, of an evening during which the power of the Holy Ghost rested upon her for several successive hours, in mingled prophecy and vision, we have an instance; for here we first see the distinction between that final stage of the Lord’s coming, when every eye shall see Him, and His prior appearing in glory to them that look for Him. — Robert N. Norton, M.D., *The Restoration of Apostles and Prophets; In the Catholic Apostolic Church* (1861), p. 15.²

A little later the idea of the secret pretribulation rapture was adopted and polished by the Plymouth Brethren in their founding Powercourt Conferences of the 1830’s. S. P. Tregelles, who participated in the Powercourt Conferences, admits that the Brethren obtained the idea of the rapture from the Irvingite movement. He writes:

I am not aware that there was any definite teaching that there should be a Secret Rapture of the Church at a secret coming until this was given forth as an “utterance” in Mr. Irving’s church from what was then received as being the voice of the Spirit. But whether anyone ever asserted such a thing or not it was from that supposed revelation that the

²Those wishing a thorough documentation of these facts should obtain a copy of Dave MacPherson’s *The Unbelievable Pre-Trib Origin* (Heart of America Bible Society, Inc., 5528 Lydia St., Kansas City, Mo. 64110).



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modern doctrine and the modern phraseology respecting it arose.—S. P. Tregelles, *The Hope of Christ's Coming*, p. 35, cited by George L. Murray, *Millennial Studies—A Search for Truth* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1960), p. 138.

b. John Nelson Darby (1800-1882), one of the prominent founders of the movement often known as Plymouth Brethren, was not only an ardent futurist, but he added another new dimension to the futuristic scheme—dispensationalism. Says Oswald T. Allis in his book, *Prophecy and the Church*:


The Dispensational teaching of today, as represented, for example, by the *Scofield Reference Bible*, can be traced back directly to the Brethren Movement which arose in England and Ireland about the year 1830. Its adherents are often known as Plymouth Brethren, because Plymouth was the strongest of the early centres of Brethrenism. It is also called Darbyism, after John Nelson Darby (1800-82), its most conspicuous representative. The primary features of this movement were two in number. The one related to the Church. It was the result of the profound dissatisfaction felt at that time by many earnest Christians with the worldliness and temporal security of the Church of England and of many of the dissenting communions in the British Isles. The other had to do with prophecy; it represented a very marked emphasis on the coming of the Lord as a present hope and immediate expectation. These two doctrines were closely connected.

a. The Parenthesis Church

The beginning of the Brethren doctrine regarding the Church is found in the claim that an ordained ministry and eldership was not necessary to the proper observance of the great central rite of the Christian Church, the Lord's Supper. It was claimed that Christian believers might meet together to break bread, without any ecclesiastical order or government whatsoever. And since the New Testament speaks quite definitely of the ordaining of elders, it was claimed that this "professing church" which is characterized by a ministry or eldership having "successive" or "derivative" authority was Jewish and Petrine, and to be sharply distinguished from the Church described by Paul as a "mystery," which is entirely unique, utterly distinct from Israel, a heavenly body having no connection with the earth. So understood, the Church age is to be regarded as a "parenthesis" between the Old Testament kingdom of the past and the Old Testament kingdom of the future, or in other words as constituting an "interruption" in the fulfilment of the kingdom promises to Israel. This distinction between the true (Pauline) Church and the professing (Petrine) church is of fundamental importance.

b. The Any Moment Coming

Closely connected with the doctrine of the Church was the doctrine of the Coming. Brethrenism had its beginnings at a time when there was great interest in the doctrine of the second advent. Edward Irving had stirred London by his flaming eloquence, declaring in sermon after sermon that the Lord might come at any moment. The Brethren, who were



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— Oswald T. Allis.

ardent Chiliasts, took the position that the Church as a heavenly body had no connection with earthly events, that such events concerned Israel and the nations, that the Church must live in constant expectancy of the coming of the Lord, that no events of any kind must be regarded as necessarily intervening between the Church and this any moment expectancy, and particularly that the rapture of the Church would certainly take place before the great tribulation.

This any moment doctrine of the coming had a natural and inevitable consequence, which is of prime importance in Dispensational teaching. It led to the discovery of a second hidden interval or parenthesis in the course of redemptive history as set forth in the Bible. If the Church has nothing to do with earthly events and may be raptured at any moment, and if the Bible clearly refers to events which are to precede the coming of Christ to the earth, the logical inference is that there must be two aspects or "stages" of the coming: one which concerns the Church only and is timeless and signless, and the other which concerns the earth and will be separated from the former by an interval during which the predicted events will take place. Consequently, instead of adhering to the view that the rapture, the catching up of the saints to meet the Lord in the air, would be immediately or speedily followed by their return with Him to reign over the earth, which was the view generally held at that time by Premillennialists, the Brethren reached the conclusion that a sharp distinction must be drawn between the coming of the Lord for the saints (the rapture) and His coming with the saints (the appearing or revelation). In between these two events, they claimed that they could recognize an important interval of time; namely the 70th week of Dan. ix., the second part of which they identified more or less exactly with the events recorded in Rev. iv.-xix. Consequently, this second parenthesis, as we may call it, between the rapture and the appearing, is both a very necessary and also a distinctive feature of Brethren teaching, almost if not quite as important as the Church parenthesis referred to above.

c. The Jewish Remnant

Closely related to this teaching regarding the Church and the Coming and indeed indispensable to it was the doctrine of the Jewish Remnant. If the Church consists only of those who have been redeemed in the interval between Pentecost and the rapture, and if the entire Church is to be raptured, then there will be no Christians on earth during the period between the rapture and the appearing. Yet during that period 144,000 in Israel and an innumerable multitude from the Gentiles (Rev. vii.) are to be saved. How is this to be brought about, if the Church has been raptured and the Holy Spirit removed from the earth? The answer to this question is found in the doctrine of the Jewish remnant. After the rapture of the Church a Jewish remnant is to proclaim the gospel of the kingdom and through the preaching of this gospel multitudes are to be saved . . .

This Brethren Controversy, as we may call it, has now become largely a thing of the past. The Plymouth Brethren are today one of the smallest of Christian groups, and their distinctive conception of Church order and government is very largely ignored. On the other hand, the fact that many of the views of the Brethren (their conception of the Church as a heavenly mystery and their prophetic program as a whole) are fully accepted in Dispensational circles, are indeed

characteristic of Dispensationalism as such, has made Dispensationalism an issue of greater or lesser importance in practically all evangelical denominations at the present time . . .

