

Sunday, April 22, 2012—Grace Life School of Theology—*Grace History Project*—Lesson 65
When Was the Mystery no Longer a Mystery? Advancements in Pauline Truth 1870-1900, Part 1

William Trotter’s “The Distinct Calling and Glory of the Church” 1886

- In 1886, William Trotter and T. Smith delivered *Eight Lectures on Prophecy*. The publication of the notes from these meetings contains the following Preface, “These lectures were delivered, and are now printed, for the benefit of Christians almost altogether unacquainted with the subjects of which they treat, hence their strictly elementary character. The following pages are, to a great extent, a transcript of the reporter’s notes.”
- Since these lectures were printed from a reporter’s notes, they are not as clear and easy to follow as Trotter’s earlier writings that we surveyed in Lesson 60. The fifth lecture is titled, “The Distinct Calling and Glory of the Church as Bride and Co-heir of Christ.” A discussion of this lecture has been included because of the clear dispensational explanation of the body of Christ based upon Ephesians 2. Cautious students should note that on a whole; Lecture # 5 is not as sound as “Christ and the Church” found in *Plain Papers on Prophetic and Other Subjects*. This however, may not be Trotter’s fault since this collection of Lectures were printed from the handwritten notes of a reporter.
- Once again, Trotter shows a clear grasp of dispensational truth when he distinguishes between the temporal and physical blessings promised to Israel and the heavenly and spiritual blessings given to the body of Christ.
 - “We have seen Israel's calling is to temporal blessings in earthly places, even in the land promised to their fathers. But what are our blessings, as set forth in this epistle? (quotes Eph. 1:3) In *heavenly* places. Not a heavenly frame of mind, as many understand this passage. That would surely be included in *spiritual blessings*. But we are taught what the region is in which we are thus blessed with all spiritual blessings; it is in *heavenly places*. Let me ask you, my brethren, where is the Lord Jesus Christ? Where is the risen and glorified Son of Man? Is he not in heaven — literally and actually in heaven? And is it not in this very chapter that we are told of "the exceeding greatness of God's power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand *in the heavenly places*? (Eph. 1:19-20)" This is exactly the same expression as in verse 3, "Blessed with all spiritual blessings *in heavenly places*." Our place is where he is, at the right hand of God. Our portion, treasure, inheritance — our life, our peace, our joy — in a word, our blessings are all there: "Blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." We are the body of him who actually sits there; and vitally united with him by the Holy Ghost, faith reckons — even as God accounts — his place to be our place in him.” (Trotter, Lecture 5)
- The following section demonstrates that Trotter understood the difference between Israel’s calling and the church’s calling. Moreover, Trotter understood that in the “ages to come” as well as now the church participates in the eternal purpose of God by teaching the manifold wisdom of God in the heavenly places.

- “In the beginning of Eph. 2 we have a glance at what our natural condition is, “dead in trespasses and sins.” Then in ver. 4, “But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ;” given us one life with him whom he raised from the dead; “(by grace ye are saved;) and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together *in heavenly places* in Christ Jesus.” And for what end is this? That all the nations of the earth may see how happy a thing it is to be under the government of the Prince of Peace? No, that is the object of Israel’s calling. But why are we thus raised up together, and made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ? It is “that in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.” And then in Eph. 3: 9, 10, we find that there is even a present display to those in heaven. “God, who created all things by Jesus Christ, to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers *in heavenly places* might be known BY THE CHURCH the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord.” It is God’s eternal purpose that even now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places — and *in the ages to come* to all — shall be exhibited, *by means of the church*, his manifold wisdom, and the exceeding riches of his grace. May our hearts enter more fully through grace into this stupendous design.” (Trotter, Lecture 5)
- In his exposition of Ephesians 2, Trotter goes to great lengths to prove that instead of the distinction between Jews and Gentiles being maintained in the church, it has been totally obliterated.
 - “The Apostle proceeds in Eph. 2 to show that instead of the distinction between Jew and Gentile being maintained in the church, it is entirely obliterated. It is not that the Gentiles are brought into blessing, as they will be in the millennium, in a place subordinate to that of the Jews; but that both Jews and Gentiles are brought out of their natural state and position altogether, into vital union with Christ in glory. “Wherefore, remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands: that at that time ye were without Christ” — Christ was of Israel according to the flesh, but the Gentiles sustained no such relationship to him — “being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world.” Such was our condition as Gentiles. God was the God of Israel, and they had the hope of their Messiah’s coming, to fulfil all the promises made to their fathers. “But now, in Christ Jesus, ye who sometimes were far off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ.” How nigh? So nigh as to be servants of Israel? their ploughmen and vinedressers, as the Gentiles will be in millennial times? Is that our place? Are we the favoured ploughmen and vinedressers of the more favoured nation of God’s choice, Israel on the earth? Hear what the Apostle says. “For he (Christ) is our peace, who hath made both (Jews and Gentiles who believe) one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; and that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby.” Can anything be plainer than what we are here taught? We are not brought into that place of subjection to Israel which will belong to the spared nations of the earth in millennial times. We are not brought into the position

