

STRAIGHTWAY

And straightway they forsook their nets, and followed him [Mark 1:18].

CHRISTIAN PURITIES FELLOWSHIP

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The Mystery of His Will Ephesians 1:9

Dr. H. T. Spence

Standing on the threshold of apostasy, historic Fundamentalism is now dead, having capitulated to the “Neo” belief. God’s true remnant now must look only to the Word of God to find out what it is to do. While many are simply hanging on to a nostalgic memory of its nobler days, Fundamentalism has spiritually collapsed. A new breed of Fundamentalists has produced new terminologies, new definitions, and new interpretations of Scripture.

The vast majority of Fundamentalist schools have aggressively joined the bandwagon of Neo-

Evangelicalism. Having left God, they are becoming drunk with the wine of entertainment, sports, and the accolades of a growing eclectic world. Amidst their overt compromises, they flippantly throw in the phrase, “And we are doing this for Jesus” while their audiences go wild with a popular dialectic Christianity. There is no hope of return or revival for these schools: like the course set for Obama’s Post-America, not even a new school president will change their direction. Having drunk from the wine goblet of this age, nothing else can satisfy their cravings.

This edition includes two more articles

**The Mystery of His Will in the Dispensation of the Fulness of Times
The Mystery of His Will Amidst Changes in the End Times**

Our only hope now is for a remnant to rise in the earth to preserve the legacy of God's Word—"the Faith once delivered unto the saints." Only the true saints will keep it. What is God's will now for His remnant? As we pray for the Lord's soon return, how are we to occupy until He comes? The next five *Straightway* messages will carefully present the burden of the "mystery of His will" for the times in which we live.

This theme of the "mystery of His will" is taken from the apostle Paul's letter to the Ephesians. As Paul grew and matured in his walk with God, his insight to truth deepened. Ephesians is among several of the letters Paul wrote during his first Roman imprisonment. It is coupled with his epistle to the Colossians as well as his letter to Philemon. Tychicus delivered the writings of Colossians and Ephesians while Onesimus delivered the beautiful letter of Philemon.

The Term "Mystery"

It is not our purpose in these written messages to study the letter to the Ephesians; we desire to draw from the burden of the verses of chapter one. There are three principle truths that must be seen in the first two articles upon which these six burdens will stand. The first concerns this term *mystery*, mentioned twenty-seven times in the New Testament. Although chiefly used in Paul's writings, it occurs in one context in each of the Synoptic Gospels as well as four times in Revelation.

The term *mystery* is not to be viewed from the modern sense of something "unfathomable" or "incomprehensible." Its biblical meaning refers to anything that at one time was "hidden," but now has come to light in revelation. This seems to be strongly implied in the only passage which is attributed to our Lord: "Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables" (Mark 4:11; Matt. 13:11; Luke 8:10). Here parables are spoken of as veiled or symbolic forms of utterance which concealed the truth from those without the kingdom; however, these same parables are revealed to those who had the key to their inner meaning (Matt. 13:35; John 16:29). Perhaps a clearer reference to the word *mystery* is found in Romans 16:25, 26:

Now to him that is of power to stablish

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you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world [ages] began. But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith.

Also note Paul's declaration in Colossians 1:25, 26.

Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfill the word of God [to fill up the Word of God, to complete it]; Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints.

And finally, note his words in Ephesians 3:3–5:

How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit.

The terms *mystery* and *revelation* are basically synonymous terms in the New Testament. In contrast to the wisdom of worldly philosophy, the mysteries of Christianity are its revealed doctrines. Worldly philosophy is the product of intellectual research, while the mysteries are the result of Divine revelation that is only spiritually discerned. From this it is to be understood that Christianity has no secret doctrines because what was once hidden has now been revealed!

Nevertheless there arises a seeming contradiction. On the one hand, there are passages which seem to imply a hidden or withheld doctrine. A mystery revealed to some is still concealed from others. The doctrines of Christ and of His Kingdom are hidden from the worldly wise and the prudent (Matt. 11:25; 1 Cor. 2:6), and from all who are outside the kingdom (Matt. 13:11). It must also be acknowledged that there are truths withheld even from Christians when at a spiritually immature stage of development (1 Cor. 3:1; Heb. 5:11–14). However, it is the communication of its truth that is limited, not by any secrecy in the gospel message itself or any reserve on the part of the speaker. In this case, it is the receptive capacity of the hearer that limits the revelation and understanding of that truth.

In the case of the carnally-minded or the “worldly” professing Christian, such spiritual deficits make them blind to the light which shines on them (2 Cor. 4:2–4). In the case of babes in Christ, they do not understand due to the lack of understanding of other first principles needed. Yet Matthew 13:11–15 indicates another more powerful blindness:

He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given. For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath. Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand.

And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive: For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them. But blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear.

The “Mystery” and the “Gospel”

It must be made clear that there is no esoteric doctrine or intentional reserve of truth in the New Testament. Therefore, we must inquire, “What, then, is the content of the Christian mystery?” In a broad sense the content of the Christian mystery is the whole gospel. In a special sense it can be applied to a specific doctrine or aspect of the gospel.

In direct antithesis to the divine mystery of the gospel is the “mystery of iniquity [lawlessness]” (2 Thess. 2:7), culminating in the coming of the Antichrist. Here, too, the word means a revealed secret; however, in this case the revelation belongs to a future time (v. 8). Though great evil forces will bring about the consummation of iniquity, it must be acknowledged these forces are already silently operating.

