

The Pacific Institute for Religious Studies (PIRS) is the educational ministry of Sovereign Grace Baptist Church of Silicon Valley
271 W Edmundson Ave • Morgan Hill, CA 95037 • www.sgbcsv.org • (408) 778-5930

Inside This Issue

- **Covenant Theology and Dispensationalism:
*A Discussion of the Primary Issues Involved***
Dr. William R. Downing
front page
- **The Spread of the Gospel
According to Acts 1-13**
Mark A. Bailon
page 6
- **Images from Church History**
page 8

PIRS Faculty



William R. Downing, M.Ed., Th.M., Ph.D., D.D.
Director

Paul S. Nelson, Ph.D., Th.M.
Department of Apologetics

James A. Billings, Th.B., M.Div.
Department of Church History

Mark A. Bailon, Th.M.
Department of Theology & Biblical Languages

Arthur L. Mellon, Ph.D.
Department of Middle East Studies

Michael A. Carling, M.Ed., Th.M.
Adjunct Faculty for PIRS Satellite Institute
in Marysville / Yuba City, California

Covenant Theology and Dispensationalism: *A Discussion of the Primary Issues Involved*

By W. R. Downing

Every Christian, Bible student, Bible teacher, biblical scholar, and preacher approaches the Scriptures from his given hermeneutical presuppositions. These may be correct or incorrect, mixed with a given amount of error, developed through personal study, inherited through religious tradition, received through formal or informal religious instruction, a seminary education or acquired through reading a given "Study Bible." All believers have the same Bible, but often have diverse approaches to its interpretation. All truth—even God's Truth—is necessarily interpreted according to one's presuppositions. This paper discusses two of the general hermeneutical approaches and the primary issues involved.

There have been, since the early twentieth century and the advent of Dispensational teaching, two general, diverse approaches to biblical interpretation within Reformed and Evangelical Christianity and among Baptists: Covenant Theology and Dispensationalism. Covenant Theology has been the historical—theological—biblical approach of both Reformed and Baptist Theology since the sixteenth century. According to C. H. Spurgeon:

The doctrine of the covenant lies at the root of all true theology. It has been said that he who well understands the distinction between the covenant of works and the covenant of grace, is a master of divinity. I am persuaded that most of the mistakes which men make concerning the doctrines of Scripture are based on fundamental errors with regard to the covenants of law and grace.¹

This can be noted by the Reformed and Old Baptist Confessions of Faith and the leading Baptist preachers and divines.²

The First London Baptist Confession (1644), Article 10:

Jesus Christ is made the mediator of the new and everlasting covenant of grace between God and man, ever to be perfectly and fully the prophet, priest, and king of the Church of God for evermore. (1 Tim. 2:5; Heb. 9:15; John 14:6; Isa. 9:6–7).

The Second London Baptist Confession (1689), Chapter 7: Of God's Covenant:

1. The distance between God and the creature is so great, that although reasonable creatures do owe obedience unto him as their creator, yet they could never have attained the reward of life but by some voluntary condescension on God's part, which he hath been pleased to express by way of covenant. [Luke 17:10; Job 35: 7–8; 1 Tim. 2:5; Heb. 9:15; John 14:6; Isa. 9:6–7]
2. Moreover, man having brought himself under the curse of the law by his fall it pleased the Lord to make a covenant of grace, wherein he freely offereth unto sinners life and salvation by Jesus Christ, requiring of them faith in him, that they may be saved; and promising to give unto all those that are ordained unto eternal life, his Holy Spirit, to make them willing and able to believe. [Gen. 2:17; Gal. 3:10; Rom. 3:20–21; Rom. 8:3; Mark 16:15–16; John 3:16; Ezek. 36:26–27; John 6:44–45; Psa. 110:3]
3. This covenant is revealed in the gospel, first of all to Adam in the promise of salvation by the seed of the woman, and afterwards by farther steps, until the full discovery thereof was completed in the New Testament;

and it is founded in that eternal covenant transaction that was between the Father and the Son about the redemption of the elect; and it is alone by the grace of this covenant that all of the posterity of fallen Adam that ever were saved did obtain life and blessed immortality, man being now utterly incapable of acceptance with God upon those terms on which Adam stood in his state of innocence. [Gen. 3:15; Heb. 1:1-2; 2 Tim. 1:9; Titus 1:2; Heb. 9:6, 13; Rom. 4:1-2; &c., Acts 4:12; John 8:56]

Dispensationalism began its development in the late nineteenth century and has been popularized through the *Scofield Reference Bible*. Dispensationalism now characterizes much of Evangelical Christianity and is often predominant in modern Baptist circles.