which Israel itself will then occupy. No, but we are brought into one immeasurably higher and more blessed than either. The Jew, with all his privileges, is by nature dead in sins. The out-cast far-off Gentile is but in the same condition before God. What has God in his grace done for us both? Rich in mercy, he has quickened us, whether Jews or Gentiles together with Christ. He has brought the Jew out of his natural position as a Jew, and the Gentile out of his natural position as a Gentile, and brought both into the entirely new and wondrous position of being the body of the heavenly glorified man; of him who being in the form of God, and thinking it not robbery to be equal with God, humbled himself to the death of the cross. He has now as his reward for this, a name which is above every name — the name of JESUS — at which name indeed the church herself bows the adoring knee; but he is also "*head over all things,*" and *we are his body.* He died, as we have seen, to make in himself of twain one new man. There is a new, mystic man; of which Christ in glory is the head, and of which all who believe during the period of its formation, are members. And this is the sense in which we are said to be "the fulness of him that filleth all in all." All my members are the fulness, or complement, which constitute my body. If a joint of my little finger were wanting, I should not be a complete man. Thus is the church, the fulness, the complement, of this new heavenly man. Christ in glory is the head, and in all things he has the pre-eminence. But the feeblest saint is essential to the completeness of the body. The head (and we know who that is) cannot say to the feet, I have no need of you. (See 1 Cor. 12: 2 1.) Hence in Eph. 4, the gifts are said to be bestowed "for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, *unto a perfect man,* unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." It is not "till we all come to be perfect men." No, but till we all come unto "a perfect man:" that is, until the body, the bride of Christ be completed. It was for this that Jesus died. "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word; *that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.*" (Eph. 5: 25-27.) Wondrous truth! "He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the Church; for we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones." "This is a great mystery," says the Apostle, "but I speak concerning Christ and the church." (Trotter, Lecture 5)

C.H. Mackintosh's *The Life and Times of Elijah* Exact Date Unknown

- "Charles Henry Mackintosh, whose initials "C.H.M." are known world wide, was born in Glenmalure Barracks, County Wicklow, Ireland, in October 1820." (Pickering, 110) The writings of C.H. Mackintosh had a profound theological impact upon the thinking of D.L. Moody. Concerning the writings of Mackintosh, Moody stated,
 - "Some time since I had my attention called to C.H.M.'s Notes, and was so much pleased and at the same time profited by the way they opened up Scripture truths, that I secured at once all the writings of the same author, and if they could not be replaced, would rather part with my entire library, excepting my Bible, than with these writings. They have been to me a very key to the Scriptures." (quoted in Sandeen, 173)

