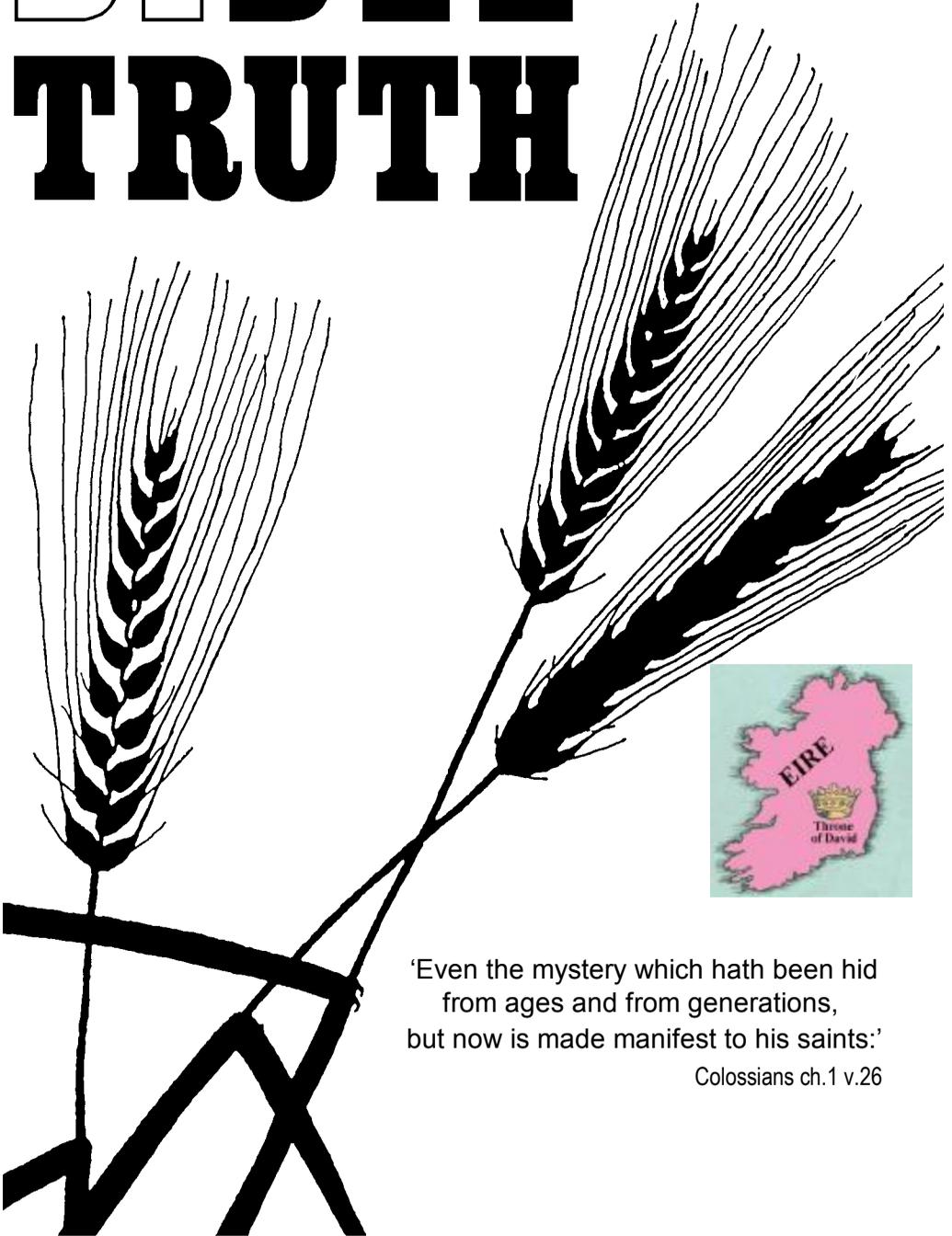


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'Even the mystery which hath been hid
from ages and from generations,
but now is made manifest to his saints:'

Colossians ch.1 v.26

God's Assembly of Called-Out Ones

by Pastor Robert B. Record

No two words have done more to confuse the thinking of the people of Christendom than 'Church' and 'Gentile'. It has been imagined, or taken for granted that they are translated from the Hebrew and the Greek. Such is not the case and sadly these words have been given a meaning that the Lord never intended.

Because of its use, or misuse, in connection with the church, let us look briefly at the word 'Gentile'. Popular usage has made it to mean everybody except the Jew. But what are the facts? Frederick Haberman in his book, *Tracing Our Ancestors*, points out,

'There is no equivalent in the Greek for our term "Gentile". It is an English word found in no other language. "Gentile" is derived from the Latin, "gens", meaning "nations or tribes". Paul said, "I am an apostle to the ethnos", meaning "nations or tribes", and meant in this case, the tribes of Israel. In general, however, the word "ethnos" is translated "heathen".'

I point this out, here, to show the absurdity of speaking of the church as either heathen, or Gentile. Yet it is being done all the time.