Covenant Theology

Covenant Theology views Scripture in terms of the Divine eternal, creative and redemptive purpose or Covenant of Redemption [the *pactum salutis* or “Covenant of Peace”] and its out-working in time and history in terms of the Covenant of Works and the Covenant of Grace revealed in Scripture. The various subordinate and progressive covenants under the Old Covenant and Testament [Adamic, Noahic, Abrahamic, Mosaic and Davidic] were covenants of promise (Eph. 2:12), and the New or Gospel Covenant is the realization and finalization of the Covenant of Grace. In short, the New or Gospel Covenant is the Covenant of Grace. It is all of free and sovereign grace from election to glorification, and pertains to the elect alone.³

Covenant Theology holds that God has always dealt with man within a covenant relationship—from a principle of *representation* and *imputation*—i.e., either in Adam or in Christ [this identification is also termed Federal Theology], and not merely on a personal basis (Rom. 3:24-6; 5:11-19; 1 Cor. 15:22, 45-47). We were in Adam by nature; we are in Christ by grace. There has ever been and will ever be only one method of salvation and a right relationship with God—through personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. The Old

Testament believers looked forward to the cross; we, as New Testament believers, look back to it, as it were (Gen. 3:15; Jn. 8:56; Heb. 11:1ff). There was never salvation through animal sacrifice or the works of the Law (Rom. 3:27-31; 9:31-32; Gal. 2:16; 3:10-16).⁴

The Covenant of Works was made with unfallen Adam (Gen. 2:16-17). Adam transgressed, apostatized and broke this Covenant (Gen. 3:1-13; Hos. 6:7).⁵ God instituted the Covenant of Grace (Gen. 3:15) as both a promise to fallen, sinful man and a challenge to the serpent. The history of redemption and the subsequent dealings of God with mankind are to be viewed in terms of this Covenant of Grace as promised in the subordinate covenants of the Old Testament and both realized and finalized in the New Testament Covenant of Grace or New Covenant which was ratified by the blood of the Lord Jesus (Gen. 12:3; Jer. 31:31-34; Ezk. 11:19-20; 36:25-27; Matt. 26:28; Gal. 3:16; Heb. 8:6-13; 10:16-18; 12:24; 13:20).

Indeed, The Covenant of Grace is the Covenant of Works [broken by the first Adam] realized, fulfilled and mediated through the person and redemptive work of the Lord Jesus Christ who, as the “Last Adam” and “Second Man,” the only Mediator, Savior and Redeemer, completely fulfilled and satisfied its requirements through his active and passive obedience. This perfect righteousness and complete obedience are imputed to the elect through faith alone. Thus, the entire scope of salvation effectually comes to the elect by free and sovereign grace alone. (1 Tim. 2:5; Heb. 9:15; Jn. 14:6; Acts 4:12; Isa. 9:6-7)

Dispensationalism

Dispensationalism by contrast emphasizes such terms as “dispensation” (οἰκονομία, Eng. “economy,” from οἶκος, “house,” and νόμος, “law,” hence the management of an household, a stewardship) and “age” (αἰών, “age,” “era”) in the Scriptures. Dispensationalism is an inclusive hermeneutical approach that views the Scriptures as

divided into various well-defined time-periods or “dispensations.”

In each dispensation God reveals a particular salvific purpose to be accomplished to which men respond in either faith or unbelief, obedience or disobedience, contrary to Covenant Theology, which holds to only one method of salvation through faith in Christ alone. These dispensations or time-periods are seen as the successive stages of progressive revelation. Although the number of ages varies from five to many dispensations [ultra-Dispensationalism], the commonly-held Seven Dispensations are: “Innocency” [the era of unfallen Adam], “Conscience” and “Human Government” [from the Fall of Adam to Noah], “Promise” [from Abraham to Moses], “Law” [from Moses to Christ],⁶ “Grace” [from Pentecost to the Rapture] and a literal “Millennium” [1,000 year reign of Christ on Earth], followed by the eternal state.

Dispensational Theology is latently Arminian through, at the least, a “modified Calvinism,” which is, in reality, a refined Arminianism. According to Robert Haldane,

Many call themselves moderate Calvinists, a denomination to which it is not easy to affix a precise idea. To the system called Calvinism, there may be nearer or more distant approaches, but those who deny any of the peculiar doctrines of that system cannot in any sense be called Calvinists. To affix the term Calvinism to any system, from which the doctrine of predestination is excluded, or in which it is even modified, is entirely a misnomer. Some profess Calvinism, but affect to hold it in a more unexceptionable manner than it is held in the system in general. They seem to think that in the defense of that system, Calvin was extravagant, and that he gave unnecessary offense by exaggerated statements, and by language not warranted by the Scriptures. Such persons, it is presumed, are strangers to the writings of Calvin. Calvin himself is remarkable for keeping on Scripture ground, and avoiding anything that may justly be termed extravagant. No writer has ever indulged less in metaphysical speculation on the deep things of God than this writer. To support his system, it was necessary only to exhibit

Scripture testimony; and he seems quite contented to rest the matter on this foundation.