- CHM died November 2, 1896, and was buried in Cheltenham Cemetery, in what is known as the Plymouth Brethren plot, where the graves of Exclusive and Open Brethren lie side by side awaiting the resurrection morn. (Smith, 13)
- In 1896 CHM's *Miscellaneous Writings* were published in six volumes. Since these works were compiled and printed in 1896, the year of CHM's death, it is safe to conclude that they were written some time before they were actually published. As with many of the Brethren writers, CHM did not date his written works. The essay in question, *The Life and Times of Elijah* appeared in volume five of the original six volume set. In 1976, CHM's *Miscellaneous Writings* were republished in one volume, *The Mackintosh Treasury*.
- The conclusion to *The Life and Times of Elijah* contains an extended discussion of the unique message and ministry committed to the Apostle Paul. An analysis of this document reveals that CHM had definitely abandoned the Acts 2 dispensational position. In fact, as we shall soon see, some Acts 28 Dispensationalists claim that CHM was perhaps the first writer to articulate the Acts 28 position. Our discussion will deal with areas where CHM was clear as well as those portions of this essay that are more controversial.
- CHM opens the final section of *The Life and Times of Elijah* with the following forceful statement.
 - *Every system of doctrine or discipline which would connect the Church with the world, either in her present condition or her future prospects, must be wrong, and must exert an unhallowed influence. The Church is not of the world. Her life, her position, her hopes, are all heavenly in the very highest sense of that word. The calling and existence of the Church are, humanly speaking, consequent upon the present rejection of Israel and the world."*
- CHM clearly teaches that the church's heavenly character and power was not brought out in the Bible until the ministry of the Apostle Paul.
 - "The doctrine of the Church's heavenly character was developed in all its power and beauty by the Holy Ghost in the apostle Paul. Up to his time, and even during the early stages of his ministry, the divine purpose was to deal with Israel. There had been all along a chain of witnesses, the object of whose mission was exclusively the house of Israel."
- Mackintosh demonstrates a clear understanding between prophecy and mystery. The church composed of Jew and Gentiles seated together in Christ lay far beyond the range of the prophetic testimony, according to CHM.
 - "The prophets, as has been already observed in the opening of this paper, bore witness to Israel, not only concerning their complete failure, but also the future establishment of *the kingdom* agreeably to the covenant made with Abraham, Isaac Jacob, and David. They spoke not of the Church as the body of Christ. How could they, when the thing was a profound mystery, "not revealed to the sons of men"?"

The thought of a Church composed of Jew and Gentile, “seated *together* in the heavenlies,” lay far beyond the range of prophetic testimony. Isaiah, no doubt, speaks in very elevated strains of Jerusalem's glory in the latter day; he speaks of Gentiles coming to her light, and kings to the brightness of her rising; but he never rises higher than the kingdom, and as a consequence never brings out anything beyond the covenant made with Abraham, which secures everlasting blessedness to his seed, and through them to the Gentiles. We may range through the inspired pages of the law and the prophets, from one end to the other, and find nothing concerning “*the great mystery*” of the Church.”

- Beginning with the ministry of John the Baptist, the long prophesied kingdom promised to Israel was announced as being at hand, according the CHM. Moreover, Mackintosh is explicitly clear that not even one syllable of John the Baptist’s ministry speaks of the body of Christ.
 - “Then, again, in the ministry of John the Baptist we observe the same thing. We have the sum and substance of his testimony in these words: “Repent, for *the kingdom is* at hand.” He came as the great precursor of the Messiah, and sought to produce moral order amongst all ranks. He told the people what they were to do in that transition state into which his ministry was designed to conduct them, and pointed to Him that was to come. Have we anything of the *Church* in all this? Not a syllable. The *kingdom is* still the very highest thought. John led his disciples to the waters of Jordan — the place of confession in view of the kingdom; but it was not yet that character of repentance produced in them who are made members of the body of Christ.”
- Jesus Christ and the 12 Apostles are depicted as extending John’s prophetic ministry to Israel. According to Mackintosh, Peter offers Israel the kingdom in Acts 3:19-21.
 - “The Lord Jesus Himself then took up the chain of testimony. The prophets had been stoned; John had been beheaded; and now “the Faithful Witness” entered the scene, and not only declared that the kingdom was at hand, but presented Himself to the daughter of Zion as her King. He too was rejected, and, like every previous witness, sealed His testimony with His blood. Israel would not have God's King, and God would not give Israel the kingdom.

Next came the twelve apostles, and took up the chain of testimony. Immediately after the resurrection they inquired of the Lord, “Wilt Thou at this time restore again *the kingdom* to Israel?” Their minds were filled with the thought of the kingdom. “We trusted,” said the two disciples going to Emmaus, “that it had been He which should have redeemed Israel.” And so it was. The question was, *when?* The Lord does not rebuke the disciples for entertaining the thought of the kingdom; He simply tells them, “It is not for you to know *the times or the seasons*, which the Father hath put in His own power. But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be *witnesses* unto Me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth” (Acts 1: 7-8).

Agreeably to this, the Apostle Peter, in his address to Israel, offers them *the kingdom*. “Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, and the times of refreshing shall come from the presence (*apo prosopon*) of

the Lord; and He shall send Jesus Christ which before was preached unto you; whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began.””