5. Dispensationalism in America

The distinctive features of Brethrenism were fully developed and formulated before the middle of the last century. Darby made his first visit to Canada in 1859 and subsequently paid repeated visits to Canada and the United States. In 1862 James Inglis of New York began the publication of a monthly, *Waymarks in the Wilderness*, which helped to spread the teachings of the Brethren on this side of the Atlantic. One of the most influential advocates of this teaching was James H. Brookes of St. Louis, whose *Maranatha* appeared about 1870 and passed through many editions. But while Brookes' Dispensational views so closely resemble those of the Brethren that it seems clear that they were largely derived from them, Brookes gave no credit for them to Darby or any other of the Brethren. This may be due to the fact that there were associations with the name of Darby which Brookes wished to avoid. But his attitude was characteristic of the movement as a whole. Dispensationalists have accepted the prophetic teaching of the Brethren, but until recently have shown themselves decidedly unwilling to disclose the source from which they derived them. Brookes was active in the summer conferences known as "Believers' Meetings for Bible Study" which were commenced in the seventies, and also in the Prophetic Conferences, the first of which was held in New York in 1878.

Without attempting to trace the history of Dispensationalism in detail, it will suffice to point out that it has owed its rapid growth in no small degree to two books, *Jesus is Coming* by "W.E.B.," and the *Scofield Reference Bible*. Blackstone's *Jesus is Coming* was published in 1878 . . . The *Scofield Reference Bible* was published in 1909 and revised in 1917. More than two million copies have been printed. It is the Bible of Dispensationalists, and has probably done as much to popularize the prophetic teachings of Darby and the Brethren as all other agencies put together. That Scofield was indebted to the Brethren for his Dispensational views cannot be questioned. He derived them first indirectly, from Brookes, and then directly from the Brethren and their writings. He held Darby's *Synopsis*, which is the standard commentary among the Brethren, in high esteem; and in the Introduction to the *Reference Bible* he acknowledged his indebtedness to the Brethren Movement without expressly mentioning it, and made special mention of the "eminent Bible teacher," Walter Scott, who was a prominent figure among the Brethren. There are today scores of Bible Schools and Institutes in this country and elsewhere, especially in Canada, where Dispensational interpretation of the Bible is stressed and the *Scofield Reference Bible* practically a textbook. And the number of books and periodicals in circulation today which represent this viewpoint is legion.—(Philadelphia: The Presbyterian & Reformed Pub. Co., 1972), pp. 9-14.

Two Outstanding Defenders of the Protestant Method of Prophetic Exposition

When these developments in England were seriously

eroding the historical, or Protestant, system of prophetic interpretation, two great opponents of futurism arose:

1. Edward Bishop Elliott (1793-1875), graduate of Cambridge in 1816, produced a most elaborate work of 2,500 pages on the Apocalypse. He exposed the fallacious interpretations which involved abandonment of the Protestant position on antichrist, and attacked the Romanizing tendencies in the Tractarian movement. It was Elliott who presented a thorough, documented history of the rise of futurism and preterism from Jesuit sources.

2. Dr. Henry Grattan Guinness (1835-1910) of London published nine major works on prophecy between 1878 and 1905. Alarmed by the inroads of the futurist school of counterinterpretation stemming from the Jesuits, Guinness mounted a tremendous defense of the historical school of Protestant view, which holds to the progressive fulfillment of prophecy from John's time to the second advent.

A Summarized Appraisal

In the last one hundred years the Protestant movement has largely abandoned the prophetic convictions of historic Protestantism and has opted for theories which have their origin with the Jesuits. The liberal wing of the Protestant movement, often denying the inspiration of the Bible or spiritualizing away its most pointed truths, have adopted the preterist view of prophecy, first espoused by Jesuit Alcazar. But the right wing of Protestantism, espousing an extreme literalism in reaction against the liberals, have taken over Ribera's futurism, and in some circles they have made it a part of "evangelical orthodoxy." This represents a remarkable triumph of the theories of Rome's Counter Reformation.

Above all, we need to see the reason why Protestantism has swerved away from her historic prophetic convictions. It is because the great truth of justification by faith is no longer at the center of the church's attention. As we will see in the next article, that truth has been buried by an earthly, man-centered vision. Says Dr. Francis Pieper:

What, then, may be the reason that men are today disinclined to recognize the Pope as the Antichrist? Whence this strange and deplorable phenomenon, that nearly all recent "believing" theologians search about for the Antichrist while he is performing his work in the Church right before their eyes, his soul-destroying activity as plain as day? The trouble is that they have no living knowledge of the doctrine of justification and of the importance of this doctrine for the Church. From my own experience I must confess that I was vitally convinced that the Pope is the Antichrist only after I realized, on the one hand, what the doctrine of justification is and how much it means to the Church, and, on the other hand, that the real essence of the Papacy consists in denying and cursing the doctrine of justification . . .

Most modern Protestant theologians have adopted the Roman view of the doctrine of justification, as Doellinger pointed out in his lectures on the reunion of the Christian Church.—Pieper, *op. cit.*, Vol. 2, pp. 554, 555.

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Justification by Faith and the Spirit of Antichrist

The historic Protestant identification of antichrist is not a matter of cheap polemics against the papacy. Rome is the religious personification of human nature. "We cannot reproach Rome with anything which does not recoil upon man himself."—J. H. Merle D'Aubigne, *History of the Reformation of the Sixteenth Century*, Vol. 1, p. 32.

It is for good reason that the apostle calls the antichrist the "man of sin." 2 Thess. 2:3. St. Paul's words hark back to the book of Daniel. The prophet describes this power which grew up out of the Roman Empire and among the ten nations of Western Europe as having "eyes like the eyes of *man*." Dan. 7:8. And the leopardlike beast of Revelation 13, which is obviously the same power as the horn of Daniel 7, is said to have "the number of a *man*." Rev. 13:18. The papal system was developed by man—and we want to say very decisively, by many great and good men. They worked with great energy and foresight to build up the church of God on earth. But they gradually shaped the development of the church according to "the eyes of man"—man's wisdom and understanding. Great men like Augustine, who nobly combatted the heresy of Pelagianism, helped build the Church of Rome into the papacy. Augustine combatted Pelagius by showing that there was much evil in the best saints—and his own impact on subsequent church history proved his own words.

More and more the Church of Rome bore the image and superscription of man until it sat in the temple of God acting as if it were God. It was the expression of the one sin of all ages—man taking the place of God.

Casting the Truth to the Earth

The focus of the Christian's affections is above. It is "where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God." Col. 3:1. The Old Testament scripture most frequently alluded to in the New Testament is Psalm 110: "The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit Thou at My right hand . . ."

It needs to be made startlingly clear that Christ at the right hand of God, and not Christ in the human heart, is the great focal point of the apostolic proclamation. Christ has redeemed, perfected, justified and secured the salvation of His people, and He has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. But all these blessings are in Christ,

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reserved in heaven for all who are kept by the power of God through faith (1 Peter 1:3-5). The Christian does not possess these blessings within himself, for they are found outside of him in the person of Christ. Christ Himself at the right hand of God, absent from His saints on earth, is the redemption, righteousness, security, perfection, life and immortality of His people. ". . . our comonwealth is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ . . ." Phil. 3:20, R.S.V. The Spirit of Christ dwells in the saints to direct their affections, their faith and their attention outside of themselves to Christ at the right hand of God.