What is called moderate Calvinism is in reality refined Arminianism. It is impossible to modify the former without sliding into the latter. If the doctrine of God's sovereignty and of unconditional election be denied, regeneration and redemption must undergo a corresponding modification, and all the doctrines of grace will be more or less affected.⁷

It is also unavoidably antinomian, in that it relegates the "Mosaic Law," including the Moral Law, as epitomized in the Decalogue, to an alleged "Dispensation of Law" from Sinai to the Cross. Thus the Moral Law has been abrogated by the redemptive work of our Lord and does not apply to this "Dispensation of Grace." The result is that the very nature of conversion [replaced by "decisionism"] and Christian experience have been severely modified and the reality of personal sanctification made optional through the necessarily antinomian doctrine of the "carnal Christian" error, which makes the believer's union with Christ ineffectual, contrary to Scripture (Rom. 5:11-6:23; Col. 3:1-5ff). Note the comments of Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer (1871-1952), a leading proponent of Dispensationalism:

...every believer is now said to be sanctified positionally, holy, and by so much a saint before God. This position [union with Christ] bears no relationship to the believer's daily experience more than that it should inspire him to holy living...As positional sanctification is absolutely disassociated from the daily life, so experimental sanctification is absolutely unrelated to position in [union with] Christ.⁸

The Scripture makes our union with Christ the very foundation of our definitive and practical, progressive sanctification, as manifest in our daily lives (Rom. 6:1-23; 1 Cor. 6:14-20; 2 Cor. 3:17-18; 5:13-17; Gal. 2:20; Eph. 1:3-6; 2:4-10).

Again, according to Chafer,

...Those believers who are dominated by the flesh respond to the flesh and those that are dominated by the Spirit respond

to the Spirit (Rom. 8:5). In any case the carnal or fleshly mind functions in the realm of spiritual death and the spiritual mind in the realm of spiritual life and peace (Rom. 8:6)...Too much emphasis can hardly be given to the fact that the Christian may function in his life either in the realm of spiritual death—separation from God—or the realm of things related to the Holy Spirit...The Christian is saved and safe in Christ, yet in his manner of life he may prove σαρκικός or πνευματικός.⁹

The Apostle Paul called some of the Corinthians "carnal" because they were looking to men rather than to our Lord, not because they were living unconverted or sinful lives (1 Cor. 3:1-4). Further, Rom. 8:5-11 is clearly a contrast between the converted and unconverted, not between "carnal" and "spiritual" Christians. Thus, contrary to Dispensational teaching, regenerating grace must be expressed in the life through a biblical conversion experience and a subsequently converted and sanctified lifestyle as necessitated by the New or Gospel Covenant (Jer. 31:31-34; Ezk. 11:19-20; 36:25-27; Jn. 3:3-7; 5:24; Heb. 8:6-13; 12:14; 1 Pet. 1:15-16; 2:9).

Further, Dispensationalism gives priority, not to grace but to race, holding national Israel to be central to God's redemptive purpose, and "The Church Age" [the "Dispensation of Grace" from the Cross to the Rapture] to be but a parenthesis in God's dealings with national Israel.¹⁰

The Deciding Issue

The deciding factor with regard to biblical interpretation is: should the New Testament be brought into strict conformity to a rigid literal interpretation of the Old Testament, or should the Old Testament be interpreted and understood in the light of the New? Dispensational Theology makes the Old Testament determinative in interpretation and seeks to conform the New Testament to a rigid Old Testament literalism. Non-Dispensational theology makes the New Testament determinative and thus interpretive and explanatory of the Old.

One's hermeneutical approach thus determines the relationship of the New

Testament to the Old, the Old Covenant to the New, the progressive nature of Divine revelation, the very nature of grace, salvation and the church; the nature of Christian experience, the relevance and perpetuity or abrogation of the Moral Law as the standard of righteousness, and the ultimate fulfillment of the covenants of promise in the New or Gospel Covenant in the Person and redemptive work of our Lord and the fullness of the gospel, and thus the nature and fulfillment of biblical prophecy.

A Consideration of Some Issues Involved

Paedobaptist Covenant Theology

The great distinction between Reformed paedobaptist tradition and the historic Baptist position,¹¹ although both are essentially Covenantal in their theology, is that, first, the Baptists have held that there are elements of diversity within the covenants, while Reformed tradition has held that the Abrahamic Covenant was and is *identical* with the Covenant of Grace [One Covenant, two administrations]. Second, that the Covenant of Grace is just that—a Covenant in which grace is both free and sovereign—and thus pertains to the elect alone. Reformed paedobaptists necessarily corrupt the nature of free and sovereign grace with the inclusion of the infant children of believing parents upon the idea of "covenant children" and presumptive regeneration. Mark the following statements by paedobaptist theologians:

Charles Hodge: They, therefore sin against God and their own souls who neglect the command to be baptized in the name of the Lord; and those parents sin grievously against the souls of their children who neglect to consecrate them to God in the ordinance of baptism. Do let the little ones have their names written in the Lamb's Book of Life, even if they afterwards choose to erase them. Being thus enrolled may be the means of their salvation.¹²

Louis Berkhof: It is possible to proceed on the assumption (not the certain knowledge) that the children offered for baptism are regenerated and therefore in possession of the *semen fidei* (the seed of faith); and to hold that God through baptism in some mystical way, which we do not understand, strengthens this seed of faith in the child.¹³

The root source of the issue, in the research and thinking of this writer, is that the Reformers inherited and modified the practice of paedobaptism from the Church of Rome, which also possesses an Old Testament mentality with its priesthood, rites, rituals and ceremonies.