- Immediately after quoting Acts 3:19-21, CHM says that the verses in question deal with the kingdom promised to Israel and not the church the body of Christ. In fact, Mackintosh emphatically states that those who see the church in the opening chapters of Acts “have by no means reached the divine thought on the subject.” In short, CHM was not an Acts 2 Dispensationalist.
 - “Have we here the development of the Church? No. The time had not yet arrived for this. The revelation of the Church was yet to be, as it were, forced out as something quite extraordinary — something quite out of the regular course of things. The Church as seen in the opening of the Acts exhibits but a sample of lovely grace and order, exquisite indeed in its way, but not anything beyond what man could take cognisance of and value. In a word, it was still the kingdom, and not the great mystery of the Church. Those who think that the opening chapters of Acts present the Church in its essential aspect have by no means reached the divine thought on the subject.”
- After coming down hard on the Acts 2 position, CHM teaches some things that seem to be more consistent with the Acts 28 position than the Mid-Acts position. Mackintosh states the following regarding Peter’s ministry to Cornelius in Acts 10 and the Jerusalem council in Acts 15. CHM seems to think that Paul understood the mystery of the church in Acts 15 but that he did not yet publically proclaim it because of his affection for his kinsmen according to the flesh (Israel). Please note that to save space I have only included the references to the passages quoted by CHM.
 - “Peter's vision in Acts 10 is decidedly a step in advance of his preaching in Acts 3. Still, however, the grand truth of the heavenly mystery was not yet unfolded. In the council held at Jerusalem for the purpose of considering the question that had arisen in reference to the Gentiles, we find the apostles all agreeing with James in the following conclusion: (Acts 15:14-17).

Here we are taught that the Gentiles, as such, are to have a place with the Jews in the kingdom.

But did the council at Jerusalem apprehend the truth of the Church, of Jews and Gentiles so truly formed in “one body” that they are no more Jew nor Gentile? I believe not. A few members might have heard it from Paul (see Gal. 2: 2), but as a whole they do not seem to have understood it as yet. . .

Because Israel had not as yet been finally set aside. The Lord was still lingering over His beloved city, unwilling to enter into judgment; for, as another has said, “Whenever the Lord leaves a place of mercy, or enters a place of judgment, He moves with a slow and measured pace.”

This is most true; and hence, although the apostle of the Gentiles had been raised up and constituted the depositary of a truth which was designed to carry all who should receive it far away beyond the bounds of Jewish things, yet did he make the house of Israel his primary object; and in so doing he worked in company

with the twelve, although not a debtor to them in any one way. “It was necessary,” says he to the Jews, “that the word of God should *first* have been spoken to you; but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles” (Acts 13: 46).”

- In the midst of the lengthy section we just quoted, Mackintosh is very clear that Peter and Paul were operating under different commissions. It was left to Paul alone to unfold the mystery of the church.
 - “We infer, therefore, that the preaching of the gospel to the Gentiles by the mouth of Peter was not the development of *the great mystery* of the Church, but simply the opening of *the kingdom*, agreeable to the words of the prophets, and also to Peter’s commission in Matt. 16: (Matt. 16:18-19)

Mark, it is “the kingdom,” and not the Church. Peter received the keys of the kingdom, and he used those keys, first to open the kingdom to the Jew, and then to the Gentile. But Peter never received a commission to unfold the mystery of the Church. Even in his Epistles we find nothing of it. He views believers on earth; as strangers, no doubt, but yet on earth; having their hope in Heaven and being on their way thither, but never as the body of Christ seated there in Him.

It was reserved for the great apostle of the Gentiles to bring out, in the energy and power of the Holy Ghost, the mystery of which we speak. He was raised up, however, as he himself tells us, before the time. “Last of all, He was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time.” Things were not sufficiently matured for the development of the new revelation of which he was made the peculiar minister, and hence he styles himself one born *before* the time; for such is the real force of the original word.”

- CHM sees Paul’s ministry during the Acts period as consisting of both new, previously unrevealed information as well as divine affections for Israel. Therefore, Paul was slow and deliberate in the proclamation of his unique commission. Regarding why it was necessary “that the word of God should *first* have been spoken to you; but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles” (Acts 13: 46). CHM wrote,
 - “Why was it necessary? Because of God’s long-suffering and grace. Paul was not only the depositary of the divine counsels, but also of divine affections. As the former, he should act upon his peculiar commission; as the latter, he would linger over “his brethren, his kinsmen according to the flesh”: as the former, he was called upon to lead the Church into the knowledge of “a mystery which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men”; as the latter, he would, like his Master, with “a slow and measured step,” turn his back upon the devoted city and the infatuated nation.