It is important we see that the *entire* Gospel is the fullness of the mystery of God. First Corinthians 4:1 states, “Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God.” Revelation

10:7 reads, “But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished, as he hath declared to his servants the prophets.”

As we have noted, however, these mysteries can be hidden. Note what Christ declared in Matthew 11:25–27:

At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight. All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him.

When His preaching was rejected at the cities mentioned in the previous verses, it was *at that time* or *at that season of time*. This is the reason for Him to say these words *at that time*.

The Mystery of the Bible

We must candidly observe that contrary to any other book in the world, the Bible is *not* an open book. Jesus spoke quite freely anywhere and everywhere. While on all occasions He dropped the seeds of divine truth, He personally observed that only some of the seeds went into the soul of man, germinated, and brought forth fruit. Even Paul declared that his preaching was a “savour of death unto death; and . . . of life unto life” (2 Cor. 2:14–16). The Bible reveals that some *see* and some *do not see*. This is no arbitrary decision of God.

While God is not against intellect, there are certain disadvantages to the worldly wise. The wise tend to look in the wrong direction for truth; a scientist tends to analyze life through scientific means—the wise through logic. Their constant danger is that of their own pride. We must remember that the *Truth* of God is a *revelation*, not the product of human thinking; the Truth of God is also a discovery that men have to make for themselves. Yet this discovery could never be achieved through scientific and scholastic searchings. It is a gift of God, and He can give it to a searching babe equally as to a searching wise man.

The Bible has been an unparalleled book throughout the centuries. The coming to the End Time of the last days has found us in the explosion of knowledge. And yet while epistemology is in its great depth today, how ironic it is that even the church and its leaders do not truly know the Bible! Though the world's people will never know and understand the Bible, it is sadder still that the institutional Church does not know the Bible.

When men leave the love of the truth, God sends a strong delusion; this delusion includes a blindness of His own Word (2 Thess. 2:10–12). There are more apostates in the church today than there are saints. The Epistle of Jude declares an apostate has not the Spirit; therefore, he cannot know the mysteries of

the Word of God. We are in an age of Christianity in which the Bible as a book has been expounded, paraphrased, exegeted, revised, and decoded yielding hundreds of English versions. There is really no other tool needed to be published to help us study the words, meanings, grammar, and idiomatic expressions. A person can be the greatest Greek scholar of the century, but his eyes blinded to the true Word of God. One can know natural things of any writing. A preacher can study the words, the phrases, the antiquity of those words and phrases, and build sermons off the studies of those words. Nevertheless, his sermons can be sterile and mechanical, having eyes blinded though all his life was given to the study of the Bible.

Oh, consider the many TV preachers and scholars of Neo-Christianity that are in great acceptance by the world! They are in error! *Why?* Is this because they are ignorant? Is it because they have not studied? Is it because they have not pursued the theological systems of history? *No, it is simply because they have not the Spirit of God!* They have no spiritual discernment of the Word of God. Hermeneutics can be found in any concept of epistemology—literature, art, music, etc.; there can be expertise in all of those areas. *However*, hermeneutics of Scripture is not based simply on the mechanical principles of a science of interpretation. Though the principles need to be sound and biblical, there must be the *Holy Spirit* to discern the

Word of God.

Perhaps the Greek New Testament will help us to understand this important observation. Let us consider two parallel sets of word studies: The first set concerns three classic Greek words for *sight*: *blepo*, *theoreo*, and *eidon*; the second set concerns three classic Greek words for *knowledge*: *ginosko*, *oida*, and *epiginosko*.

From the perspective of *sight*, how do we see the Bible, the Word of God? *Blepo* is a “physical sight” while *theoreo* is a “perceptive sight.” Both of these sights can be found in the study of any form of epistemology. These two sights come simply by natural study. In contrast, *eidon* is the Greek equivalent for our English word “insight.” *Eidon*-sight or insight *only* comes from the Holy Spirit. The first two are natural; the third is spiritual. Although men may become scholars through the first two, only a man walking with God, in communion with God, can come to this third sight. Without *eidon*-sight, there is *no* heavenly understanding of the Word of God.

From the perspective of *knowledge*, what does one truly know about the Word of God? *Ginosko* is a “general knowledge” of a matter, while *oida* is a “perceptive knowledge.” In contrast, *epiginosko* is an “experiential knowledge,” an absolute knowing through experience. Again, the first two can come through natural study, but the third can only come through the power of the Holy Spirit as it

applies to spiritual truth.

Amidst the great exegetical powers of Hebrew and Greek language studies, the Bible could still be a complete mystery. The insights of the mysteries of the Scriptures are only given to the saints, *never* the Neo crowd. Just as THE FAITH was given to the saints, its interpretation is given to the SAINTS; it is not given to the scholarly, the wise, the prudent, and certainly not to the liberals, the carnal, and the worldly. A person may read books such as Barclay’s *New Testament Words* to gain background understanding to biblical words; one can say that there is good and benefit to be found in reading Barclay, an existential Neo-Bultmannian. One can read through the entirety of Kittel’s *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* and find all kinds of meanings and studies that are good in the natural understanding in the “words” and “phrases” and “sentence structures.” *Nonetheless*, the spiritual understanding of Bible truth *only* comes from God the Holy Spirit!