In contrast, let us look at the spirit of antichrist. Daniel, that great prophet who described the antichrist, said, ". . . it cast down the truth to the ground; and it practised, and prospered." Dan. 8:12.

Consider how the truth of justification by faith was thrown down to the earth. We have seen that the Christian's righteousness with God is at the right hand of God. But through the influence of human nature—the man of sin—the church lost this great truth of justification. More and more it focused on the inward work of grace in the human heart (which is very necessary and proper to give attention to in its right place and perspective). Finally, the church was found teaching that the Christian's righteousness with God is found in the Holy Spirit's work in his heart—the experience of renewal and sanctification. The *personal* righteousness of the believer on earth was put in the place of the *vicarious* righteousness of Christ in heaven. Faith was no longer directed to the doing and dying of Christ alone for justification with God. It was directed to the inner experience of the believer. In short, a righteousness on earth (the good works of men) took the place of the all-sufficient righteousness (the good works of

Christ) mediated for poor sinners at the right hand of God. Thus did the man of sin throw down the truth to the ground.

The whole development of the Roman system is a demonstration of what happens when the human heart and inward religious experience become the focus of the church's attention. What makes it the more terrible is that it is done under such a pious pretext. It is done under the guise of honoring the Holy Spirit, who indwells Christians.¹ Dr. James Buchanan pinpoints the doctrine of antichrist when he says:

There is, perhaps, no more subtle or plausible error, on the subject of Justification, than that which makes it rest on the indwelling presence, and the gracious work, of the Holy Spirit in the heart . . . nothing can be more unscriptural in itself, or more pernicious to the souls of men, than the substitution of the gracious work of the Spirit *in* us, for the vicarious work of Christ *for* us, as the ground of our pardon and acceptance with God.—James Buchanan, *The Doctrine of Justification* (republished London: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1961), pp. 401, 402.

When man's *personal* righteousness took the place of Christ's substitutionary righteousness, a whole process of putting man in the place of God began. The church usurped the authority of Christ. Its voice was put forth as the voice of God, its priests became mediators in the place of Christ, and its mass was set forth as the sacrifice in the place of the cross. All the abuses of the papal system were only corollaries of its one great error of putting an inside righteousness of the heart in the place of the outside righteousness of Christ. ". . . it cast down the truth to the ground; and it practised, and prospered." Dan. 8:12.

The Deadly Wound

Luther did not center his attack against the abuses of the papacy but against its doctrine of justification. Complaining against the radical enthusiasts, who aimed their attack on papal customs and abuses, Luther said:

We moreover did teach and urge nothing but this article of justification, which alone at that time did threaten the authority of the Pope and lay waste his kingdom . . . Images and other abuses in the Church would have fallen down of themselves, if they had but diligently taught the article of justification. — Martin Luther, *A Commentary on St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians*, Middleton edition (London: James Clarke & Co. Ltd., 1953), pp. 218, 219.

The Reformation restored the truth of the righteousness of faith—a righteousness not on earth but in heaven, not in man but in Christ, not personal but vicarious, not infused but imputed, not experiential but eschatological. This was the sword of truth which inflicted such a blow on the papacy that prophecy described it as a "deadly wound." Rev. 13:3.

¹Since the Holy Spirit comes to glorify Christ alone (John 16:13), He will not be a party to placing His own work in the heart at the center of attention instead of Christ's work for man.

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The Healing of the Deadly Wound

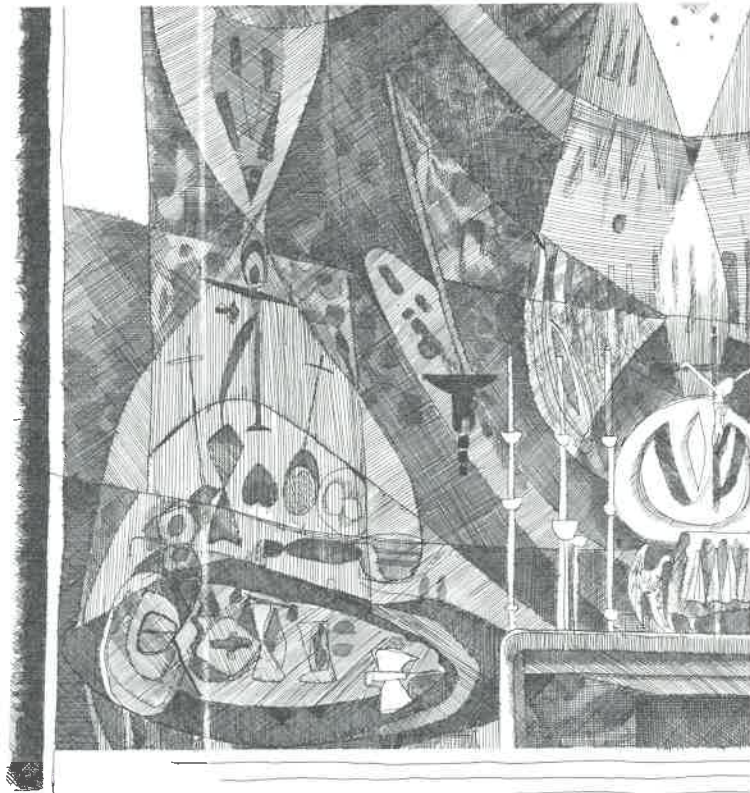
The same human tendencies which corrupted the truth of justification by faith in the early church have been at work in the Protestant movement. The current religious scene is preoccupied with things other than the great article of justification. The human heart and what goes on in the human heart is the overwhelming preoccupation of the current religious scene. This religion of internalism, which never gets higher than a man's own spiritual navel, takes many forms:

1. It is often taught that faith itself justifies as an ethical act. People are urged to "believe" as if a certain quality in the heart called faith will make them pleasing in the sight of God.

2. Every sinner who comes to faith by the hearing of the gospel and work of the Spirit will make a decision for Christ, but this is far different from urging people to become Christians by their own acts of decision. There is a popular type of "decisionism" which tends to ground salvation on some religious act of the human agent—it may be called "faith," "decision," "surrender," etc. But justification by grace alone teaches us to flee from our own acts of repentance, contrition, consecration, or even faith, and hide ourselves in the faithfulness of Christ.