In a word, as the gospel with which he was entrusted could only be proclaimed upon the ground of the total abandonment of earth, the earthly city, and the earthly nation, and as Paul’s heart yearned over that nation and city, therefore it was that he was so slow to make known publicly the gospel which he preached. He delayed for fourteen years, as he himself informs us. “Then fourteen years after I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and took Titus with me also.

And I went up by revelation, and communicated unto them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to them which were of reputation, lest by any means I should run, or had run, in vain” (Gal. 2: 1-2).

This is a very important passage on the question now before us. Paul had been raised up quite out of the regular course of things; his ministry was totally divested of the earthly, human and Jewish element; so much so indeed as to give rise to numerous questions as to its divine origin.

To him was committed what he emphatically styles *his* gospel. But, as has been remarked, it was a question whether things were ripe as regards the divine counsels respecting Israel, for the public development of this gospel. The apostle felt this to be a momentous question: hence his caution in communicating it *severally* to a few. He could not, even in the midst of the Church at Jerusalem, speak openly on this grand question, because he feared that the full time had not come, and that, should he develop it prematurely, few had sufficient spiritual intelligence or largeness of mind to understand or enter into it. His fears, as we know, were well grounded. There were few at Jerusalem who were at all prepared for Paul's gospel.”

- Based upon the preceding quotation, Paul delayed the widespread proclamation of his gospel because Jerusalem was not ready to hear it. It is also clear that Mackintosh viewed Paul's ministry as totally separate and distinct from any “earthly, human and Jewish element.” CHM appears to be saying that as of Acts 15 Paul knew that his commission and revelation were unique and distinct; however, he chose not to proclaim his gospel at that time.
- After a lengthy section where he surveys the events of the final chapters of Acts, CHM says the following regarding Paul's departure from Jerusalem for Rome.
 - “Now Paul's departure may be looked upon as the immediate precursor of all this. The peculiar truth of which he was the depositary could only be brought out in all its fullness and power in connection with the abandonment of earth as the *manifested* scene of divine operation. Hence Paul's journey from Jerusalem to Rome must be viewed with deepest interest by the intelligent and reflecting Christian.”
- Careful readers will note the following sentence, “the peculiar truth of which he was the depositary could only be brought out in all its fullness and power in connection with the abandonment of earth as the *manifested* scene of divine operation.” According to CHM, Paul knew the mystery, i.e., “the peculiar truth of which he was the depositary” before Acts 28. Moreover, since it could only now, upon leaving Jerusalem, “be brought out in all its fullness and power,” it must have experienced a limited proclamation previous to Acts 28.
- CHM's comments on Acts 28:28 have led some to conclude that he was teaching the Acts 28 position, i.e., that the body of Christ started in Acts 28. It is best to consider Mackintosh in his own words.

- “There was now no more hope. Every effort that love could make had been made, but to no purpose; and our apostle, with a reluctant heart, shuts them up under the power of that judicial blindness which was the natural result of their rejection of the salvation of God. Thus every obstacle to the clear and full development of Paul's gospel was removed. He found himself in the midst of the wide Gentile world — a prisoner at Rome and rejected of Israel. He had done his utmost to tarry among them; his affectionate heart led him to delay as long as possible ere he would reiterate the prophet's verdict; but now all was over — every expectation was blasted — all human institutions and associations present to his view nothing but ruin and disappointment; he must therefore set himself to bring out that holy and heavenly mystery which had been hid in God from ages and generations — the mystery of the Church as the body of Christ united to its living Head by the Holy Ghost.

Thus closes the Acts of the Apostles, which, like the Gospels, is more or less connected with the testimony to Israel. So long as Israel could be regarded as the object of testimony, so long the testimony continued; but when they were shut up to judicial blindness, they ceased to come within the range of testimony, wherefore the testimony ceased. . .