Viewing, on the one hand, and not fully accepting the baptismal regeneration of the Romish Church, and also seeing in Scripture the characteristics of a New Testament Church with a regenerate membership and the baptism of believers, but finding in their Reformed Movement many in their ranks who were outwardly professing Christians, they retreated into a half-way position on the “visible church” [composed of both believers and unbelievers as opposed to their concept of the “invisible” or “true” church composed of only the elect] and paedobaptism.

According to Martin Luther concerning a “Believer’s Church,”

Those who want to be Christians in earnest, and confess the Gospel by hand and mouth, ought to enlist themselves by name and assemble apart from all kinds of people in a house alone to pray, read, baptize, receive the sacraments and practice other Christian duties. In this manner we could know who were not Christians, punish, correct, exclude and excommunicate. Then we could expect general thanksgiving, giving willingly and distributing among the poor. I cannot yet found [establish] such a church, for I have not the people to do it with, and do not see many who are urgent for it.¹⁴

The result was the establishment of Protestant State Churches as rivals to Rome [the “neo-Constantian” principle],¹⁵ and a modified paedobaptism, enabling them to enlist the civil magistrate to enforce religion and to remain

inclusive in their doctrine of salvation to include infants, apart from the clear teaching of Scripture.

Again, according to Martin Luther on the civil magistrate,

Every person is duty-bound to prevent and suppress blasphemy, each according to his status. By virtue of this commandment princes and civil authorities have the power and the duty to abolish unlawful cults and to establish orthodox teaching and worship. Concerning this point Leviticus applies: “He that blasphemeth the name of the Lord, let him be put to death.” ...princes must not only protect the goods and the physical being of their subjects, but their most essential function is to promote the honor of God, to repress blasphemy and idolatry. That is why in the Old Testament the kings...put false prophets and idolaters to death. Such examples apply to the function of the princes.¹⁶

Reformed paedobaptists hold to one “Covenant of Grace” in both the Old and New Testaments, with two administrations, thus holding to circumcision in the Old Testament and finding its counterpart in infant sprinkling [paedobaptism] in the New as the “seal of the covenant”—apart from any biblical teaching or testimony—and opposing the clear teaching of the personal faith and baptism of believers only [credebaptism], and necessarily by immersion.¹⁷

Baptists hold that the Old Testament and its progressive covenants—Adamic, Noahic, Abrahamic, Mosaic and Davidic, were covenants of promise anticipating the New or Gospel Covenant which is realized in and through the Person and work of the Lord Jesus (Eph. 2:12; Heb. 7:22; 8:6–13; 9:1–20; 13:20).

Thus, Reformed tradition, denying the diversity and straining for the unity of the covenant[s], makes no distinction between the promises made to Abraham and his physical descendants concerning their nation and land, and the spiritual promises made to Abraham concerning his spiritual seed and children (Gen. 12:1–3; Rom. 2:28–29; 4:9–11; Gal. 3:5–24; Eph. 2:12; Heb. 7:22).

This peculiar paedobaptist “Covenant Theology” was developed by Zwingli and Bullinger in their disputations with the Anabaptists as they sought to defend infant sprinkling and the concept of covenant children against the clear Scriptural teaching of believer’s baptism by immersion by “arguing from the covenant.”¹⁸ Indeed, not finding their proof within the New Testament or Old Testament Scriptures, they resort to “arguing from the Covenant,” and resort to “good and necessary consequences” rather than standing by the clear teaching of Scripture.

According to J. G. Vos, “The real proof of infant baptism depends on the truth that the children of believers are included in the Covenant of Grace.”¹⁹

According to B. B. Warfield,

It is true that there is no express command to baptize infants in the New Testament, no express record of the baptism of infants, and no passages so stringently implying it that we must infer from them that infants are to be baptized...the warrant for infant baptism is not to be sought in the New Testament, but in the Old Testament...and nothing short of an actual forbidding of it in the New Testament would warrant our omitting it now.²⁰

At this point, the great distinction is revealed between Reformed paedobaptists and Baptists in their basic approach to Scripture, as revealed and contrasted in the Westminster Confession of Faith (1646) and the Second London Baptist Confession of Faith (1689):

The Westminster Confession, Chapter I, Article VI:

The whole counsel of God, concerning all things necessary for His own glory, man’s salvation, faith, and life, *is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence* may be deduced from Scripture...

Contrast this with the *Second London Baptist Confession of 1689*, Chapter I, Article 6:

The whole counsel of God, concerning all things necessary for His own glory, man's salvation, faith, and life, is either expressly set down or necessarily contained in the Holy Scripture.