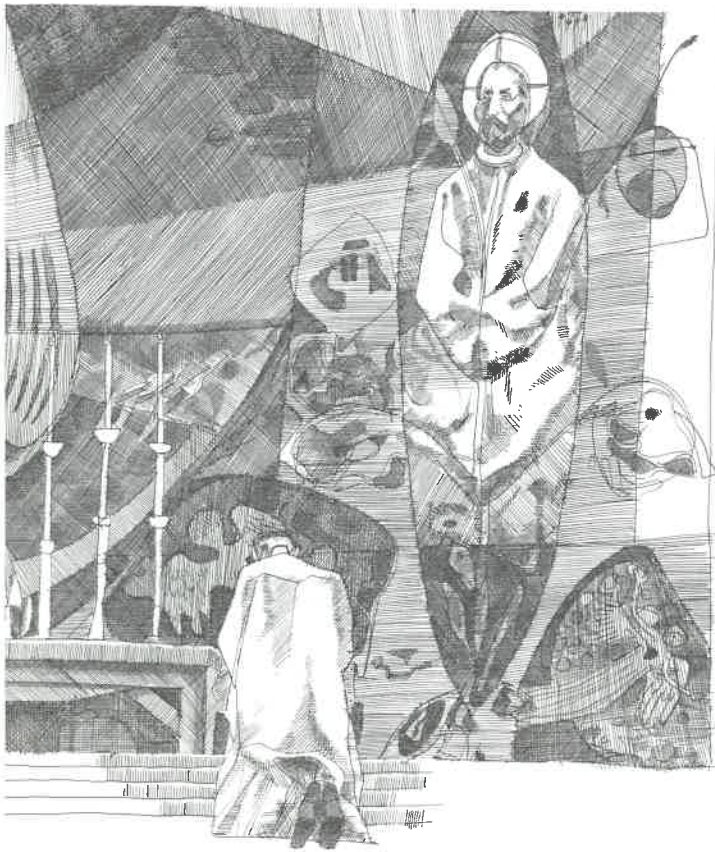
3. Evangelicalism in general has far more to say about the psychological and moral change in the believer (regeneration, or renewal) than about God's regenerating act in Jesus Christ. Along with this, baptism is often set forth as the outward sign of this inward experience. Baptism becomes a sign and memorial of the believer's "death"—a memorial of his decision and consecration—instead of a witness to the one efficacious death of Jesus Christ. The gospel is subtly changed into the message of self and him crucified instead of Christ and Him crucified (1 Cor. 2:2). The believer's mystical act of "dying" becomes the focus of attention. This crisis experience of "yielding," "surrendering" and "dying" is said to be the means of getting the Spirit or getting the victory over sin (according to a misuse of Romans 6:1-7). Just as Rome put man's *personal* righteousness in the place of Christ's *vicarious* righteousness, so this teaching puts the personal "dying" of the believer in the place of the vicarious death of Christ. It is so easy to forget that it is His unique, unrepeatable death which frees us from sin and the law and brings us the Spirit (Rom. 6:2-7; 7:4; 2 Cor. 5:14; Gal. 3:13, 14). "We have even preferred heroic crucifixion on our own rather than face humdrum crucifixion 'with Christ'."—J. E. Fison, *The Christian Hope* (London & New York: Longmans, Greene & Co., 1954), p. 32.

4. The apostles proclaimed the resurrection of Jesus with great power, but modern evangelicalism prefers to focus on the resurrected life of the believer. The new birth, of course, is vitally important, but it is nothing short of tragedy when we substitute the "gospel" of the changed life for the gospel which changes lives. Instead of a healthy preaching of the Christ event, the changed



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life itself becomes the supreme event. Go to an average evangelical “testimony meeting,” and you will have full proof of that. But the devotees of the teenage Indian guru also have glowing testimonies about how their master gave them victory over drugs, changed their personalities and filled them with radiant peace. The apostles did not run around preaching a new life style obtainable by believing in Jesus—as if Jesus were a mere means to this end. Modern evangelicalism preaches the conversion event of the believer far more than the Christ event, salvation by new birth rather than salvation which brings new birth.

5. There is no question but that the doctrine of the Spirit’s indwelling and the Spirit-filled life has become the center of evangelical interest. The charismatic movement has only carried this evangelical preoccupation with the Spirit’s work in the heart a little further than most of its evangelical friends.

When the human heart and subjective inward experience become the center of the church’s teaching—and who could deny that this has become well-nigh universal—the truth is cast down to the earth. Man on earth has taken the spotlight from Christ at the right hand of God. It does not matter how this is dressed up in the most pious and splendidly Christian robes; it is the spirit of antichrist. Glorification of religious experience under the sanctimonious pretext of honoring the Holy Spirit is the glorification of man and leads to the worship of the creature (the beast) rather than worship of the Creator. This is what the great issue described in Revelation 13 and 14 is all about.

The church cannot ignore the mighty truth of justification by faith without casting the truth to the ground. When the pursuit of man’s religious experience on earth takes the place of faith in Christ’s intercession of righteousness in heaven, people “mind earthly things”—even their own “belly,” or internals (see Phil. 3:19).

How Views of the Evangel Influence Views on Prophecy

An earthly, man-centered, experience-centered religion will have a corresponding effect on views about eschatology. The evangelical is inseparably linked to the prophetic. For instance:

Instead of looking to the Jerusalem which is above (Gal. 4:26), which descends “out of heaven from God” (Rev. 21:10), there is a looking to *earthly* Jerusalem. Instead of looking to Mount Zion which is in “heavenly Jerusalem,” where Jesus stands as Mediator of the new covenant (Heb. 12:22-24), there is a looking to an *earthly* Mount Zion, which is as destitute of any significance as the old covenant itself. Instead of looking to the true temple in heaven, where Christ is High Priest after the order of Melchisedec (Rev. 11:19; Heb. 8:1, 2), there is a looking for an *earthly* temple to be built in Palestine. And the end of all earthly, man-centered religion is an *earthly* millennium



A Judaizing corruption of the gospel has led to a Judaizing concept of prophecy and eschatology.

“along the lines of a Moslem paradise on the improved Damascus model.”—*Ibid.*, p. 42. An “exciting experience of the Spirit-filled life” is to be exceeded by an even more exciting future in the coming earthly utopia. “. . . tomorrow shall be as this day, and much more abundant.” Thus, the prophetic along with the evangelical is thrown down to the earth.