But there could be numerous degrees of elevation as regards the standing of the saint. For example, a saint in the opening of Acts had higher privileges than a saint under the law. Moses, the prophets, John, our Lord in His personal ministry, and the twelve, all brought out varied aspects of the believer's position before God. But Paul's gospel went far beyond them all. It was not the kingdom offered to Israel on the ground of repentance, as by John the Baptist and our Lord; nor was it the kingdom opened to Jew and Gentile by Peter in Acts 3 and Acts 10; but it was *the heavenly calling of the Church of God composed of Jew and Gentile, in one body, united to a glorified Christ by the presence of the Holy Ghost.*

The Epistle to the Ephesians fully develops the mystery of the will of God concerning this. There we find ample instruction as to our heavenly standing, heavenly hopes, and heavenly conflict. The apostle does not contemplate the Church as a pilgrim *on earth*, (which, we need not say, is most true,) but as sitting *in Heaven*: not as toiling *here*, but resting *there*. “He hath raised us up together, and made us *sit* together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.” It is not that He *will* do this, but “He hath” done it. When Christ was raised from the dead, all the members of His body were raised also; when He ascended into Heaven they ascended also; when He sat down, they sat down also; that is, in the counsel of God, and to be actualised in process of time by the Holy Ghost sent down from Heaven.

Such was the thought and purpose of the divine mind concerning them. Believers did not know this at the first; it was not unfolded by the ministry of the twelve, as seen in the Acts of the Apostles, because the testimony to Israel was still going on; and so long as earth was the manifested scene of divine operation, and so long as there was any ground of hope in connection with Israel, the heavenly mystery was held back; but when earth had been abandoned and Israel set aside, the apostle of the Gentiles, from his prison at Rome, writes to the Church, and opens out all the glorious privileges connected with its place in the Heavens with

Christ. When Paul arrived at Rome as a prisoner he had, as it were, arrived at the end of all human things. He no longer thought of the Church as exhibiting anything like a perfect testimony on earth. He knew how things would turn out as regards the Church's earthly path; he knew that it would fare with it even as it had fared with the vessel in which he had sailed from Jerusalem to Rome; but his spirit was buoyed up by the happy assurance that nothing could touch the unity of the body of Christ, because it was a unity infallibly maintained by God Himself.”

- Acts 28 Dispensationalist, Stuart Allen quotes the preceding section from Mackintosh in his 1969 book *The Early Centuries and the Truth*. Allen makes the following assertions regarding CHM’s understanding of the book of Acts. Ultimately, Allen views Mackintosh as an Acts 28 Dispensationalist.
 - “The writer (CHM) sees clearly the dispensational character of the Acts, with the people of Israel coming first right up to the last chapter. He realizes that the truth of the great secret (Mystery) revealed through Paul the prisoner of the Gentiles was not known or commended at Acts 2. Neither is the ministry of Peter or the Twelve connected with it. Rather the first unfolding of this Divine secret is after Israel’s rejection at Acts 28, and made known in the first epistles written after that event, namely those to the Ephesians and Colossians. It is all the more remarkable when one remembers that this was written and taught a hundred years ago. How comes it then that this teaching is dubbed as ultra-dispensational by many of the present day followers of the movement to which C.H. Mackintosh was attached, and looked upon as a concoction of Dr. E.W. Bullinger and Charles H. Welch?” (Allen, 40)
- It is easy to see why Allen would view Mackintosh as an Acts 28 Dispensationalist. Some of what CHM says is in line with standard Acts 28 viewpoints. All of this raises the interesting question of what makes someone an Acts 28 Dispensationalist? Michael Penny, author of *Approaching the Bible*, an Acts 28 Dispensationalist. points out the tension between CHM’s comments on Acts 28 and his application of all of Paul’s epistles to the body of Christ.
 - “It would be wrong to give the impression that all, or indeed any, of the above writers agreed with the detailed approach advocated in this book. They were all dispensationalists, but more than that, they all saw something of signification occurring at the end of Acts. However, some of them did not relate their views on Acts with their comments on the epistles or letters written during Acts. For example, they might state that Israel was set aside in Acts 28:25-27 and that the announcement that God’s salvation was sent to the Gentiles in Acts 28:28 signified the close of one dispensation and the start of another. They might state that the letters of James, Peter, John, and Jude, as well as the letter to the Hebrews, were for Israel. However, some continued to hold that all of Paul’s letters concerned this dispensation. They failed to see that his earlier ones, the ones he wrote during Acts, Galatians—1 & 2 Thessalonians, 1 & 2 Corinthians, and Romans were all for that time. They involved the central people of Acts, Israel. The churches of that time were mixtures of Jews and Gentiles, with those of Hebrew descent still, rightly, occupying the first place and observing the Law of Moses.