What shall be said about the word, 'Church'? How is it derived? *Smith's Bible Dictionary* answers the question with the following information.

'The derivation of the word is generally said to be from the Greek, "Kuriakon", meaning, "belonging to God". But the derivation has been too hastily assumed. It is probably connected with "kirk", the Latin, "circus", "circulus", the Greek, "Kuldos", because the congregations were gathered in circles.'

Now, because the word 'church' is not found anywhere in the Old Testament, and because of its use or misuse in the New Testament, it has been almost completely disassociated from any teaching found in the Old Testament. For example, I would call your attention to a footnote in the *Scofield Reference Bible* which attempts to enlighten the reader on Jesus' words in Matthew ch.16 v.18, where the word 'church' appears for the first time. The Greek word translated 'church' is 'ecclesia', meaning 'an assembly of called-out ones', and with this in mind as a definition of the word 'church' the footnote reads,

‘... Israel was a true “church”, but not in any sense the N. T. church — the only point of similarity being that both were “called out”, and by the same God. All else is contrast’.

Such teaching is a great evil, and has done almost irreparable harm to the thinking of God’s people. The connotation that has developed around the word ‘church’ has led to the creation of a theology which blinds people to the continuity of the Old Testament teaching with that of the New. A popular teaching is, that the Old Testament has to do with Israel, or the Jew, while the New Testament has to do with Gentiles, or non-Israel people. This mistaken concept developed around a mistaken identity of the Israel people.

Let us go back into the Old Scriptures for a moment and let us see what it was that God planned from the beginning. We understand from Matthew’s Gospel ch.25 v.34 that His plan was to set up a kingdom of righteousness here on the earth. In the building of that kingdom, God chose a people in Abraham to be His servants and witnesses. Almost from the beginning, therefore, this covenant people were an assembly of called-out ones. This truth is recognised in a *Biblical and Theological Dictionary* published for the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, back in 1857. ‘This covenant people were distinct from other peoples and races. They were in every sense of the word, a true church.’

Now what we need to see is, that when our Lord declares in Matthew ch.16 v.18, that He is going to build His church on the rock of faith in His name as Lord and Saviour (the first church, or assembly of called-out ones having failed through human weakness and disobedience), He was **not**, therefore, introducing something new that would have to do with the heathen, non-Israel world. Such a teaching is but the mistaken theology of men who make the Word of God of none effect. The church alluded to by Christ in Matthew ch.16 was simply the old assembly of called-out ones established under a new and better covenant with new ordinances of worship.

That the Israel of God was destined to son-ship is seen throughout the Law and the prophets. From the beginning it was the intent and purpose of God to indwell His people. In Leviticus ch.26 vv.11-12 for example, we find God predicting and promising that if they would obey Him and walk in His statutes, then He, Jehovah, would take up His abode among them and be their God. While this promise to Israel had a partial fulfilment when God later dwelt among

them in the Tabernacle and in the Temple, we need to turn to Corinthians for its deeper and fuller meaning. Here we find Paul quoting from this passage in Leviticus with these words.

‘And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.’

2 Corinthians ch.6 v.16

Need I remind you that the promise of God in Leviticus ch.26 was to Israel?

And Paul is here declaring that this promise was having its fulfilment in this Christian dispensation in the people to whom it was promised. Yet how many people see this? God was literally to indwell His people. And this body of believers is not a Gentile church. It is an assembly of called-out ones who for many years looked forward to Christ, but which now experience the salvation of God through faith in the finished work of Christ on the cross. The yearly sacrifices for sin by the high priest were a constant reminder to Israel of their need of a Saviour. It was their schoolmaster until Christ, then in the fullness of time,

‘... God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons’,

Galatians ch.4 vv.4-5

or, as the *Moffatt Bible* translation puts it, ‘that they might have their son-ship’. All this was to do with Israel. This was God confirming the New Covenant promised to Israel (see Jeremiah ch.31 vv.31-33), whereby God would put His law in their inward parts and write it in their hearts.

This leads us to consider the words of Jesus on that memorable night as He commemorated the coming Passover with His disciples. As He took the cup, He said,

‘For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins’.

Matthew ch.26 v.28

How many people who partake of this Supper have the slightest idea of what He was saying? Jesus is saying that He was about to die as Testator of the New Covenant — which covenant of course, was predicated on the Abrahamic Covenant. Hebrews ch.9 vv.16-17 tells us that,

'For where a testament is, there must also ... be the death of the testator. For a testament is of force after men are dead ...'.

This all had to do with the redemption of God's Ecclesia, His assembly of called-out ones. In Galatians ch.3 v.13 Paul says,

'Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree:'.

Who had incurred the curse of the Law? Israel had, and this redemption provided by Christ was national. Many I fear, do not see this. While Israel as a nation has yet to come into an experiential knowledge of that redemption, it is assured and guaranteed them by the blood which Jesus shed on Calvary. Having said all this, look again at the words of Jesus to Peter.