Futurism,² with its prophetic vision directed to an earthly Palestine, came out of Rome. Futurism is the extension of Roman Catholic spirituality to the things of prophecy. The only reason that it could take root on Protestant soil is because, as Catholic scholar Bouyer says, there has been “a rediscovery of Catholicism”

²To be fair, we must acknowledge that there is a kind of futurism that is neither dispensational nor Palestinian. This better kind of futurism is represented by the writings of George Eldon Ladd. We do not deny that some prophecies of the antichrist may have future fulfillment. Like preterism, this form of futurism may be correct in some things which it affirms, *but it is wrong in what it denies.*

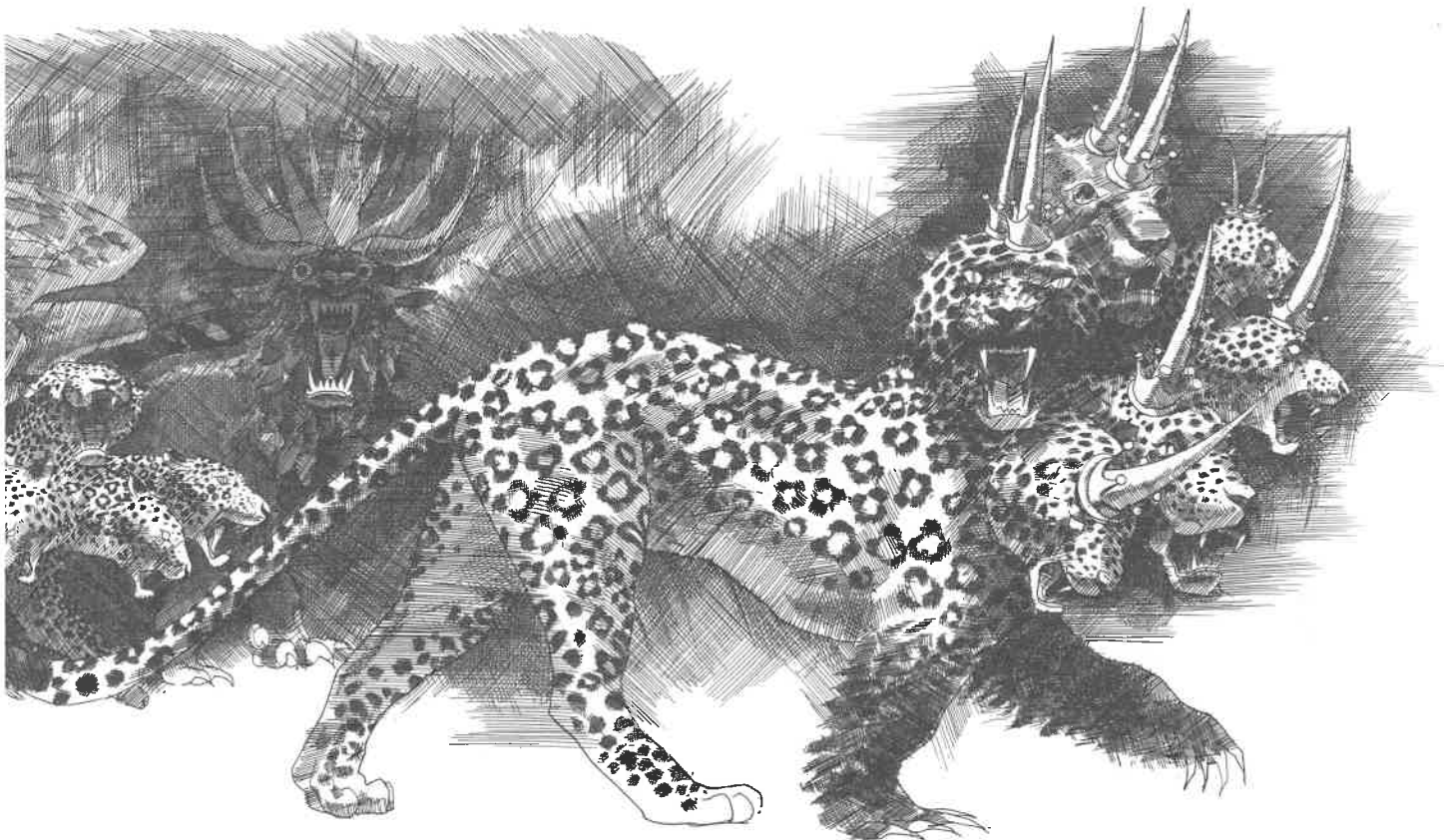
within the Protestant movement (Louis Bouyer, *The Spirit and Forms of Protestantism* [Cleveland: World Pub. Co., 1964], p. 189). We have a situation today wherein the so-called Protestant movement is saturated with Catholic mentality and Catholic spirituality. A Judaizing corruption of the gospel has led to a Judaizing concept of prophecy and eschatology. The Reformers had a lot of insight when they labeled the millennial dreams of radical Anabaptists as “Jewish fables.” At any rate, the New Testament gives not a suspicion of a text to show that the apostles preached about a coming earthly, temporal, Jewish millennium. We must not read the prophecies of the Old Testament as if the New Testament did not exist.

“What about Revelation 20?” someone asks. We cannot object to taking this scripture literally in a premillennial sense, but search and look, and as F. F. Bruce acknowledges,³ there is nothing here which says the millennium is on earth. And there is nothing to say it is Jewish either.

The Implications of Revelation 13

However unpleasant and alarming it might be, we ought to take off our futurist glasses and look at the way Protestantism read Revelation 13 for three hundred years. Just as the Hebrews got a new Pharaoh who knew not

³Commentary on Revelation 20, Tyndale series.



Joseph, so the church has new teachers who know not the genuine Protestant system of prophetic interpretation. This generation of Christians needs to be told how our spiritual fathers understood the symbol of the leopardlike beast in Revelation 13.

Until the last one hundred years Protestants generally understood that the great leopardlike beast of Revelation 13 was a symbol of the papacy. Says the Revelator:

And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy. And the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion: and the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority. Rev. 13:1, 2.

This harks back to Daniel 7, where the prophet describes the four great empires (Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece and Rome) under the symbols of the lion, the bear, the leopard and the ten-horned beast. Apparently, the spirit of Babylon, Greece, etc., lives on in the power brought to view in Revelation 13. The evil work of this beast corresponds exactly with the evil work of the "little horn" of Daniel 7.

The "little horn" of Daniel 7 grew out of the beast which symbolized the Roman Empire. It is therefore a Roman power. It grew up among the ten nations of Western

Europe and dominated them. It is described as continuing its existence until the judgment sits to take away its dominion. The "little horn" clearly describes Papal Rome, and the beast of Revelation 13 is obviously the same power brought to view.⁴ So Protestant expositors of a bygone era said that Revelation 13:1-10 describes the papacy. They also understood that the Protestant Reformation inflicted the "deadly wound" on the papacy through proclaiming the truth of justification by faith. Thereafter the power of Rome suffered a great decline in Europe, until the opening of the nineteenth century witnessed a papacy so weakened that most observers saw it ready to die as a world power, never to rise again.