We can see tension between their comments on the Acts of the Apostles and their comments on the letters written during Acts with a number of writers. It is there in C.H. Mackintosh's *The Life and Times of Elijah the Tishbite. . .* (Penney, 206)

“Welch has often been credited with the discovery of the dispensational change in Acts 28:28. However, many who lived and wrote before him had seen the significance of the last pronouncement in Acts 28:25-28 of Isaiah 6, including Anderson, Bullinger, Mackintosh and many others. Some have suggested that Welch's breakthrough was to recognize that if the dispensational change came at the end of Acts, it was inconsistent to treat the earlier letters of Paul as one with his later letters. To leave Paul's earlier letters in the Acts dispensation and to consider his later ones as pertaining to the post-Acts dispensation is consistent and far more sensible. However, Welch may not have been the first to come to this conclusion. Both Mackintosh and Holden had written of the difference between Paul's earlier and later ministries, although from their writings it does not seem as if they had come to as clear-cut a view as Welch.” (Penney, 212)

- Whether or not C.H. Mackintosh should rightly be viewed as an Acts 28 dispensationalist is difficult to say. His thoughts in *The Life and Times of Elijah* are muddled at best. CHM seems to view Paul as having known the unique contents of his gospel and the mystery during the Acts period; however the time had not come for it to be fully proclaimed.
 - “But did the council at Jerusalem **apprehend the truth of the Church, of Jews and Gentiles so truly formed in “one body” that they are no more Jew nor Gentile?** I believe not. **A few members might have heard it from Paul** (see Gal. 2: 12), but as a whole they do not seem to have understood it as yet.” In order for them to have heard it from Paul at the Jerusalem council, Paul would have had to have known the mystery before Acts 15.”
 - “Now Paul's departure may be looked upon as the immediate precursor of all this. **The peculiar truth of which he was the depositary could only be brought out in all its fullness and power in connection with the abandonment of earth as the *manifested scene of divine operation.*** Hence Paul's journey from Jerusalem to Rome must be viewed with deepest interest by the intelligent and reflecting Christian.” If Paul's final departure from Jerusalem brought out the proclamation of the depositary of doctrine committed to Paul in “all its fullness and power,” than clearly Paul had already been making it known to some degree prior to his final departure from Jerusalem.”
- These comments coupled with the fact that Mackintosh does not distinguish between the Acts and post-Acts epistles but accepts all the Pauline as epistles as equally applying to the church leads me to conclude that CHM cannot rightly be viewed as an Acts 28 Dispensationalist. As we have already seen, CHM was not an Acts 2 Dispensationalist either. So then what was he? I cannot in good faith call Mackintosh a Mid-Acts Dispensationalist because he shows many Acts 28 tendencies. I think that we can safely conclude that CHM was a Pauline Dispensationalist. That is, Mackintosh understood that Paul was given a different commission than the one given to Peter and the Twelve. To the Apostle Paul, the apostle of the gentiles, was committed the revelation of the mystery concerning the heavenly purpose and calling of the church the body of Christ. He viewed

the early chapters of Acts as the kingdom being offered to the nation of Israel. On these points Mackintosh is explicitly clear despite his lack of consistent clarity over where the dispensational boundary should be drawn.

- Mackintosh understood that the current dispensation would last until the rapture of the church.
 - “He was not ashamed, for he knew that the Church, though broken in pieces here, was nevertheless held in the everlasting grasp of the Son of God, and that He was able to keep it until the happy moment of its rapture to meet Him in the air. . . . And then, as to the Church’s hope, “we look for the Saviour,” and not for the accomplishment of any earthly event. Thank God, believers are not taught to wait for the revelation of Antichrist, but for the appearing of the blessed Son of God, who loved them and gave Himself for them. Christians should understand that they have nothing to look for save their rapture into the air to meet the Lord. The world may ridicule the idea, and false teachers may build up systems hostile to it, for the purpose of shaking the faith of the simple-minded; but through grace we will continue to “comfort one another” with the assurance that “the days are at hand, and the effect of every vision.” ”
- In addition, CHM seems to have understood some things about positional truth and the believer’s standing in Christ.
 - “But it may be asked: How can believers be said to be seated in heavenly places when they are yet in the world, struggling with its difficulties, its sorrows and temptations? The same question may be asked in reference to the important doctrine of Rom. 6: How can believers be represented as dead to sin when they find sin working in them continually? The answer to both is one and the same.