Hermeneutics is strategically changing in Christianity, especially in contemporary Fundamentalism. This is because God is sovereignly withdrawing His Spirit from Fundamentalism. And we repeat—*there can be no spiritual understanding of the Word without the Spirit*. Why do such men not see what is happening within their own ministries and within their own schools? Why do they not see the changes taking place and where these

changes are taking them? Why? It is simply because God has withdrawn His Spirit from them; therefore, they cannot discern His Truth, a Truth they no longer love. They cannot know the mysteries of God! At one time these men saw the mystery of His Word because they were in touch with God; now they know not His Spirit.

This confirms that one can lose discernment and insight to the Word of God while the mechanics of the Truth may continue in one's ministry. I fear anytime men in their writings and preaching place much on the mechanics of their studies and presentation of the Word of God while being clearly void of any communion with God. Without communion, the Spirit is not present in their interpretations of the Word. Such individuals see sterile truth from the past and inevitably twist its truth amidst the absence of *eidon*-sight and *epiginosko*-knowledge. They have left the living of truth and heart responsiveness to truth, and now there is no Spirit to take them deeper into truth. *Yet* they claim to see things never before preached in their ministries; they have come to a new interpretation that is the product of their own reasonings. "Private" interpretations of Scripture now are expounded to accommodate the change in their standards, their music, and their view of Truth. Did not Lucifer have tremendous insight and wisdom before he fell? When he fell from Heaven, his wisdom became

corrupted (Ezek. 28:17). No longer did the Holy Spirit accompany his ministry.

Why do not individuals see their changes and compromises when they study the Word of God? Why do they not see with insight the apostasy and its powers gripping the churches of our times? Why do they not see? Perhaps we could mention five reasons that contribute to the powers of blindness in our time. Anyone of these will keep the spiritual eye from seeing what is needed to be seen.

(1) *Men cannot see because they are not born again.* We cannot make light of this first principle, because the vast majority of people in churches today are not saved. The Bible is very clear, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3), to say nothing of being able to enter the kingdom (John 3:5).

(2) *The spiritual immaturity of a babe in Christ will affect the eyes of his soul.* Yet God will be faithful to reveal His Word to the hungering and seeking babe following in faith and obedience.

(3) *Although born again, a Christian controlled by the powers of carnality and worldliness cannot see clearly.* These powers produce blindness in a saved heart whereby one cannot discern his age and even the Scriptures clearly.

(4) *A Christian of years who refuses to go on with God (Heb. 5:11–14)*

will become blind, hindering and, yea, destroying any hope of deeper insight.

(5) *Finally, a rejection of Truth that leads to apostasy will bring blindness either to a nation (as with Israel) or to an individual.* This is where we are today. Jesus declared in Matthew 6:23, “If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!” Whatever light a person has received from God could turn into a greater darkness if light is rejected. In such a context, the babe in Christ will see more truth (maybe not more knowledge) than the fallen scholar of theology.

Conclusion

As He entered Jerusalem at His Triumphal Entry, Jesus declared, “If thou hadst known, even thou at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! But now they are hid from thine eyes.” In the days of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment, its Deists boasted of the powers of

reason and pled for natural theology. Their “faith” in such reason caused them to suggest it as a substitute for the Bible. As a result, intellectualism became the enabling power whereby truth supposedly was to be found. The same attitude flooded Liberalism, Modernism, and Neo-Orthodoxy, giving birth to the rise of Neo-Evangelicalism. Neo-Evangelicalism had rejected Fundamentalism’s call to pure and holy Truth. The rejection of the Truth given over to us by the Philadelphian Church age brought the birth of the last Church age, Laodicea. It is not the rejection of the truth by the world that has brought our problems; it is the rejection of Truth by the leaders of the Church in all of its identifications. We are ever learning, but never able to come to the knowledge of the Truth! (2 Tim. 3:7). May God grant the sight of the “mystery” of God’s Word to His remnant when blindness rules as a king in the institutional Church of the End Time. [S]

The Foundations Schools - Fall Semester

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August 25

The Mystery of His Will

In the Dispensation of the Fulness of Times

Ephesians 1:9–12

Dr. H. T. Spence

God truly has abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence. Perhaps the question needs to be asked: How has God done this? The answer is very clear in the Scriptures: He has done this through His Word, which is His Revelation. In the context of Ephesians 1:9–12, His revealed Word is called the “mystery.” God has given this mystery to His saints, those who believe His Word, those who enter into His Truth. He gives wisdom and intelligence in divine things which none of the unredeemed has ever had in all the ages of the past. While there were numerous saints of God in former times, none has had the intelligence in divine things which we ought to have through the fullness of God’s Word today and the insight appointed for the End Time of the last days. Even the angels were never given a complete revelation of what was coming; nonetheless, they are learning the wisdom, the counsels, the purpose of God, as they behold His grace displayed in us. We are not to view divine mysteries simply as lines of truth upon which to exercise our human intelligence; we are to be sanctified through the truth. The Word is given by God for the spiritual man as well as for sight for the times of history.

The mysteries of the Word of God are hidden and none can understand

them until they are revealed. God’s ministers are to become the “stewards of the mysteries of God” (1 Cor. 4:1). From this treasure of God’s Word we are ever to be drawing out “things new and old” (Matt. 13:52, the Old Testament and the New Testament). As stewards through prayer and honorable study, we must open up these mysteries to God’s people so that they may enter into the good of them.