Paedobaptists have an Old Testament perspective, which views the Old Covenant as determinative; Baptists have a New Testament perspective, which views the Scriptures as a progressive revelation with their finality in the New or Gospel Covenant and believer's baptism, as clearly revealed in the New Testament.

Male children under the Old Covenant were circumcised as their covenant-sign; under the New or Gospel Covenant, regeneration, or "circumcision of the heart" "made without hands" is the covenant-sign (Rom. 2:28-29; 4:9-16; Phil. 3:3; Col. 2:11-13). Under the Old Covenant, every male within the patriarchal and familial context was circumcised—sons, descendants and slaves. The New or Gospel Covenant pertains only to regenerate persons as consistent with the very nature of free and sovereign grace, therefore these alone are to be baptized.

Paedobaptist Covenant Theology is inconsistent first, in that it gives precedence to the Old Covenant, not the New [one Covenant with two administrations]. Second, it includes the unregenerate in the Covenant of Grace, as they view the Covenant[s] as one with two administrations in order to include the children of believing parents. Third, it limits the sprinkling to the immediate children of believing parents, but excludes everyone else within the context of the extended "family"—all descendants and servants or employees.

Paedobaptist Covenant Theology and Dispensationalism

Dispensationalism separates national Israel and "The Church" into two distinct entities, yet includes the Jews, not by grace but by race. Most Dispensa-

tionalists hold that national Israel is yet a specially favored people of God, and are to be treated as such (Gen. 12:1-3). Further, it holds that during the millennium national Israel will return to Divine covenant centrality religiously and politically, with a world government centered at Jerusalem under a Davidic King, and animal sacrifices will be re-instituted through a rigid literal conformity to the Old Covenant. Thus, both Reformed paedobaptists and Dispensationalists hold to a determining precedence of the Old Testament over the New, and also to nature and race within the "Covenant" or "Dispensation" of Grace—a position which is unscriptural and contradictory, depriving the New Covenant of its gloriously distinct nature—free and sovereign grace deriving from the finished work of Christ—and both by necessity return to an Old Covenant mentality which remains necessary to their hermeneutic.

New Covenant Theology

New Covenant Theology is a relatively new approach to the Scriptures among Calvinistic Baptists, developed as a position between Dispensationalism and Covenant Theology. As a hybrid, it possesses some characteristics of both. New Covenant Theology is generally situated within the biblical and historic Baptist faith with some very notable and determinative exceptions.

Historically, this movement began in the latter part of the Twentieth century with a conflict between Reformed and Sovereign Grace Baptists over the issue of the relevance and observance of the Fourth Commandment, i.e. concerning the unity of the Decalogue, then of the entire Decalogue or the Moral Law as a rule for the believer's life. Both Covenant Theology and Dispensational influences colored the early debates.

New Covenant Theology holds with Covenant Theology to the unity of God's people, both Jews and Gentiles as believers. "The Church" is spiritual Israel. With Dispensationalism it denies the existence of both the Covenant of

Works and the Covenant of Grace, and maintains that the Ten Commandments, as part of the Mosaic Covenant, have been abrogated by the redemptive work of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Law, therefore, has no relationship to either believers or unbelievers.

Thus, in common with Dispensationalism, New Covenant Theology is necessarily antinomian—although such terminology is denied—holding that believers are no longer under the Ten Commandments, but under "the Law of Christ," as though these were different. Their stand is that "everything that God commands is 'moral law' to the individual commanded."²¹

They further hold "that God has not written his Law on the hearts of all men," contrary to the teaching of the Apostle Paul concerning every man as the image-bearer of God (Rom. 2:11-16) and both the promise and the fulfillment of the New Covenant, (Jer. 31:31-34; Ezk. 11:19-20; Ezk. 36:25-27; Heb. 8:6-13). Several other statements made by proponents of this view also seem self-contradictory in the light of Scripture.²²

Concluding Thoughts

The Consistency of Baptist Covenant Theology

In our opinion, the historic Baptist position, as delineated in the Old Baptist Confessions of 1644 and 1689 and in Covenant Theology—without the paedobaptist peculiarities [the precedence of the Old Covenant, infant sprinkling, covenant children, presumptive regeneration and a *corpus mixtum* concept of the church] is scripturally sound with the principles of both a consistent, progressive revelation, believer's baptism and a thoroughly New Testament [New Covenant] view of the church as composed of baptized believers.

The Baptist position also stands against the distinctives of Dispensationalism [the priority of the Old Testament as the rigid rule of literal interpretation, the precedence of national Israel through race apart from grace, antinomianism, optional sanctification

and latent Arminianism]—is true to the Scriptures in its avoidance of antinomianism and its alignment to the perpetuity of the Moral Law as the one and only Divine standard of righteousness.

Ω

¹Comments appended to the sermon, *The Covenant*, as quoted by Pascal Denault, *The Distinctives of Baptist Covenant Theology*, pp. 6–7.