God sees the believer as dead with Christ, and He also sees the Church as raised with and seated in Christ; but it is the province of faith to lead the soul into the reality of both. “Reckon yourselves to be” what God tells you you are. The believer’s power to subdue indwelling corruption consists in his reckoning himself to be dead to it; and his power of separation from the world consists in his reckoning himself to be raised with Christ and seated in Him. The Church, according to God’s estimation, has as little to do with sin and the world as Christ has; but God’s thoughts and our apprehensions are very different things.”
- The church of Christendom has fallen tragically short of a true Scriptural understanding of the nature of the church the body of Christ, according to Mackintosh. In short, there will always only be a small minority of believers who comprehend the heavenly character and calling of the church as preached by the Apostle Paul.
 - “We must never forget that every tendency of the human mind not only falls short of but stands actually opposed to all this divine truth about the Church. We have seen how long it was ere man could take hold of it — how it was forced out, as it were, and pressed upon him; and we have only to glance at the history of the Church for the last eighteen centuries to see how feebly it was held and how speedily it was let go. The heart naturally clings to earth, and the thought of an earthly corporation is attractive to it.

Hence we may expect that the truth of the Church's heavenly character will only be apprehended and carried out by a very small and feeble minority.”

It is not to be supposed that the Protestant reformers exercised their thoughts on this momentous subject. They were made instrumental in bringing out the precious doctrine of justification by faith from amid the rubbish of Romish superstition, and also in letting in upon the human conscience the light of inspiration in opposition to the false and ensnaring dogmas of human tradition.

This was doing not a little: yet it must be admitted the position and hopes of the Church engaged not their attention. It would have been a bold step from the church of Rome to the Church of God; and yet it will be found in the end that there is no distinct neutral ground between the two; for every church, or, to speak more accurately, every religious corporation, reared up and carried on by the wisdom and resources of man, be its principle ever so pure and ever so hostile to Catholicism, will be found, when judged by the Spirit, and in the light of Heaven, to partake more or less of the element of the Romish system.

The heart clings to earth, and will with difficulty be led to believe that the only time wherein God ceases to be manifestly occupied about earth — that the only unnoticed interval in the history of time — is just the period wherein He, by the Holy Ghost, is gathering out the Church to form the body of Christ; and moreover, that when God was dealing publicly with earth, the Church, properly so called, was not contemplated; and that when He shall resume His public dealings with the earth and with Israel, the Church will be out of the scene. . .

Sects are not the Church, nor religious parties the body of Christ. Hence, to be attached to the sects is to find ourselves in some of those numerous tributary streams which are rapidly flowing onward into the terrible vortex of which we read in Rev. 17 and 18. Let us not be deceived — principles will work, and systems will find their proper level. Prejudice will operate, and hinder the carrying out of those heavenly principles of which we speak.

- In a candid section at the close of *The Life and Times of Elijah*, CHM makes a powerful statement about all those who will resolve to stand for Pauline authority.
 - “Those who will maintain Paul's gospel will find themselves, like him, deserted and despised amid the splendid pomp and glitter of the world. The clashing of ecclesiastical systems, the jarring of sects, and the din of religious controversy, will surely drown the feeble voices of those who would speak of the heavenly calling and rapture of the Church.

But let the spiritual man who finds himself in the midst of all this sad and heart-sickening confusion remember the following simple principle: *Every system of ecclesiastical discipline, and every system of prophetic interpretation, which would connect the Church, in any one way, with the world, or things of the world, must be contrary to the spirit and principles of the great mystery developed by the Holy Ghost in the apostle of the Gentiles.”*

Conclusion

- While I do not view Mackintosh as a full-fledged Acts 28 Dispensationalist, his views certainly are a precursor to the views of Bullinger later in his ministry and Charles Welch.
- When one considers the works we have surveyed thus far it becomes apparent that Acts 2 (Darby and Trotter), Mid-Acts (Holden), and early Acts 28 (Mackintosh) dispensational views were all in print before the year 1900. This understanding gives richness to the historical development of dispensational theology apart from the institutional cookie cutter approach that has for too long dominated these discussions. Much more was known and in print and at an earlier date than many students of dispensational theology have heretofore realized.
- In our next lesson we will consider another work, E.W. Bullinger's 1895 publication *The Mystery*.

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