



Bible Student's Notebook™

The Herald of His Grace

Presenting *every man* perfect in Christ Jesus. Colossians 1:28

Volume VIII
Issue 192

The Spirit of the Word and Theological Reversals

by – Arthur P. Adams (1845-1925)

It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life (John 6:63).

The very foundation principle upon which the Bible is interpreted by the church is the *reverse of the truth*, and this error leads the church in the way of death, and away from the way of life.



Colossians 1: 26-27). Wonderful “*treasures of wisdom and knowledge*” are hidden in the written Word, as in the Word incarnate, and He alone will find them, Who searches for them as for hidden treasure (Proverbs 2:1-9).

We are told that the correct meaning of a passage is that which lies upon the surface, the most obvious and apparent sense. For instance, a celebrated preacher, formerly of Boston, thus enunciates this error,

The systematic rules by which God works “*first the natural and afterward that which is spiritual,*” “*every man in his own order,*” the “*first fruit*” and afterward the great ingathering (Romans 11:16).

The sense which naturally suggests itself in the exposition of the Scriptures is the sense to be preferred.

These rules, connected with the gradual development of His plan, age after age, explain why God should give light to some and withhold it from others. The “*first fruit*” of course are first to be attended to, and afterwards others of the great human harvest, and so on until all are gathered together in Christ (Ephesians 1:10).

Now, so far from this being true, the truth I think is just the opposite. The Bible is written, as the Word incarnate spoke, in *parables and dark sayings* (Psalm 78:2), in types, allegories, shadows and figures, that the truth might not be seen, except by those to “*whom it was given*” (see Matthew 13:10-16).

Now, the great majority of Christians know nothing of this great principle of Scripture revelation, hence they are building upon and resting in the “*letter*” of the Word which brings not life, but death. Hence also the almost innumerable opinions, sects and contradictions that divide and disgrace the ►

I know that this statement will sound strange and erroneous to some, but it is nevertheless the plain, simple truth, capable of abundant verification from the Bible. A knowledge of the *plan of the ages* makes it plain why God should thus hide the truth in a book that is yet a revelation of the truth (see

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Our Mailbox

What an amazing subject [*Daily Email Goodie #2015*] in undeniable timing! Can't explain all the circumstances, but this ministers to my heart, and I so much appreciate your "words." They DO mean things ... More than can be explained. And they go further than just the original hearer; they get passed along to others who also benefit.

Submission: "The act of giving up the struggle for victory or superiority to the authority of another" – Wow! I like just the "giving up the struggle" part, too! :) It is so nice to "rest" in the hope that is Christ! – **TX**

I have been struggling lately and I think it's because I'm having trouble reconciling the truth I'm learning with the legalism of my old understanding ...

The Jews were in a transition in Acts of coming out of the "Jewish" mindset and embracing grace. That's what we all, who come from religion, go through, as we learn grace and find our identity in Him has been stolen ... We need to be reminded to live the "temple life" [*BSN #190*] – **NC**

Thank you so very much for providing this ministry. It is a needed resource, and a blessing to be able to study things pertaining to our Lord ... Thank you for everything. – **KS**

You don't know (actually I'm so sure you DO know!) what a relief it is, not feeling that it's my job to convert anyone. It's God's and He will do it when the time is right. My job is to shine a light of His love ... No-one feels pressured by Love, if it's unconditional. It's like more weight has been taken off my shoulders as I'm learning to hand more and more over to God ... God Bless you, your family and your ministry. I can tangibly feel the love and joy, and peace of the Lord flowing from your writings. – **UK**

Words are not adequate to convey the gratefulness for the gift He has bestowed upon me when He brought you into my life. The Lord has used you so mightily in sharing His truth with all; but it is your love that humbles me. I need it brother. There is so much the Lord has opened to me that all I can say is "Praise Him." Thank you for your love, Brother, from the heart! – **ME**

I love the *BSN*. It is a good study point for myself and my family. – **PA**

Good one [*Daily Email Goodie*]. They all are so good lately. I'm really "getting them." – **NC**

(see **MAILBOX**, last page)

Bible Student's Notebook[™]

Paul Our Guide – Christ Our Goal

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This weekly publication (52 times a year) is dedicated to:

- the proclamation of the riches of God's abundant, exceeding grace (Romans 5:20; 11:6; Ephesians 1:7)
- the affirmation of God's purpose to save all mankind through the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ (I Timothy 2:3, 4; 4:10; Titus 2:11)
- the "preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began" (Romans 16:25)
- true freedom and liberty apart from the law (Galatians 5:1)
- the organic nature of the church, the body of Christ (I Corinthians 12)
- the distinct ministry of Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles (Romans 11:13)
- the importance of receiving all whom Christ has received (Romans 14-15)
- the recovery of rich Biblical truth that has too long remained hidden under the veils of traditionalism, prejudice, misunderstanding, and fear (Mark 7:7, 13).
- the completeness of the believer in Christ (Colossians 2:10), with ...
 - total forgiveness of sins (Colossians 1:14)
 - identity in His death, burial, and resurrection (Romans 6)
 - adult sonship position (Galatians 4)

This publication is a joint effort of a few members of the body of Christ. It is a product of our individual lives and ministries together. We do not claim infallibility for its contents. Our readers are asked to be as the Bereans and search the Scriptures (Acts 17:10-11; I Thessalonians 5:21).

This publication is not connected with any "church," "denomination," "movement," "organization," "mission," "creed," "meeting," "school," "conference" or "fellowship."

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Remember that it is our responsibility as husbands and fathers to take the truths we learn from God's Word, the truths that we hold dear, and impart them to our families.

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THEOLOGICAL (continued from page 1861)

Christian world, causing the people to stumble and God's name to be blasphemed. Words are simplistic vehicles of thought, easily twisted into almost any shape, and made to answer almost any end. This is shown in the framing of human laws when, notwithstanding the utmost care, the legal formula is found to be capable of several different meanings, giving rise to oceans of talk and endless complications, to puzzle judges and to defeat the ends of justice. Thus is it also with the "letter" of the Word: it is oft times capable of various meanings, and in the absence of any authoritative standard of interpretation, one man's opinion is as good as another's, hence discord and strife rend the church into many factions.

For example, a certain skeptical writer refers to this "changeable" character of the Bible thus,

Nothing is plainer in the Bible than that there is nothing plain in the book. There is not a heresy, theory, dogma, creed, proposition or tenet, however monstrous, however cruel, however pernicious, however childish, silly and absurd, that may not be substantiated or refuted, driven home or kicked out of doors, by reference to that marvelous compilation.

THE SPIRIT OF THE WORD

Every honest, thoughtful Christian will admit that by handling the Bible as it is usually handled by the various sectarian leaders, it may be made to prove or disprove almost any proportion that man may possibly imagine or conceive. The great mistake in all this is that men are disputing about the letter that kills. The key to the unraveling of all this tangle, the one key word to bring order out of all this confusion is the Spirit of the Word.

It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life (John 6:63).

Yet the spirit of the Word is hid away under the letter, purposely hid, so that some shall not

understand; hence the ignorance of the great majority.

He that hath ears to hear let him hear (Matthew 11:15; Mark 4:9; Luke 8:8; Luke 14:35).

In studying the Bible we should seek the full truth, not on the surface, but down deep under the letter, like precious stones and metal hidden in a mine. I do not mean to say that the spiritual meaning of Scripture is always something entirely different from the letter; oftentimes it is so, but not always by any means.

The *Spirit of the Word* is its real, true, full meaning, whatever that may be. Sometimes that true meaning is properly expressed by the letter, but in order to get the full meaning you must take other Scripture in connection with it, you must perhaps refer to Old Testament types or allegories, or prophecies. Bible truths run into one another, and all are harmonious with one general plan; we need to study these truths not only to learn what they signify in themselves, but what their connections with other truths are, and what their relation to the plan. In this way we get somewhere near the full truth. Partial truths, with a great deal of error mixed in to fill up, are the curse and bane of modern orthodoxy; the *Spirit of the Word* saves us from this curse.

I would not have anyone understand that I teach that under every word, phrase and sentence of Scripture there is hidden away some mystic sense entirely different from the letter, that we must endeavor to dig out. I do not say that this is so; neither do I say that it is not so, for, knowing how wonderfully the letter sometimes hides (as well as reveals) the true meaning, that meaning being something entirely different from the letter, I would not dare to put my finger upon any sentence, phrase or word of Scripture and positively declare, "This has not a hidden sense."

However, what I do say is this: that he who expects to stroll carelessly through the fields of Bible teachings, picking up the rarest and most ►

valuable gems of truth upon the surface, as one might pick up pebbles upon the beach, will find a great deal of his building material wood, hay and stubble, in that day when,

Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is (I Corinthians 3:13).

We read that *"Jesus spake unto the multitudes in parables, and without a parable spake He not unto them,"* (Matthew 13:34), not to make the subject plain and easy to be understood, as I have heard orthodox authorities positively declare, but in order that the subject should not be plain and easy to be understood (see Matthew 13:10-13; Mark 4:11-12).