God’s Economy

As this context continues, Ephesians 1:10 mentions “the dispensation of the fulness of times.” In this article we must carefully mark, what is a *dispensation*? The word *dispensation* is used a number of times in the New Testament. There are several English words used to translate the Greek word *oikonomia*: *stewardship*, *order*, *administration*, and *dispensation*. From this Greek word *oikonomia* we also gain our English word *economy*. This passage could easily be written as “That in the *economy* of the fullness of times He might head up everything in Christ.”

What is an economy? An economy is “an ordered condition of things.” Domestic economy is the ordering of a house; but the economy of one house is not necessarily the economy of every other house. Then there is

political economy. The ordering of the affairs of one nation is not the economy of another. The economy of Soviet Russia is not that of the USA. These nations have their own ways of ordering their affairs, and if one came from Soviet Russia to the USA and attempted to order his conduct according to the economy of Russia, it would not be tolerated here. It might be lawful and right over in Russia, but not here in the United States. The term *economy* also means “a managing of affairs and resources so as to avoid waste; a management.” In theology, *economy* or *dispensation* is *the method of the divine administration of the world by God Himself, especially as it affects a particular nation or time period in history.*

The Bible gives evidences of various economies running throughout the Word of God in the light of history. Although the theological system of Dispensationalism has limited and confined the term to its own presupposition, the truth of *dispensation* must be seen from a biblical perspective in its broad meaning. A dispensation, an economy, then, is *that particular order or condition of things prevailing in one season of time which does not prevail in another season of time.*

It must be made clear that there is a difference between a *dispensation* and an *age*: an *age* is a period of time in which a particular economy of God prevails. God’s dealings or management of His providences, His approaches to man, His dealings with man or His own people change from age to age. His purpose and

plan may be the same, but when man changes or the age changes, God may change His economy or dispensation of dealings with humanity.

There is coming the “dispensation of the fullness of times” where another economy of God will arise—it will be the last glorious age, that of the Millennium. We read in Ephesians 1:10, “That in the dispensation of the fullness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him.” How important it is for us to understand our own age, and the economy of God, His ways and doings in the light of our age. One of the great problems in any generation is that professing Christians tend to believe that God is presently working the same as He did in a previous generation. I must come to know the mystery of the will of God for my age, and how the economy of God is to be seen for my age, my generation. Augustine, back in the early 400s, made a staggering observation: “Distinguish the ages, and the Scriptures are plain.” We must make a distinction between the ages of history, and thus the Scriptures will become plain in their understanding.

We must understand that the Bible is a unit of Truth, composed in our English Bible of 66 books; everything that God wants us to have and know is in it. It is the total Great Conversation of God with man. It covers many generations, many ages, many centuries, and many segments

of history. It presents over 5,000 disclosures, over 8,145 prophecies, along with many shadows and types.

Sometimes distinctive seasons are found within an age: God's economy is filled with blessing, success, prosperity, and increase; in other seasons His economic methods are the opposite. Therefore, I must be careful how I interpret the various economies, when they happened, and come to know why God dealt a certain way with humanity or with Israel or with the Church the way He did. I must be careful as to what becomes my example, my exhortation, my pursuit, my pattern, and not automatically think what I have read is what I am to do today, or that God is going to do the same thing as He did in a previous time period.

God's economy or His workings may not be the same from one generation to another when it comes to His providences. Principles of truth are the same, but the dealings of God may be different from one generation to another because man is different, the moral climate is different, and the spiritual climate is different. How often the modern evangelist goes to the Book of Acts and proclaims that what we read of those days should be happening today (thousands coming to Christ) and that the movings of God's Spirit will produce the same results. Others will write and exhort the need today for the same move of God that came in the Great Awakenings or in the Evangelical Revival of the 1700s. We

read in the Bible of great moves of God; and we read in the Bible of what seems to be no movings of God. We read in the Bible of many coming to Christ in evangelism; and we read in the Bible of the falling away with few coming to Christ.

What do I do with *all* the scriptures? Do I interpret them the way I want them to be, with the hope that this is the way things will turn out? Or must I honestly view the times in which I live and find the scriptures that honestly describe my times? Everybody reads the Bible and comes up with something different. A Richard Roberts can read it and come up with prosperity and healing. A Joel Osteen can read it and come up with God always wanting to lift us up in self-esteem. A John Piper can read it and come up with Christian Hedonism. A Benny Hinn can read the Bible and come up with the belief that a mighty move of God is coming to America very soon that will transform this country and overthrow the Muslims. A Rick Warren can read the Bible and believe that the Church is going to take over the world. A Pat Roberson can read the Bible and believe we can enact the promises of the Millennium now if Christianity can take over the White House. All professing Christian movements have found their scripture verses and tell us this is what is going to happen.