²All of the notable Baptist preachers, writers and divines of the seventeenth through the nineteenth century among the Baptists were Covenant theologians, e.g., John Spilsbury, Benjamin Keach, Hanserd Knollys, William Kiffin, John Bunyan, Hercules Collins, Nehemiah Coxe, Thomas Patient, John Gill, John L. Dagg, C. H. Spurgeon, J. P. Boyce and B. H. Carroll.

³The eternal redemptive purpose extends from personal election (Eph. 1:4; Rom. 11:5; 2 Pet. 1:10), to predestination (Eph. 1:5, 11; Rom. 8:29–30), covenant redemption (Rom. 3:24–26; 1 Cor. 1:30; Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:14; Heb. 9:12; 1 Pet. 3:18), effectual calling (Rom. 8:30; 9:24; 1 Cor. 1:26; Gal. 1:6; Eph. 4:4; 1 Thess. 2:12; 2 Tim. 1:9; 1 Pet. 2:9; 5:10; 2 Pet. 1:3; Jude 1:1), regeneration (Jn. 3:3–5, 7; Jas. 1:18; 1 Pet. 1:23), justification (Rom. 3:24; 4:25; 5:1–2, 16, 18; 8:30; Gal. 3:24; Titus 3:7), adoption (Gal. 4:4–7; Rom. 8:13), sanctification (Jn. 17:17; 1 Cor. 1:1–2, 30; 6:11; 2 Cor. 3:17–18; Heb. 10:10; 1 Pet. 1:15–16) and glorification (Psa. 73:24; Rom. 8:18, 23; 9:23; 1 Cor. 15:43, 2 Cor. 4:17; Col. 3:4; 2 Tim. 2:10; Heb. 2:10; 1 Pet. 5:1, 10; Jude 24).

⁴Animal sacrifices were all typical, not effectual, and pointed prophetically to the cross (Heb. 10:11–14). Only the shed blood of the Lord Jesus ever could, can or shall take away sin.

Acts 13:39 And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses.

Gal. 2:16 Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.

Rom. 3:19–20 Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin.

⁵Hos. 6:7, the Heb. reads “like Adam” [כְּאָדָם] not “like men.”

⁶Rather than hold to the relevance and perpetuity of the Moral Law, Dispensationalism, which is antinomian by nature and necessity, views the Law as a legal document given only to Israel, and confined to

the “Dispensation of Law” [from Sinai to the Cross].

⁷Robert Haldane, *Exposition of the Epistle to the Romans*, pp. 478–479.

⁸Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, VII, pp. 279–280.

⁹*Ibid.*, p. 70.

¹⁰The terminology “The Church” is used by both Reformed Covenant Theology and Dispensational Theology. The Reformed use such terminology to identify an “Old Testament Church” [i.e., Israel as the Covenant people of God] and a “New Testament Church” [to designate those under the New Covenant and their children]. Dispensationalism uses this terminology to designate the whole of largely Gentile Christianity as distinct from national Israel. Neither use of the term “Church” [ἐκκλησία] is scriptural, but traditional and nebulous.

¹¹For further study, see Earl Blackburn, Ed., *Covenant Theology: A Baptist Distinctive* (Birmingham, AL: Solid Ground Christian Books, 2013), 161 pp., and Pascal Denault, *The Distinctiveness of Baptist Covenant Theology* (Birmingham, AL: Solid Ground Christian Books, 2013), 167 pp.

¹²Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. III, p. 588.

¹³Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, pp. 641–642.

¹⁴Quoted by Thomas Armitage, *History of the Baptists*, Vol. I, p. 397.

¹⁵The “Constantinian Change” was the establishment of the State Church system. The Protestant Reformers followed suit in establishing their own state churches—“neo-Constantinianism.” See Leonard Verduin, *The Anatomy of a Hybrid: A Study in Church State Relations*.

¹⁶Leonard Verduin, *The Anatomy of a Hybrid*, p. 195. Also see Roland H. Bainton, *Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther*, pp. 294–296; Thomas Armitage, *The History of the Baptists*, pp. 401–403.

¹⁷The NT teaches the baptism of believers by immersion, a symbolism—not of washing or cleansing [the Reformed argument concerning baptism]—but of the believer’s union with Christ in his death, burial and resurrection (Rom. 6:3–5; Gal. 3:27; Col. 2:11–13). To change either the subjects or the mode of baptism would mean a complete reinterpretation of both the ordinance and its significance. Note: Rom. 4:9–11. Circumcision was “a seal of the righteousness of the faith” Abraham had before his circumcision, i.e., Abraham was circumcised as a believer. This was a singular instance, and such personal faith cannot be predicated of infants. Logically, if the principle is carried to baptism and the New Testament, we would necessarily have believer’s baptism.

¹⁸See M. E. Osterhaven, “Covenant Theology,” *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, p. 279.

¹⁹J. G. Vos, *Blue Banner Faith and Life*, January–March Issue, 1959., p. 37, as quoted by T. E. Watson, *Should Infants be Bap-*

tized?, p. 84.

