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THE COLOSSIAN EPISTLE (Part 2)

ETERNAL - SUPERNAL - TERMINAL

THE COLOSSIAN REPLY TO CHURCH ERROR

By: Charles D. Alexander

“And He is the Head of the Body, the Church”.
Colossians 1:18

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THE SCOFIELD BIBLE

The late Dr. C. I. Scofield (of whose character and Christian standing we desire to speak nothing but good), was surely terribly entangled in false prophetic theory when he wrote (page 975, Scofield Reference Bible - note on Zechariah 11, vs.11) “Neither the Gentiles nor the Gentile church corporately are in view. Only the believers out of Israel (*italics*) during this age. The church corporately is not in O.T. prophecy”. We understand that in the latest edition of the Scofield Bible the editors have quietly dropped this sentence. We wonder why, when the note is essential to the survival of Dr. Scofield’s system. Dr. Scofield was only ploughing with Mr. J. N. Darby’s heifer, and it must be admitted that if the prophetic theory he inherited from this great “brethren” patriarch was correct he was being no more than logical when he insisted that the church as such is not to be found anywhere in O.T. prophecy. Yet Paul insists that the Church is the body of Christ; that the Church is the eternal purpose of God. The prophet prophesied of the salvation which the Apostles proclaimed says Peter and their words were only relevant to N.T. times (see 1 Peter 1:10-12). And Amos’s wrote of Gentile salvation, said James, as he quoted from Amos ch.9. the words related to the setting up again of David’s fallen house (See Acts 15). James quoted this prophecy to prove the

validity of gentile salvation then being called into question.

Paul labours in all his writings to show that the Church of the N.T. is the lawful successor of the Church which existed in the O.T. and whose history is traced back to the first page of human history. Who can withstand his argument in Galatians that he who was child of the Law in O.T. times, subject to the schoolmaster's rod in the shape of the elements or rudiments of legal observances, rituals, dietary laws, and the whole apparatus of Levitical statutes is the grown up son who having come of age, enters into the full inheritance and statue of sonship and inheritance in the N.T., the Spirit of Adoption now crying within him "Abba Father" to denote his coming, into the full and promised inheritance? To quote Paul's words directly:

"Now I say, that the heir as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all;

But is under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the father.

Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world:

But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law,

To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.

And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son unto your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.

Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ"

Galatians 4: 1-7

CONTINUITY OF THE CHURCH

The servant becomes a son, the child becomes the inheritor, and therefore the altered status must be regarded as a new beginning, but not a new person. This was what Christ was indicating when He said to Peter "On this rock I will build my

Church” - not a new Church which never before existed, but the Church in the endowment of her full privileges, released from the bondage and servitude of the O.T. into the enjoyment of the full liberty and privilege and standing of the N.T.

This doctrine of the continuity of the Church has far reaching consequences for the interpretation of the prophecies. That which was earthly and geographical in the O.T. is Spiritual and heavenly in the N.T. The prophets spoke in ancient times in terms and figures of the Church as she then was, as the nation of Israel with all her apparatus of an earthly throne an earthly priesthood, temple and city and with natural boundaries and topographical details. Prophesying of the N.T. glory of the Church they could speak in no other terms, and hence the many prophecies which speak of the exaltation of the earthly city, the elevation of the throne of David above the nations of the world, the glory of Jerusalem or Zion as the bride of Jehovah, exalted above the hills and all nations flowing into it, the subjugation of the world, the new and mild nature of the wild beasts, and the earth “filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea”. When we say that these are figures of speech descriptive of the new and exalted character of the Church in the N.T. we are being no more than logical. We go further and say it is impossible to interpret consistently these prophecies in the literal or natural sense, for if we do we shall stumble headlong into the same error which the Jews of Christ’s day committed when they rejected Christ because in their literal and natural interpretations He did not fulfill the prophecies of the expected kingdom.

The Jews never understood the spiritual nature of the promises and were wedded to the false view that the Mosaic Law along with its priesthood and its temple was a permanent feature, of the Lord’s arrangements on earth. But Paul tells us in Hebrews that “The priesthood being changed there is made of necessity a change also of the law” (Heb. 7, vs.12). “There is verily a disannulling of the commandment going before for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof” (Heb. 7, vs.18) “If the first covenant had been faultless there should no place have been found for the second” (Heb. 8, vs.7). The change of covenant is prophesied in Jeremiah 31, vs.31-34 and it is an extraordinary indictment of the state of evangelical theology today that there is an almost universal stumbling at the words with which the New Covenant is introduced in Jeremiah – “with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah”. The claim is made on O.T. grounds that this New Covenant does not belong to the Church at all but to the Jew of a generation yet future, whereas Paul in Hebrews views it as already being in full operation in his day two thousand years ago - the change having taken place, the Old Covenant having been disannulled and the New Covenant having been set up in the blood of Christ whose heavenly priesthood began to operate for the Church when He rose

from the dead, and the Temple having fallen along with its priesthood when the veil of the Temple was rent at the moment of His death.

And what covenant is it that Christ inaugurated at the last supper when He took the cup and said, “This cup is the N.T. in my blood”? Are there two New Covenants, a Jewish one and a Gentile one? And upon what covenant do we Gentile Christians rely for the forgiveness of our sins if it is not this New Covenant of which Jeremiah speaks, there being no other New Covenant? Who therefore can deny that “Israel and Judah” here mean the church? At the time of the prophecy the church was still under the tutors and governors of the old Law but from the time of the Cross Church has been free - the Son has made her free (John 8, vs.36). She is the true successor of the Church of the O.T. in unbroken continuity and the heir to the promises made to Israel – “All the promises of God in him (Christ) are yea and Amen”.

Our friends cannot dispose of this argument without rending the N.T. away from prophecy and covenant promise and leaving the Church (as indeed a formidable element in the Church does in fact leave her) without a prophecy, without a lawful existence, and without a valid future.

The Church must learn afresh to interpret prophecy as the N.T. interprets prophecy -- in spiritual and heavenly manner, as enduing her with the realisation of all the hope and expectation of the righteous in those far off days when it was revealed unto them that “not unto themselves but unto us they did minister the things, (namely the prophecies) which are now reported unto us by them that have preached the Gospel unto us with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven”. (1 Peter 1, vs.10-12)