In contrast, when reading the Bible we see we are in the prophecies of the End Time of the last days. We see that the institutional Church is in a global

apostasy, that all the compartments of life in a public context on this planet have been destroyed. We do not see that we are in days of revival or some great awakening in America. Fundamentalism has gone so far in its falling away that there will be no return to its former days of glory before God. In fact, the new Fundamentalists do not want to even return to such days. We read the Bible and its disclosures and see the country of America with no hope of recovery. It has rejected biblical Theism and entered into the explosion of a New Theism; yea, even its public Jesus is one contrary to the Bible. We see that we are in the days of Noah—where the godly and ungodly are mixing the seeds, where the imaginations of the thoughts of man's heart are only evil continually. We see that we are in the days of Lot—where sodomy is beginning to pound on our very doors, crying out for the possession of our children, our schools, and even our churches. Yes, this is where we are today, according to the Scriptures!

Thus we must find out how God is working in this age and what His economy is now. I remember the former days of my childhood and youth when God healed me of polio; after being paralyzed from my waist down, doctors told my parents I would never walk again. God healed me instantly early one morning in a polio ward with no one present but Himself. I also remember several years later when a large church furnace exploded in my father's face totally

disfiguring his face; I remember the stench of burnt flesh so strong that it was difficult for us to stay in the same house with him. Yet one week later, early one morning, God instantly healed his face completely without any remaining scars. Although there have been other healings in the past, we are not now seeing in God's present economy or dispensation such healings as frequently.

I witnessed in my early years of the ministry many coming to the Lord in almost every service; but it is not as evident today. Among the staggering statistics of the Neo crowd, where are the truly *radically* changed lives? At the time when I was called into the ministry, there were many other young people being called as well. How few today are receiving callings into the ministry? It seems now that there are more individuals leaving God and the Truth than coming to the Truth.

We can note a similar change of economy in God's ways by comparing the opening and closing of the Book of Acts. Early in Acts there are obvious, outward displays of miracles and conversions by God; toward the close of the book we do not read the evidence of as many coming to Christ and not as many miracles. The question needs to be asked: what was the difference between the two economies of God in those two seasons of time?

In the light of these candid observations, we must distinguish the ages of the past from this present age. If

we discern this truth, it will cause the Scriptures to become plain. But if we do not see this truth, the Scriptures will be confusion to us, or we will be in a quandary with our ministries and the slow growth in our evangelistic endeavors. What most evangelists do today is leave much of the Scriptures out in their messages and not even deal with the passages declaring the apostasy and its powerful effect in the End Time. Many hyper-evangelists today limit the verses of their preaching in order to accommodate the massive, public show of the Church today and the popularity of the Contemporary Christian Music. One minister told me recently that if he preached according to the Bible and its principles, there would be but few attending his services.

We must in this economy discern how God really is presently working; we must discern what is true and what is false. We dare not look to the modern church to find out what God is doing, but directly to the Scriptures. We *must* find the “mystery of His will” for this dispensational season of history.

The Mystery of His Will

One of the great enigmas of the theological systems throughout church history has been the various concepts of the “will of God.” One of the problems has been the misunderstanding concerning the term itself. This is a classic example where the Greek language will help to dispel these misunderstandings and

bring insight to the word and how it is to be applied.

Though several terms are used, there are two which become prominent for this burden of truth. There is the Greek word *boulema*, which declares “a deliberate design” or “that which is purposed.” This would be a “decretal will” of God or His will that is unalterable. The Calvinists draw heavily from this concept of the will of God. Decretal will is found in Romans 9:19: “Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will?” No one can resist the *boulema* of God.

Nevertheless, there is another word of equal importance used in the New Testament, and we must carefully acknowledge when and where it is used. It is the word *thelema*. It is used to define the “wish will” of God from His heart. It is His desire, His will for our lives. God’s “wish will” (*thelema*) can change as man responds; however, his “decretal will” (*boulema*) is forever unalterable. *Thelema* is God’s declaration, “I want you to do this.” Man may or may not obey the “wish will” of God. God will never coerce me in this will of His. When seeking the will of God for my life, I am seeking His *thelema* will, His desire. I can follow it or I can refuse it (with consequence). Yes, man has the power within his own will to reject and make null-and-void this will of God for His life.

Second Peter 5:9 states, “The Lord is not slack concerning his promise,

as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not *willing* that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.” This word *willing* here is not *boulema*, but *thelema*. Though it is God’s will for all men to be saved and to come to repentance, He will not coerce them nor force them to do so, even if it is His wish will from His heart.

There are passages in the Bible where both *boulema* and *thelema* are used: “Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done” (Luke 22:42). The first “willing” is the Greek word *boulema*—“If thou be willing,” your decretal, unalterable will. The second “will” is the word *thelema*—“nevertheless, not my [wish] will but thine [your *thelema*], be done.” In Romans 12:2 we read, “And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.” This is not three different wills, but according to the Granville Sharp Rule, this is three descriptions of the one will of God. The word here is not the decretal will of God but His heart’s wish will for a person’s life. It can be accepted or rejected by the individual.

It is *thelema* not *boulema* that is used in Ephesians. Note carefully the verses where this term is used:

Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God (1:1).

Having predestinated us unto the adoption

of children by Jesus Christ to himself according to the good pleasure of his will (1:5).

Having made known unto us the mystery of his will (1:9).

... who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will (1:11).

Wherefore be ye not unwise but understanding what the will of the Lord is (5:17).

... but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart (6:6b).

In all of these passages it is *not* the decretal will of God, but His wish will from His heart. Men can accept or reject this will of God.