²⁰B. B. Warfield, *Studies in Theology*, p. 399 [Where in the Old Testament do we find such a warrant? This is synonymous with “arguing from the Covenant.” WRD]

²¹John Reisinger, as quoted by Alan Cairns, *Dictionary of Theological Terms*, p. 303.

²²For a full discussion of New Covenant Theology, see Alan Cairns, *Loc. Cit.*, pp. 303–306, and the several websites pertaining to this movement.

The Spread of the Gospel According to Acts 1-13

By M. A. Bailon

The Mystery of the Gospel

We know now that the mystery of the Kingdom of God was unveiled with the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. The great mystery is simply that the Triune God who created heaven and earth had always planned to bring salvation to both Jew and Gentile alike. Put another way, the gospel of salvation from sin through repentance and faith in Jesus Christ is for all mankind, not just Jews, as the very early church assumed. This is not to say that everyone is going to hear the gospel, but it is the reason that we have missionaries and evangelists. Our Lord made that it clear in Matthew 28 in the Great Commission (Matt. 28:18–20). Moreover, all three Synoptics give the account of our Lord where He tells the disciples that to them had been given the mystery of the kingdom of God.¹ Yet it took time for this truth to sink in. It certainly took time before the realization of the true extent of the gospel was taken for granted by the church. The first 13 chapters in the Book of Acts can be regarded as the story of the initial fulfillment of the mystery. If the church in Antioch is indeed the home or mother church of the outreach to the Gentiles, then Luke identifies it as such in Acts 13:1 – 3. But this is the culmination of some critical church history told in the preceding chapters. It was not yet clear that this would be the case.

The Gospel at Pentecost

There were hints, though, even at Pentecost. That the gospel was, at the very least, for Jews everywhere was evi-

dent when the manifestation of the Holy Spirit included the preaching of the gospel in many languages (Acts 2:8). Every Jew in Jerusalem for the feast heard the gospel in their native tongue. Moreover, Peter preached, "For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call" (Acts 2:39). As a son of Abraham Peter must have understood this to refer to present and future generations of Jewish believers. In modern terms we would say that the reach of the gospel extended in both space and time. But Peter and the others had no time to think abstractly about what was happening. For one thing, they had to contend with the Jewish religious leaders who had the tendency of throwing them in jail. Moreover, Peter and the other Apostles were certainly very excited about all the people that were not only saved, but healed as well (Acts 3:1-11; 8:6-7). It was certainly an exciting time for the early church and its evangelistic efforts. It is even more exciting to see how the true extent of the gospel came to be understood and embraced by the church in Jerusalem.

The Gospel Reaches the Samaritans

The Holy Spirit sent Philip to Samaria where he preached Christ. Many were healed of their diseases and demon possessions, and many believed and were saved! Thus, we are told, there was great joy in that city of Samaria (Acts 8:8). Already, the gospel had spread beyond the Jews, and yet, it was still in their backyard. Interestingly, the ministry of the Word in Samaria was so successful that the Apostles in Jerusalem head about it. Peter and John came down from Jerusalem to investigate and eventually returned home, preaching all along the way (Acts 8:25).

The Gospel Reaches a Gentile

The salient issues in the conversion of Cornelius are that he was a Roman centurion, definitely a Gentile and a man discontent with the religion of his people. He was prepared to receive the truth of the gospel, but Peter was not quite prepared himself. Clearly, having

Peter preach to Cornelius and his household would be unique at this time in Peter's life. The Spirit had to specially prepare him for this ministry through a vision (Acts 10:9-16). The vision was symbolic of the meaning of the mystery of the gospel. Food once characterized as unclean was no longer so. God's exclusion of the Gentiles from His family likewise ended (Acts 10:28,34). In order to reinforce the truth that the gospel was indeed for Jew and Gentile alike, Cornelius and his family and friends testified of the grace and goodness of God in tongues (Acts 10:46). Because some from the church of Jerusalem came with Peter these new Christians were probably speaking Aramaic. This was truly a wonderful day for both Cornelius and Peter. The longing of Cornelius's heart is finally satisfied and quite satisfactorily. Peter witnesses the unmistakable power of the gospel to the Gentiles, but he will need to explain this to the brethren in the Jerusalem church (Acts 11:1-18).

The Gospel Reaches Antioch

In anticipation of the profound telling of the calling of Barnabas and Saul in Acts 13:1-3, Luke explains the evangelistic activities in Antioch in 11:19. He uses a construction in the original Greek² that provides a contrast that is not conveyed as clearly in the King James Version. Luke writes that, on the one hand, the believers driven out of Jerusalem by the persecution that occurred after the stoning of Stephen travelled north to coastal region of Phoenicia and to Antioch as well as west to the island of Cyprus. Everywhere they went they preached the gospel, but to the Jews only (v. 20). Luke continues by stating that, on the other hand, some men from Cyprus and Cyrene (on the northern coast of Africa) travelled to Antioch and preached to the Grecians. That is, they evangelized Gentiles. References to Greek speaking people in Acts (Grecians in the KJV) need to be interpreted according to the context. Luke is clearly explaining that the Holy Spirit moved certain other men to preach to the Gentiles. We infer that the Christians from Jerusalem were ill-equipped to reach the Gentiles. It could have been a language barrier

or perhaps a cultural one since the Jews were unhappy subjects under the Caesars. It took men from outside of Judea to reach the Gentiles.