And with many such parables spake He the word unto them, as they were able to hear it; and when they were alone he expounded all things to His disciples (Mark 4:33-34).

Does it not seem strange that Jesus should give these explanations when alone with His disciples, and not in public so that all might have the benefit of them? He spoke to them in parables that they might not understand, and then gave the explanation in private.

Does it not look as though Jesus did not want them to understand? The simple explanation of all this is that to the disciples it was *"given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but unto them that were without it was not given"* (Matthew 13:11).

Christ worked according to the great plan: first the promised "Seed" must be perfected, Christ and they that are Christ's, (Galatians 3:16-29; I Corinthians 15:22, 23), then through that Seed *"all the families of the earth shall be blessed"* (Genesis 12:3), *"in the ages to come"* (Ephesians 2:7), but *"every man in his own order"* (I Corinthians 15:23).

Take Christ's conversation with the Jews as recorded in John 6 as a further illustration of the same truth. In that conversation Jesus seems to bewilder and confuse His hearers by the strange statement He makes. He says, *"I am the Bread of Life that came down from heaven;"* and *"the Jews murmured at Him and said, 'Is not this Jesus the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How is it then that He saith, 'I came down from heaven?'"*

Now we should expect that Jesus would explain to them what He meant; but no, He gives them a still harder nut to crack by telling them, *"I am the Living Bread which came down from heaven; if any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever; and the bread that I will give is My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world."* The Jews therefore strove among themselves, saying, *"How can this man give us His flesh to eat?"* (John 6:51-52).

Is it any wonder that they did not understand Him? Was not His language calculated to completely baffle the wisest among them? Did not His statements seem like dark enigmas and riddles? Does He now explain? No, He still further staggers them by making the plain assertion, without a particle of explanation,

Verily, verily, I say unto you, except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you. As the living Father hath sent Me and I live by the Father, so He that eateth, Me, even he shall live by Me (John 6:53).

It would seem that this statement was too much even for the disciples, and they began to murmur, and to say, *"This is a hard saying; who can hear it?"* Now notice how Jesus helps His disciples, but not a word of help for the multitude.

When Jesus knew in Himself that His disciples murmured at it; He said unto them, "Doth this offend you? It is the spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing, the words that I speak unto you they are spirit and they are life" (JOHN 6:61-63).

To many it would seem strange that Christ should apparently drive His followers away from Him thus, and make no effort to justify His language or to remove their misapprehension. According to the common belief such conduct is wholly unaccountable and seems cruelly unjust; if it were true that people were at that time having their only chance to obtain eternal life, and that, failing in that chance, they would drop into an endless hell, if this were true, how can you explain the Savior's conduct?

It will not help the matter any to say that Jesus knew that it would do no good to explain, unless we take the ground that none of Christ's hearers could ever be benefited by an explanation, for this was Christ's invariable method of public preaching: "*without a parable spake He not unto them*" (Matthew 13:34).

How can we account for His adopting such a method of discourse? It would seem as though it was a method surely calculated to defeat the object of His preaching, the enlightenment of His hearers. Christ speaks in parables, obscure and strange figures, that His hearers might not understand, lest they should understand; and then when He knew that they had entirely misapprehended His meaning He leaves them in their mistake without the slightest effort to undeceive them.

"*He that hath ears to hear let him hear,*" was the apparently "indifferent" conclusion to His teaching as though one might think He had little care whether He was understood or not. There is absolutely no way of accounting for this invariable practice of Christ on the basis of the orthodox view. What I want the reader to see is that since this was Christ's uniform method of preaching to the people it indicates a set purpose. It was something more than a temporary expedient justified and explained by the requirements of a special occasion: it was a constant practice, hence it indicates a precious arranged plan. Thus the question: what is that plan?

We search the creeds and standards and prevailing religious opinions in vain for any explanation of

this practice of our Lord, or any hint of the plan upon which it was based. In fact this practice is utterly opposed to the common theology and is one of the strongest arguments against it. Christ preached in such a way that only a few were "*able to receive it.*"

He that is able to receive it, let him receive it
(Matthew 19:12).

His method *excluded the multitude*, and gathered out a few choice spirits suited to His purpose. Thus it appears that selection or election was certainly a part of the plan upon which He acted, hence He says, "*Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you*" (John 15:16); "*unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them that are without it is not given*" (Mark 4:11); "*No man can come except the Father draw him*" (John 6:44); and finally that most remarkable and most unaccountable, upon any orthodox basis, of all His utterances in His wonderful prayer recorded in John 17: "*I pray not for the world, but for those that Thou has given Me.*"

Pray not for the world! Why not? Christ died for the world; "*He tasted death for every man*" (Hebrews 2:9); "*He is the propitiation for the sins of the whole world*" (I John 2:2). Why should He not therefore pray for the world?