Perhaps a final passage can be viewed in Acts 13:22 and 36, where both words are used. In verse 22 we read, “I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfil all my will.” This word for “will” is also *thelema*. After looking back over David’s life, the summation of that life is that he fulfilled the wish of God for his life. Yet in 13:36 we read, “For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God.” In this verse the word for “will” is *boulema*. It was God’s divine appointment and decree for David to live and serve God in an appointed generation of history.

Therefore in the burden of Ephesians chapter one, we must come to know the mystery, the revelation of God’s will for this generation, and how to fulfill the will of God for this generation. Yet, we can resist it, reject it, and turn our back against

what we know (according to the Scriptures) that we need to do and preach in this dispensation of God. We must get in harmony with it, and no matter what the church says or how Fundamentalism falls away, we must come to know God's will through Scripture, the mystery of God, and live in accordance to it. I must find the mystery of that will within the mysteries of God.

I am not in the Millennium, I am not in a Fourth Great Awakening, I am not under a Christian President in Washington, I am not in a revival in Fundamentalism, I am not witnessing the greatest hour of the Fundamentalist schools and colleges, and I am not in an economy of God where He is being accepted by the world or even by the institutional Church. Dare we say today that we do not even live at a time when the last bastion of Truth on the planet, the Fundamentalist movement, is in

touch with God. Nevertheless, I must see God's economy at this time in history and must get in harmony with it. I must find His will and do it in my generation: in my living, in my preaching, in my stands, in my witness, and in my separations both from the world and from disorderly brethren. Others may not see it because of their secret heart-rejection of Truth; and in light of this, God is withdrawing insight from them concerning the mystery of His will.

We all will have to stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ for what we saw in the Bible, and what we believed was revealed to us as the will of God for us to live. If we read it, see it, and then back off from it, we will eventually lose the sight or insight of it. May the Lord enable us in this economy of God in the End Time of the last days to know "the mystery of His will."

§

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The Mystery of His Will Amidst Changes in the End Times Ephesians 1:9-12

Dr. H. T. Spence

What is God's economy for this time in history? I fear that many good ministers do not see this truth. Though their preaching is fundamentally sound, it has tended toward "generic" preaching. They simply prepare what they can, basically a "general" message. However, it must be acknowledged that they are not preaching the "mystery of the will of God" for this time, for this *dispensation*, or for the working of God in this generation. We have allowed the Dispensationalists to hurt the very term, limiting it to dispensations of conscience, law, and grace. Every age in history has its dispensation of God, His economy, His working for that generation, in the light of that generation. Although we speak about a lot of things that are taking place in the world today, are we preparing our people for these times and for the future? Do we discern how God is working *now*, rather than just how He worked fifty years ago? The Lord must make known the mystery of His will, His heart's desire for this time in history, for me and for His people, and how He is working at this time in history.

Through the Word of God we must first see our age: both our world age and our church age. Through God's Word we must find wisdom concerning how God wants us to

live amidst our age. One of the great problems that tends to blind Christians from seeing their times is continued apathy toward what is happening in the world and in the Church. Transitions have been drastically made in recent years that have permanently set the course for the future; we cannot afford to not see these changes. We are now well into the world generation that has opened its doors wide for the devil to take control of their lives.

John Bunyan's classic allegory *The Holy War* portrays a fortress (man's soul) being besieged by strong malignant forces. These enemies cannot capture the fortress until its gates are opened from the inside. There is a discussion by the enemy concerning how the fortress would eventually be overrun. In the story Diabolus speaks to his cohorts and says, "We will cajole them [persuade by pleasant words, flattery and false promises], delude them, pretending things that will never be and promising things they shall never get. Lies, lies, lies. This is the only way to get Mansoul to let us in."

The apostle Paul gives the following warning:

For the time [a season] will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves

teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables [myths] (2 Tim. 4:3, 4).

We are in the season of the myth-making by both politicians and religious church leaders. The world seems ready to accept these myths as Truth. Though they begin seemingly insignificant, once they are disseminated they are difficult to combat. When uncontested, the myths become a truth to that generation.

In George Orwell's book *1984*, we have a compelling description of how the so-called Ministry of Truth used "newspeak" to brainwash the people of Oceania. The party slogans were "War is Peace," "Freedom is Slavery," and "Ignorance is Strength." Through crafty manipulation, these lies were eventually believed.

Myths have their origin in the Garden of Eden. Here Satan convinced Eve that if she disobeyed the Word of God she could rule her own life; through disobedience she could be her own god, escaping thoughtless dependency on a Being who had no claim to her life in the first place. This dispute continues—"Will mankind be ruled by God, or is he capable of ruling himself." Sir Julian Huxley, one of the founders of the American Humanists Association, gives the following definition of a modern-day humanist:

I use the word "humanist" to mean someone who believes that man is just as much a natural pheno-

menon as an animal or plant; that his body, mind and soul were not supernaturally created but are products of evolution, and that he is not under the control or guidance of any supernatural being or beings, but has to rely on himself and his own power.

The building blocks of today's humanists are atheism, evolution, moral relativism, freedom of inquiry, and one-world government.