The Church at Antioch

The language in Acts 13:1-3 powerfully describes the situation at Antioch.

Acts 13:1-3 Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. (2) As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. (3) And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.

A fully-functioning and thriving New Testament church had been established in Antioch. Luke writes that "Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers" (Acts 13:1). The way he puts it emphasizes the existence of a true New Testament body of believers in Antioch. And the leadership of the church represented the cosmopolitan makeup of the city. Antioch was the third most prominent city in the Roman Empire behind Alexandria and Rome itself. Luke naturally mentions Barnabas and Saul since they are the missionaries sent out from the church. But he mentions the others to show that the leaders were men of the world. Simeon may have been black, Lucius was from Africa and Manaen had grown up at the palace in Rome with Herod Antipas, the tetrarch of Judea at the time of our Lord. These men were no doubt sophisticated, talented and God-called.

The Call

The leaders were completely given to the work of the Lord. They are characterized as those who labored in service to the Lord and they fasted as a matter of course. The Holy Spirit then says, using the aorist imperative, urgently and immediately mark out³ to me Barnabas and Saul for the work [to] which I have called them (vs. 2). Again, not translatable into English, a Greek particle is used that makes this calling an

emphatic call. The particle intensifies the already emphatic aorist imperative. In addition, when Luke uses the work “call” it is in the middle voice and perfect tense. The middle voice is used when the subject performing the action of the verb takes a special interest in the action. In this instance, the Holy Spirit is personally invested in this call, and the perfect tense emphasizes the fact that the call is without repentance. The Holy Spirit calls Barnabas and Saul using the strongest language possible. It is clear that there is nothing casual about this call. This is not surprising given that we know how virtually the whole western Roman Empire is evangelized by the Apostle Paul. The next thirteen chapters of Luke's Acts of the Apostles record for us this great work of evangelism for the Lord. But time and space do not allow us to comment on these chapters at this time.

It took some time, but the Holy Spirit caused the gospel to spread from the Jews in Jerusalem up north to Antioch (and everywhere in between) and then westward towards Rome. And there was nothing nonchalant about the effort.

The Apostle Paul would later write, after it was fully understood by all, that “I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek” (Rom. 1:16).

Ω

¹ See Matt 13:11; Mark 4:11 and Luke 8:10. In each of these verses the emphatic personal pronoun is used to emphasize that it was them, the disciples, who were given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God. Luke 8:10 Ὑμῖν δέδοται γινῶναι τὰ μυστήρια τῆς βασιλείας τοῦ θεοῦ (Luke uses the plural, mysteries). To you have been given the mysteries of the Kingdom of God.

² Luke uses the μεν / δε construction. Verse 19 has μεν and verse 20 has the corresponding δε.

³ When the Apostle Paul writes in Romans 1:1 that he is a called Apostle separated unto the gospel of God, the word “separated” is the same word that the Holy Spirit used in Acts. So, the Apostle to the Gentiles is saying that he was literally separated or marked-out to the gospel ministry. He is simply quoting the Holy Spirit.

Images from Church History

Picture and text taken from *Martyrs Mirror*, by Thieleman J. van Braght, pp. 1093-1094



Anneken Van Den Hove
buried alive
1597

Anneken Van Den Hove was imprisoned two years and seven months, in which time she suffered much temptation, from priests, monks, Jesuits and others, who thereby sought to make her apostatize from the faith she had accepted; but however great pains they took with her, in the way of examining, tormenting, fair promises, threats, long imprisonment, and otherwise, she nevertheless constantly remained steadfast in the faith in her Lord and Bridegroom, so that finally, on the ninth of July, 1597, certain Jesuits came and asked her whether she would suffer herself to be converted, for in that case she should be released and set at liberty. Thereupon she replied: “No.”

They then offered to give her six months more time for consideration; but she desired neither day nor time, but said that they might do what seemed good to them, for she longed to get to the place where she might offer up unto the Lord a sacrifice acceptable unto Him.

...a few Jesuits went out with her about eight o'clock, half a mile without the city of Brussels, where a pit or grave was made, while in the meantime she fearlessly undressed herself, and was thus put alive into the pit, and the lower limbs having first been covered with earth..

...the Jesuits then laid before her, that she had to expect...the eternal pain of the fire in her soul, in hell. She answered that she had peace in her conscience, being well assured that she died saved,...

...they continued to throw earth and thick sods of heath ground upon her body, up to her throat; but notwithstanding all their asking, threatening, or promising to release her and take her out of the pit, if she would recant, it was all in vain, and she would not hearken to it.

Hence they at last threw much additional earth and sods upon her face and whole body, and stamped with their feet upon it, in order that she should die sooner.