But the prophecy of Revelation 13 does not end there. Even as Christ received His death wound and lived again, so the antichrist would receive his death wound and live again. The prophet shifts his attention to a lamblike beast rising from the earth (Rev. 13:11). The lamb is elsewhere used as a symbol of Christ. Here a new power arises which is completely different from the wild, ravaging "beasts" that came before. In appearance and profession this power is Christian. But a strange thing happens. This second beast, which supplanted the first beast, begins to act like the first beast. Instead of preaching the gospel, it preaches another

⁴Compare the work of the "little horn" with the work of the leopardlike beast of Revelation 13.



gospel. It becomes a "false prophet" (Rev. 16:13) which works miracles and brings fire down from heaven in the sight of men (Rev. 13:13).⁵ It thereby deceives people into once again worshiping the first beast (Rev. 13:11-13). A likeness of the first beast is formed, and together the beast and its image unite to compel all men to follow in their train.

Now if the first beast of Revelation 13 is, as Protestantism once believed, a symbol of Romanism, what is signified by this second beast, which finally becomes a likeness of the first beast? Could it be a symbol of a Protestantism which, having lost the truth of justification by faith, proclaims a "gospel" in the power and spirit of antichrist?

If the Revelation, chapter 13, is truly a description of where the current religious scene is heading, it demands

the most urgent and prayerful attention on the part of God's people. The great mistake of the Jewish nation was that, failing to recognize Christ, they fulfilled prophecy by condemning Him (Acts 13:24). The great danger facing the Christian church is that, failing to recognize antichrist, we will fulfill prophecy by promoting him. One thing from Revelation 13 stands out clearly. Just as Christ, the image of God, is also God, so the lamblike beast, on becoming an image of antichrist, is also antichrist. The hand that wounded antichrist is the hand which will restore the lost ascendancy of the man of sin.

The Final Reformation

As we scan the future, all is not dark. The truth, cast down to the earth, will be lifted up to its rightful place as the Spirit of Christ points men to Christ at the right hand of God. Many will cast away their preoccupation with their own experience and live by faith in their Righteousness and Life at the right hand of God.

⁵Fire genuinely from heaven would signify the outpouring of God's Spirit, but this is seen to be God's Spirit by those who have the eyes of men—that is, by those who themselves have the spirit of antichrist (Dan. 7:8). Therefore, a counterfeit outpouring of the Spirit is here indicated.

Justification by Faith and the Israel of God

For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature. And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God. Gal. 6:15, 16.

What is the New Testament view of the Israel of God? What determines whether a man is a real son of Abraham?

To the Jew it was most important that he could prove he was a son of Abraham, for “to Abraham and his seed were the promises made.” Gal. 3:16. The Pharisees were certain of being part of the Israel of God because they could trace their physical descent back to Abraham. John the Baptist declared that they were resting on a false confidence. “. . . think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father,” he warned them, “for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.” Matt. 3:9. Mere physical descent would give them no claim on God and no right to be included in the Israel of God.

Again, the Pharisees said to Jesus, “Abraham is our father.” John 8:39. But Jesus denied their confident claim, saying, “If ye were Abraham’s children, ye would do the works of Abraham.” John 8:39. Jesus categorically denied that they were children of Abraham.

When Zaccheus showed by his works that he had the faith of Abraham, Jesus declared, “Today salvation has come to this house, since he also is a son of Abraham.” Luke 19:9, R.S.V. Jesus was not saying that Zaccheus was saved because he was a physical descendant of Abraham—for there were many Jews in Palestine who were not saved. Jesus was saying that Zaccheus’ faith constituted him a *real* son of Abraham. The Lord could have said to him, as he said to the repentant woman, “Thy faith hath saved thee . . .” Luke 7:50.

Again, Jesus greeted Nathanael with the salutation, “Behold an Israelite *indeed*, in whom is no guile!” John 1:47. The word “indeed” signifies a *true*, or *real*, Israelite. Jesus therefore declared that a real Israelite is a man “in whom is no guile.” According to Psalm 32, the guileless man is not a sinless man but the man who honestly continues to confess his sinfulness and who finds forgiveness at the hand of a merciful God. St. Paul cites Psalm 32 and shows that this guileless man (the Israelite “indeed”) is the man who is justified by faith (see Rom. 4:1-8).

Jesus declared that a real Israelite is a man “in whom is no guile.”



The clear teaching of Jesus about the real Israel of God is found also in the Epistles of His great apostle. Could words be clearer than the following?

For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: but he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God. Rom. 2:28, 29.

Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called. That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed. Rom. 9:7, 8.

... even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham. Gal. 3:6, 7.

And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise. Gal. 3:29.

For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature. And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God. Gal. 6:15, 16.

Christ the Seed of Abraham

God made promises to the seed of Abraham. The Jews are still waiting for God to carry out His promises to them, and more amazing, many Christians are now waiting for God to carry out His promises to the Jewish nation as the seed of Abraham. This is what happens when people read the Old Testament without the light and interpretation of the New Testament.

Now let us get two simple facts straight once and for all:

1. God made promises to Abraham's seed (Gal. 3:19).
2. Christ is the Seed of Abraham. ("Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of One, And to thy Seed, which is

Christ.") This is why Christ is called the Mediator of the covenant. It is only by Him, in Him and through Him that God carries out any of His promises to Abraham.

The Seed of Abraham is Jesus Christ. It includes all who are *in Christ* and excludes all outside of Christ. So the apostle affirms, ". . . if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." Gal. 3:29.

When the apostle declares, "And so all Israel shall be saved . . ." (Rom. 11:26), he is certainly not teaching us that every member of the Jewish race will be saved. But the seed of Israel shall be saved—that is to say, all those who are in Jesus Christ—and not one shall be lost.

Neither Jesus nor Paul are speaking in mere allegories when they tell us who are the children of Abraham. They are telling us who are *real* children of Abraham. Abraham was justified by faith and therefore became the father of Israel. All who are justified by faith are real children of Abraham (Gal. 3:8). The Seed of Israel is Jesus Christ. He is also the "King of the Jews." If a man is related to Jesus Christ, who can deny that he is a real Jew according to the Scriptures? For those who believe in Jesus Christ are born again (1 John 5:1), and they actually partake of the nature of Jesus Christ (2 Peter 1:4).