In this again we see the unmistakable evidence of a plan, a prearranged order and system, according to which all of Christ's actions were regulated. He prays for the unity and perfection in one of a certain class, "*those whom the Father had given Him,*" in order that the world might ultimately be blessed through them, "*that the world may believe,*" "*that the world may know*" (John 17:21, 23).

Thus spoke the Word incarnate, in parables and sayings, in strange figure, puzzling symbol, and apparently impossible metaphor; and thus speaks the written Word, in type, pattern, allegory, prophecy, parable, symbol, figure, image and shadow, hiding away the most important and full truth underneath the letter, so that only he who has a veritable passion for the truth, and really ►

eats God's words (Jeremiah 15:16) – only such ones will “find the knowledge of God” (Proverbs 2:5).

Yet that one who accepts the church's teaching upon this point, and expects to find the great truths of life lying in plain sight upon the surface of God's revelations, will surely be led astray. In this connection look up, and carefully read and ponder the following Scripture, noticing how God is represented as “a God that hideth Himself” amidst “clouds and darkness,” and whose thoughts and ways are as different from, and as much higher than ours, as the heavens are different from and higher than the earth (Psalm 36:5-7; 77:19; 97; Isaiah 8:13-17; 28:8-18; Isaiah 45:15; 55:8-13; Hosea 14:9).

God hides the truth from some whose turn has not yet come, and reveals it to others whom He is finishing off for the perfect state.

The question naturally arises as to why the truth is thus hidden under type and shadow and figure in God's revelation? I have already partially answered this question: because God has a plan, because there is order, a system and a “due season” to that plan and to every stage in it; because there are “first fruits” and later fruits, “first born” and later born, a “first resurrection” and a second resurrection, a “special salvation” (I Timothy 4:10) and a “common salvation” (Jude 3), and every man is to be dealt with “in his own order,” i.e., when his turn comes. Hence God hides the truth from some whose turn has not yet come, and reveals it to others whom He is finishing off for the perfect state.

Furthermore God's ways and methods are a part of our training and education, and not simply the means to reach a certain end. God makes the means a blessing to us as well as the end. The form in which the truth comes to us is as beneficial and educational as the truth itself, and all tends not only to the acquirement of so much truth, but what is more valuable to the development and perfection of the spiritual man (I Corinthians 2:14-15).

So it is with mental training, the education of the schools. The young man that goes through the various steps of education until he graduates from a university does not seek so much to store his mind with just so many items of knowledge, just so many facts of science, philosophy and literature, memorized from books. If this is all he gets he has fallen short of nine-tenths of the real value of an education. What he is seeking is to develop and perfect his mental faculties so that, when he leaves the schools and goes out into the world to fight for himself, he may be able to continue his research into truth in every department, through all his future life, without the help of text book, school or tutor.

So in the realm of spiritual truth, God gives us the truth in such a form so that

the studying of it is of more value to us in the way of training and spiritual development than is the truth itself after we have arrived at it.

The object of our training is not that we may know so many things, but that we may “come in the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God unto the perfect man” (Ephesians 4:13).

God might have given us truths so that we could store them away in our minds, just as you would put so many parcels into a chest; but the mind would not be developed and trained by such a process any more than the chest would.

Spiritual education is a growth and gradual development into the “perfect man.” We are to go on from the condition of “babes in Christ” (I Corinthians 3:1) unto “full age” (Hebrews 5:11-14), “unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” (Ephesians 4:13).

Hence the form of the Word is such as to promote this growth: if everything in the Bible was plain and simple like a child's primer, it would require no effort to receive it, and though we might obtain a certain number of truths, yet these would be but

(See **THEOLOGICAL**, last page)

Who Is Your Apostle?

by – Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

According to Ephesians chapter 3 we live in what is called the “dispensation of the grace of God.” In this present dispensation God has given us our own apostle, the Apostle to the Gentiles (Romans 11:13).



After the final rejection of Christ by the Jews, to whom was Paul the Apostle sent (Acts 22:21)?

The purpose of this short piece is to help you distinguish the difference between the 12 Apostles sent to Israel and the one Apostle, Paul, sent to the Gentiles.

(Fill in the blanks with the Bible answer.)

To whom were the Twelve Apostles sent (Matthew 10:5-6)?

To whom were the Twelve Apostles NOT sent (Matthew 10:5-6)?

To whom were the Twelve Apostles sent after the resurrection (Matthew 28:19)?