What are the changes that now pervade this global society? We are now well into a secular state with its arbitrary morality and devaluation of human life. The world philosophy is paving the way to get rid of those of whom they deem not viable for the coming global society. Just as Hitler redefined "personhood" to exclude all Jews from the protection of the law, so pre-born babies have been reclassified as nonpersons for the convenience of women. Similarly, the public school system is under the god of humanism. Note the humanist John Dunphy's observation of it:

I am convinced that the battle for humankind's future must be waged and won in the public school classrooms by teachers who correctly perceive their role as the proselytizers of a new faith: a religion of humanity . . . the classroom must and will become an arena of conflict between the old and the new; the rotting corpse of Christianity, together with all its adjacent evils and misery, and the new faith of humanism.

The myth now is that premarital sex,

extramarital sex, and homosexuality are on the same moral level as chastity, monogamy, and heterosexuality. The intention of the secularists is to discredit the voice of Christianity so that America will tolerate only one religion, secular humanism. And we must acknowledge that in 1961 the Supreme Court declared that Humanism is a religion. The battle lines in all areas of life are now drawn between these two concepts—Christianity and secular humanism. In those countries where secularization is complete, the State has tried to exterminate all religion. Clearly two world views are on a collision course. Whether we want to acknowledge it or not, humanism has now replaced Christianity in America! We are like a cut flower: although we still have the semblance of life, we have been cut off from the source of life, to eventually wither and die.

What myths have now taken over the world in its rejection of Truth? Evolutionary myth has now been forced into the academic world as fact and truth. Thus there is no distinction between right and wrong, no accountability to a Creator, and the moral behavior of man must be randomly accepted. We have gone from Darwinism to Neo-Darwinism (which believes that the radical changes in species are the result of variations that arose suddenly rather than gradually). There is also the myth that we can have morality without religion—that whatever is legal is moral. We are in a time of

“Sociological Law,” the belief that there are no absolutes but rather a relative, evolutionary morality. Law is what the majority wants or what the judges say it is. There is no higher court of appeal; no longer can one challenge a ruling on the basis of absolutes derived from the Creator. Man, not God, is the source of laws.

Julian Huxley was once on a television program in which he responded to the question of why evolution was so readily accepted. He admitted, “The reason we accepted Darwinism even without proof, is because we didn’t want God to interfere with our sexual mores.” These words prove that the real reason modern man does not want to believe in God is that he wants no interference from the Creator. Francis Crick, who won the Nobel Prize for his work in unraveling the DNA code, made the following important observations:

You must realize that much of the political thinking of this country is very difficult to justify biologically. It was valid to say in the period of the American Revolution, when people were oppressed by priests and kings, that all men were created equal. But it doesn’t have biological validity. It may have some mystic validity in a religious context, but . . . it’s not only biologically not true, it’s also biologically undesirable . . . We all know, I think, or are beginning to realize, that the future is in our hands, that we can to some extent do what we want.

The belief that morality cannot be legislated is a myth, because liberal

courts and politicians are regularly passing legislation to legitimize immorality in our country. Dr. Pierce of Harvard University, over twenty-five years ago, addressing some two thousand teachers in Denver made the following remarks:

Every child in America who enters school at the age of five is mentally ill, because he comes to school with allegiance toward our elected officials, toward our founding fathers, toward our institutions, toward the preservation of this form of government . . . patriotism, nationalism, sovereignty . . . all of that proves that children are sick, because the truly well individual is one who has rejected all of those things and is what I would call the true international child of the future.

Christopher Dawson (1889–1970), a brilliant British independent scholar, also observed:

The new state will be universal and omni-competent. It will mold and guide the life of its citizens from the cradle to the grave. It will not tolerate any interference with its educational functions by any sectarian organization, even though the latter is based on religious convictions. And this is the more serious, since the introduction of psychology into education has made the schoolmaster a spiritual guide as well as a trainer of the mind. In fact it seems as though the school of the future must increasingly usurp the functions that the church exercised in the past, and that the teaching profession will take the place of the clergy as the spiritual power of the future.

We must remember that the secular state always pushes its values on society through the courts. No law is ever neutral! Every law imposes some form of morality on society.

Dear Reader, morality is being legislated upon us globally. We are being told that the roles of men and women are interchangeable. The public libraries have radically changed in recent years getting rid of books that declare the roles of fathers and mothers, husbands and wives. One of the major goals of the feminist movement is to destroy the concept of marriage as between a husband-wife, or man and woman. Thus lesbianism seeks affection without the domination of man. Biblical marriage is viewed as slavery for women, thus freedom for women must abolish the definition of marriage and man and woman. Karl Marx in his “Communist Manifesto” stressed that the family system is the result of capitalism, which divides society into classes. Women were to become equal in all aspects of production for the State and thus the State would rear the children. Friedrich Engels, who along with Marx, wrote the *Communist Manifesto*, made the following declaration:

The care and education of the children must become a public affair in order to liberate the woman. The state must take the responsibility for the rearing of the children, and this responsibility is so that the proper indoctrination of children would be assured.

Homosexuality has now gained powerful status in our country and around the world. It is now being taught in our public schools as an alternate sexual preference. The homosexuals are now in strategic positions in the American government through Bill Clinton and even more so through the Obamanation found in leadership today. Sodomites are knocking on the doors of the churches, schools, and our homes. On March 26, 1985, the Supreme Court affirmed an appellate court ruling that struck down an Oklahoma law permitting public school districts to fire teachers who openly advocated homosexuality. What this meant in practical terms is that homosexual teachers can flaunt their lifestyle in the classroom without any protest from parents or teachers.