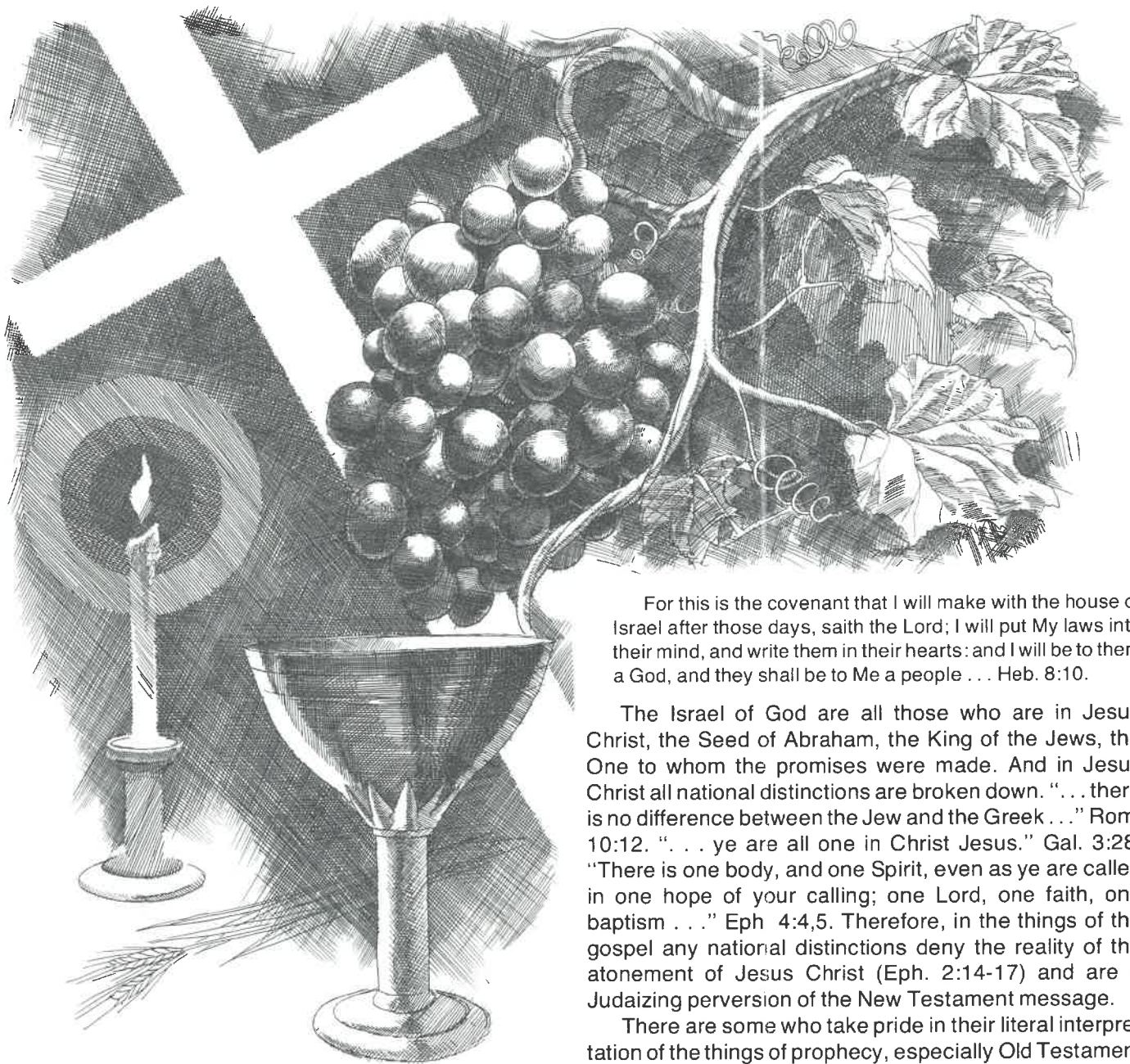
The Gentile Church Not a Separate Identity

The Judaizers at Galatia were contending that the Gentiles had to become children of Abraham by *means* of certain changes in their flesh. The apostle Paul did not dispute the necessity of Gentiles becoming part of the Israel of God. Indeed, "all Israel shall be saved," and only Israel—for as Jesus said, "salvation is of the Jews." John 4:22. The apostle refuted the wrong *method* of trying to incorporate the Gentiles into the Israel of God. His message was clear: Abraham was justified by faith, and every Gentile who is justified by faith becomes a son of Abraham (Gal. 3:8). The promises were made to the seed of Abraham, and Christ is that Seed. Therefore, all who are truly baptized into Christ are in Christ and are part of Abraham's seed (Gal. 3:28, 29). Those who have become new creatures by faith in Jesus and walk according to the rule of faith are "the Israel of God." Gal. 6:15, 16.

Gentiles who believe the gospel become "fellow heirs" with the faithful Jews. They do not make up a separate body, but they become "fellow heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ by the gospel . . ." Eph. 3:6. The Gentiles, "being a wild olive tree, wert grafted in among them [the Jews], and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree . . ." Rom. 11:17. Once "aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise," the Gentiles are "made nigh by the blood of Christ." Eph. 2:12, 13. Being now children of Abraham, part of the commonwealth of Israel and partakers of God's promises to Israel, believing Gentiles make up "the house of Israel" to whom the new covenant promise is given:

The Seed of Abraham is Jesus Christ. It includes all who are *in Christ* and excludes all outside of Christ.

Abraham was justified by faith, and every Gentile who is justified by faith becomes a son of Abraham.



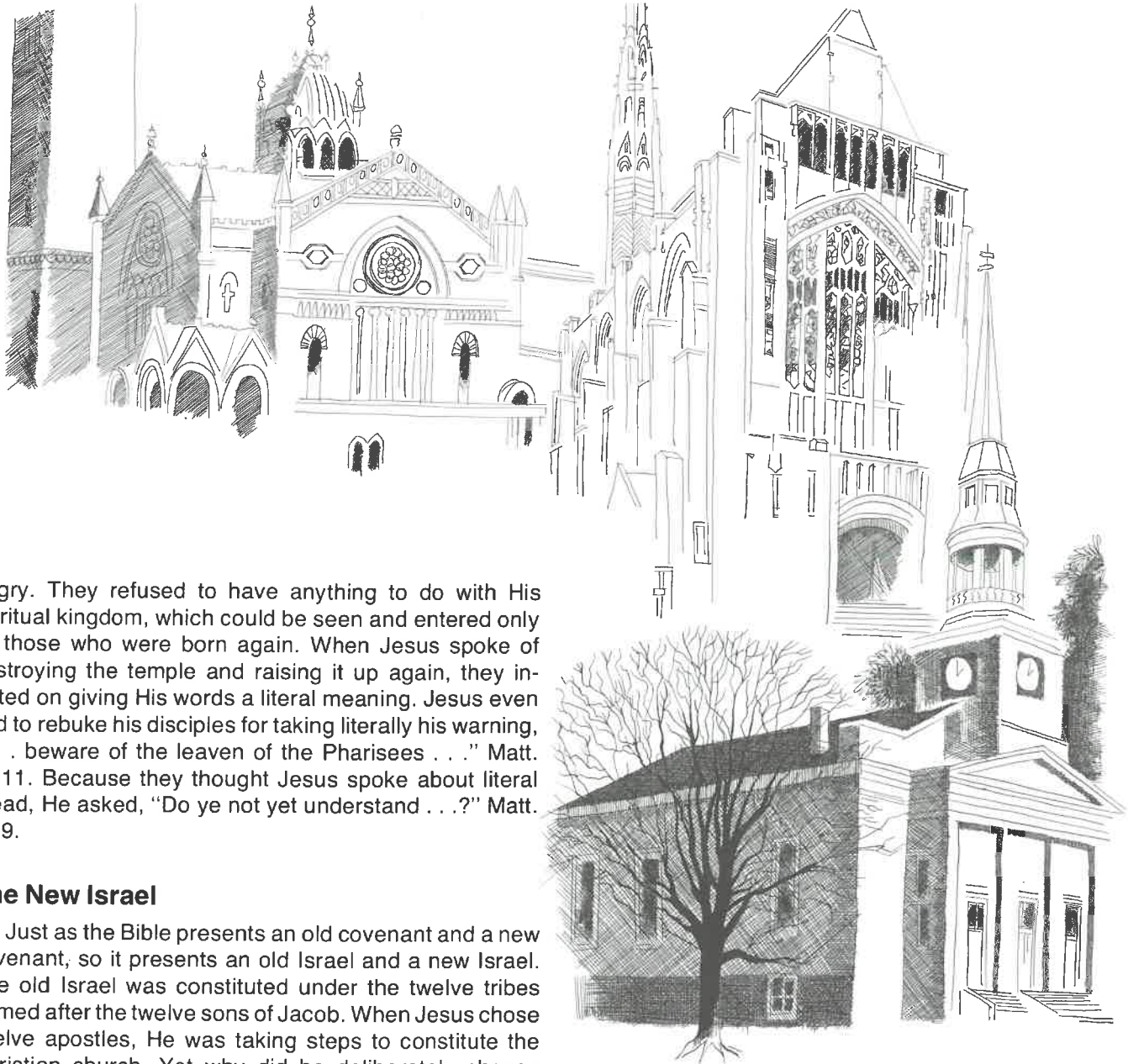
Crass literalness is in keeping with the method of interpretation employed by the Pharisees.