How far did the Twelve Apostles get in their commission (Acts 8:1 & 11:19)?

In the following verses, to whom does Paul the Apostle, say he was sent?

Romans 11:13 _____

Galatians 2:7-8 _____

Ephesians 3:1, 2, 8 _____

Colossians 1:25-27 _____

I Timothy 2:7 _____

II Timothy 1:11 _____

Who does Paul say we are to follow?

I Corinthians 4:15-16 _____

I Corinthians 11:1 _____

I Thessalonians 4:1 _____

I Timothy 1:16 _____

II Timothy 1:13, 2:2 _____

Clearly the Word of God teaches that the Twelve Apostles were sent to the Twelve Tribes of Israel, while Paul was sent to the Gentiles. ■

MAILBOX (continued from page 1862)

I am excited about your new book that's out on the home ... Your name and the BSN are heard a lot in our home. Your presence, not bodily but in spirit, is a continuous blessing to us. We love you! – **IL**

I have enjoyed the *Bible Student's Notebook* more than you can ever know. – **NY**

Love this *Daily Email Goodie!* Am experiencing this in a "renewed" way! Am realizing again that the only thing the "thief" can do is deceive me into thinking my joy has been stolen, my hope has been killed, and my life destroyed – BUT IT IS ONLY A DECEPTION!! If God is truly in charge, as we all believe, none of those can ever be taken from me, unless I am deceived – "distracted" if you will, from "His life already in me." "Yielding to His estimate of what is truly important and valuable in life" is the key ... keeping the "divine viewpoint" at all times and not allowing a "Thief" to steal my joy, hope and abundant life!! Yahoo!! Can you imagine anything better than that? Can you imagine the day when we will see Him as He is? Wow!

And you know what else I thought? Even in the midst of the suffering, pain and trials of this life, this perspective is not just "wishful thinking" as some may assume. It is the "peace that passes understanding" that gets you through it with "knowing" joy; the "calmness in the storm" that blows

THEOLOGICAL (continued from page 1866)

very little spiritual training.

An "order" of men is now being fitted and trained to reign in the "ages to come," the promised "Seed" in Whom "all the families of the earth are to be blessed," – the "sons of God," for whom the whole creation waits (Romans 8:19). This "order" must reach the "perfect man" condition by a gradual growth and development, and the form of the Word is one of the principal means to effect this growth and development. To them it is given to know the "mysteries of the kingdom of heaven;" but to those who do not belong to this "order" it is not given, because they do not yet need to see these "deep things of God," but "they shall see" in the judgment age, when "the inhabitants of the world learn righteousness" (Isaiah 26:8-11).

Thus taking God's plan into consideration, the apparently dark, puzzling and mysterious character of the Word is fully accounted for, and clearly shown to be simply another manifestation of that "wisdom and knowledge of God," the depths

people's minds ... even our own at times. I've passed along your encouragement to a friend going through major trials now. It's funny to me that your Email Goodies have been so close to home in the conversations with this friend. Has to be God, eh?

Thanks for the encouragement to "be reasonable" (*i.e.*, well thought out, with purpose), too. That has come home as we encourage our son in his life *after* graduation. He is looking at many, many options for himself now, and can be swayed by the "mindless following of the world's course" at this vulnerable time in his life. So far, his life has had great purpose – well thought out and diligent – and we are praying for his focus to stay that way through this awkward time of life.

Thanks again for sharing your heart. It means more than you know. – **TX**

Well Clyde, you have caused more of a ruckus out here and have caused men to think outside the religious box more than you will ever know. Being a "grace" pastor and rightly dividing the word of truth for 15 years and studying for 25 years I thought I understood the abundance of God's Word. But now (hey, where have I read those words before?) I am slowly coming to the great refreshing truth that God is the Savior of ALL and ALL will be saved. Thanks. Keep the faith and never back down! – **PA**

of which are unsearchable and past finding out (Romans 11:33).

The errors of *theological reversals* are part and parcel of the life and soul of the nominal church; they are a part of its entire fabric; they are woven into its creeds and standards, its preaching, Sunday school instruction, and social meeting talk, its hymns and songs, into the entire body of its literature, its rituals and litanies, and they are ingrained into the thought and feeling, the mind and heart of every one of its members, so that to remove them would be like drawing out the nerves and tendons of the human body, an operation that would inevitably result in the body's total destruction.

The institutional church is all wrong in these things; "there is no soundness in it," hence the only thing that can be done is to tear it down; and this is just what will be done, for the One that sits upon the throne shall say, "Behold I make all things new; it is done" (Revelation 21:5-6).