We are seeing the rise of the powers of pornography that have destroyed men and homes, as well as the rise of violent immoral crimes. Our nation is drowning in a sea of sensuality. With explicit magazines, vulgar movies that are readily available, we are rotting from the inside. Though pornography vainly promises like a god, it pays like the devil. It gives the message that such a sin is for pleasure only and to be divorced from all responsibility. The eyes of such perversion must ever seek deeper in its hunger and lusts. It reminds us of Proverbs 27:20—"Hell and destruction are never full; so the eyes of man are never satisfied." Pornography always leads to deeper

and darker sins and desires, ultimately deadening the conscience.

The Bible predicted these changes would come. These changes in government against God are prophetically found in Psalm 2, when the kings of the earth and the rulers take counsel against the Lord and His anointed. The Hebrew language makes this very vivid:

Why did nations stir up riots against God, and the peoples devise futility? The riots are rising in various ways but predominately against morality appointed by God, as well as riots against the need of acceptance of Christ. But the people are devising philosophies and ideologies that are futile, without hope, yea for the destruction of mankind. The kings of the earth take a stand together, and the dignitaries counsel together against the Lord and against his anointed.

It is amazing how our national leaders are gathering forces in the passing of laws to destroy belief in God, His Word, His principles, and His authority over them. We see the breaking of the bands of morality, reverence, and fearing of God. But to what extreme are they taking counsel? Is it to have His liberty, to bring the people to dislike Him? As Matthew's Gospel declared, "They took counsel to put Him to death!" They even took counsel against Lazarus to put him to death because of being identified with the Lord (John 12:10). We are in the time of the full powers of immorality of Romans 1 and the growing political

powers of Revelation 13 against God's saints.

How is God dealing with this dispensation? What is His economy? Romans 1:24–28 speaks of how God gives up men and women to uncleanness, to vile affections, and to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not proper. This is true of a community, a nation, and the whole world: God is giving us over to the fullness of what we have become. There is coming a man who will be the embodiment of this world against God and moral living. God is letting man do what he wants; it seems He is letting man get rid of Him, like He permitted them to kill Jesus. One nation after another is falling in line in their consent to put God to death in every aspect of life: from our origin, our living, our morals, our purpose, our existence, and ultimately our dying.

What is the mystery of God's will in this season of history? This is not a *boulema*-decretal will of God. He is not going to force us to choose this way, to go this way, or to live this way. We must desire it; we must want it as a part of our very life. God is withdrawing from this generation; as in the days of Noah, God is withdrawing His Spirit in conviction and condemnation. I must see this. Very few are entering the Kingdom *now*; these are different days with humanity and different ways with God's dealings. We are seeing very few backsliders coming back to God. What is this doing to

the theological systems? These are not days of revival; nations are not seeing God's call to revival; churches are falling away rather than coming to Christ!

As a Christian, I must know God's will, the mystery of His will for this dispensation and this economy of His working. I must continue to endure, yea, endure all the way to the end, whether I feel God or not, whether I see others going on with God or not, whether I see prayers being answered or not, whether my family or my church is going on with God or not, whether the schools are changing and *not* coming back. I *must* know the mystery of His will for this dispensation of time! I must continue on with God; I dare not wait for encouragement! Whether I receive it or not, God's Word must ever be my guide! Things are not going to get better; things are only going to get worse. There is no revival coming to America; God may not give us another president! (Oh, God help us and have mercy upon us this year!) But God's will, His desire for my life, found in His Word must ever be my living. As Daniel of old, we must purpose in our hearts not to be defiled by this generation. When everything is morally and spiritually gone all around us, when nothing but the fiery furnace is present, when nothing but the lion's den is present—WE MUST NOT CHANGE, but remain true and firm to the "mystery of His will," no matter how God works in this generation. [S]

Dear *Straightway* Reader:

After nearly forty years of written ministry, the *STRAIGHTWAY* newsletter announces to its readers a special series of meetings to be held in the month of October. It is called **A Congress for the Remnant Christians**. This call comes at a desperate time in the history of the world as well as of the institutional church. We are on the eve of the secret coming of Christ to the air to catch His saints away, and we are on the eve of the coming of Antichrist. The Church on earth has entered into a wholesale apostasy, and Fundamentalism is following in its train. Today, only a remnant remains who are true to the Word of God. While scattered across the globe, they live with vexed souls amidst the political and religious darkness of our time.

We are warned by the words of Amos 8:11, 12: “Behold, the days come, saith the Lord GOD, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD. And they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east, they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the LORD, and shall not find it.” Even though Christianity has reached the ends of the earth with Bibles translated into almost every language, yet we stand in the worst spiritual hour in the history of the Church. We are not in an “awakening” but in an “apostasy.” Only a remnant of God’s true people are to be found who are living for Christ and longing for His soon return—and the number is diminishing. Thus for the hope of encouraging the Remnant, we cordially invite you to attend **A Congress for the Remnant Christians** to be held on the campus of Foundations Bible College, **October 3–7, 2012**. Write or call for information concerning this important meeting.

In His Majesty’s Service,
Dr. H. T. Spence

A CONGRESS FOR THE REMNANT CHRISTIANS

October 3–7, 2012

“Ah Lord GOD! wilt thou make a full end
of the remnant of Israel? . . . yet will I be to them
as a little sanctuary in the countries
where they shall come.”
(Ezekiel 11:13b, 16b)

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