For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put My laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to Me a people . . . Heb. 8:10.

The Israel of God are all those who are in Jesus Christ, the Seed of Abraham, the King of the Jews, the One to whom the promises were made. And in Jesus Christ all national distinctions are broken down. “. . . there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek . . .” Rom. 10:12. “. . . ye are all one in Christ Jesus.” Gal. 3:28. “There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism . . .” Eph. 4:4,5. Therefore, in the things of the gospel any national distinctions deny the reality of the atonement of Jesus Christ (Eph. 2:14-17) and are a Judaizing perversion of the New Testament message.

There are some who take pride in their literal interpretation of the things of prophecy, especially Old Testament prophecy. No sound Bible scholar will deny that the Bible should be read in its historical-grammatical sense or that “literal wherever possible” is a good rule. But many prophecies of the Old Testament cannot be taken with strict literalness. The stone of stumbling to both houses of Israel was not a literal stone but Jesus Christ. Malachi’s Elijah was not literally Elijah but John the Baptist. Many more examples could be given, but our point is this: How would we know the true interpretation without the New Testament? Does not the gospel determine our use of the Old Testament?

Besides, a crass literalness is in keeping with the method of interpretation employed by the Pharisees. When Jesus gave a nonliteral application to the Messianic prophecy about delivering the captives, they were



angry. They refused to have anything to do with His spiritual kingdom, which could be seen and entered only by those who were born again. When Jesus spoke of destroying the temple and raising it up again, they insisted on giving His words a literal meaning. Jesus even had to rebuke his disciples for taking literally his warning, “. . . beware of the leaven of the Pharisees . . .” Matt. 16:11. Because they thought Jesus spoke about literal bread, He asked, “Do ye not yet understand . . .?” Matt. 16:9.

The New Israel

Just as the Bible presents an old covenant and a new covenant, so it presents an old Israel and a new Israel. The old Israel was constituted under the twelve tribes named after the twelve sons of Jacob. When Jesus chose twelve apostles, He was taking steps to constitute the Christian church. Yet why did he deliberately choose twelve apostles? And why did the apostle James address the church as “the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad”? James 1:1.¹ It was because the New Testament church, comprised of Jews and Gentiles, constituted the new Israel of God.

When Christ died on the cross, national distinctions were ended. The old national religious economy was as extinct as the old covenant. Henceforth the Christian church, founded on the teachings of the twelve apostles, would be the new Israel, the inheritor of all the promises and responsibilities of Israel of the Old Testament.

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¹From ancient times the Epistle of James was classified as one of the “Catholic Epistles”—meaning that it was written to the church in general and not to a particular segment of believers.

The following chart illustrates how the New Testament church has become the new Israel:

Old Israel	New Israel
Holy nation Ex. 19:5, 6	Holy nation 1 Peter 2:9; Matt. 21:43
Kingdom of priests Ex. 19:5, 6	Kingdom of priests 1 Peter 2:5, 9; Rev. 1:6; Rev. 4:4; 5:10
A peculiar treasure Ex. 19:5, 6	A peculiar treasure 1 Peter 2:9
God's people Hosea 1:9, 10; Rom. 9:6-8	God's people 1 Peter 2:9
A holy people Deut. 7:6	A holy people 1 Peter 1:15, 16
A people of inheritance Deut. 4:20	A people of inheritance Eph. 1:18
God's tabernacle among Israel Lev. 26:11	God's tabernacle among Israel John 1:14
God walked among them Lev. 26:12	God walks among His people 2 Cor. 6:16-18
Twelve sons of Jacob	Twelve apostles
Twelve tribes	Twelve tribes scattered abroad James 1:1
Christ married to His people Isa. 54:5; Jer. 3:14; Hosea 2:19; Jer. 6:2; 31:32	Christ married to the church James 4:4; Eph. 5:23-33; 2 Cor. 11:2

Conclusion

Abraham was justified by faith (Gen. 15:6; Rom. 4:3). Just as Abraham had two sons — Ishmael and Isaac — so there were always two classes of Jews. Not all were true sons of Abraham. The prophets frequently referred to the faithful remnant, who were the real children of Abraham.

Finally, at the time of the apostles there was a saved "remnant according to the election of grace" (Rom. 9:27; 11:5). This remnant were those who welcomed their Messiah and were justified by faith in Jesus. God's word had not failed (Rom. 9:6). These alone were the lineage of Isaac, and the rest were counted as Ishmaelites — illegitimate children. All Israel — that is, all who were

justified by faith — would be saved according to God's promise, which could never fail (Rom. 11:26). And all from among the Gentiles who would believe on Christ and be justified by faith would become children of Abraham. There is one way of salvation, one body, one faith, one baptism. Christ is the Seed of Abraham. The promises of God are by Him, to Him, through Him and in Him. He is the Elect One (Isa. 42:1), and the chosen people are those who are chosen in Him (Eph. 1:4).

For all the promises of God in Him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us. 2 Cor. 1:20.

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