'And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.'

Matthew ch.16 v.18

We must keep in mind that when Jesus uttered these words, there was no such thing as a book called the New Testament. Jesus had not yet died, and Paul had not yet been converted. The only scriptures the disciples had, and from which our Lord Himself preached, was what we call the Old Testament. When our Lord therefore spoke of building His church, not on Peter, but on a personal faith in Himself as the promised Messiah, was He referring to something taught in the Scriptures, and with which the disciples were familiar, or was He introducing something new? Let us see.

Let us now go over some things and recap just a little so as to get a clearer picture of this assembly of called-out ones that God is building. In the Greek the word is 'ecclesia', while it may be used to mean an assembly of people called together, it is used in the Scripture to designate Israel.

The word 'church' on the other hand, has had a connotation given to it that makes it include almost everyone but Israel. In the Old Testament Scriptures it is the Hebrew 'qaha', meaning a congregation, or 'what is called together'. This is the designation given to Israel after the Exodus from Egypt. It is so used in Genesis ch.35 v.11 & Genesis ch.48 v.4. It was this assembly, or congregation of called-out ones to which God gave His Law which they persistently broke, leading ultimately to their divorcement.

Having failed through human weakness, they stood in need of redemption and restoration. James refers to this fallen assembly as ‘... the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down ...’ (see Acts ch.15 v.16), but which Christ had come to restore and raise up again. Christ had come to put the kingdom nation back on track again. This new ecclesia was actually a restructuring of Israel on a better foundation. Christ was to become the new Fountainhead of the nation of Israel. That this is so, is further borne out by Christ Himself when He said,

‘... I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel’.

Matthew ch.15 v.24

This is not to say that there is salvation for no one else, far from it. But before the heathen, pagan world could effectively be reached, the nation of Israel had to be restored and established in righteousness. Once done, the heathen nations can come up to us to learn of our God and to walk in His ways (see Isaiah ch.2 vv.2-4).

That God has been calling out a people for His name in this Christian era, no thoughtful or informed person will deny. To assert and teach that this assembly of people whom God is calling out is made up largely of Gentiles, or non-Israel people, is wholly unscriptural, yet this line of thinking is often taught. How, then, shall we account for such an unscriptural doctrine becoming so popular throughout Christendom today? I think the basic reason lies in the fact that most of the people of Christendom have mistaken the biblical identity of the people of Israel.

Having limited Israel of the Bible to the Jew, a religious sect classed with Protestants and Catholics, the rank and file of religious leaders have swallowed hook, line, and sinker, the devil’s lie that God in this Christian dispensation has been building a Gentile church, made up largely of non-Israelites. These same religious leaders have divided the world up into two camps — Jew and Gentile. To their way of thinking, therefore, anyone who is not a Jew must be a Gentile. And since the Jews rejected Christ, and would have none of Him, there is thus no one left of which the church could be comprised. To say that our people are confused is to put it mildly. They are so confused, that politician and clergy alike stagger like drunken men as they endeavour to cope with our mounting problems.

Think with me for a moment. For God to set Israel aside, the people with whom He made His covenants and promises, whom He

chose to be His servants and witnesses, and in this Christian era turn to a heathen, Gentile people with whom He made no covenants, who were strangers to God and His promises, and use them to do Israel's work, is nothing short of a flat denial of the sovereignty of God.

But, you ask, 'didn't Paul say that he was an apostle to the Gentiles?' He certainly did. But here again that phoney word Gentile, is substituted for the Greek 'ethnos', meaning 'nations'. Paul is saying that he is an apostle to the nations. But what nations you ask? Let us not forget that our Lord declares the kingdom was being taken from Jewry and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof (see Matthew ch.21 v.43), and this nation could be none other than a nation of Israel. Most theologians either ignore or seem unmindful of the fact that Abram's name was changed to Abraham, because he was to become the father of many nations. It is most singular to note that when Paul went on his missionary journeys he went westward into the region of Asia Minor, where Israel had migrated in their westward trek to their new home in the West. The Galatians, the Ephesians, the Corinthians, the Thessalonians, etc., were all Gentilized Israelites, and Paul's letters to the churches in these areas so indicate. These people were not Chinese, Japanese, Indians, or Negroes. They were God's Israel who later became the Caucasians who moved into Western Europe to become the English, the Scotch, the Irish, the Germans, the Norwegians, the Swedes, the Danes and other related peoples.

Strange isn't it, or is it? How the Reformation and religious revivals took place in the hands of western Europeans and Anglo-Saxons? Strange isn't it, how these 'Gentiles' have embraced Christ and Christianity and have carried the Gospel to the rest of the world, while the Jews and other Gentiles have remained non-Christian or heathen? For those who have eyes to see and ears to hear, this is all proof-positive that God has poured out His Spirit on Israel as He had promised. Here in these lands are the assemblies of the called-out ones, churches, which worship God in the Person of Jesus Christ. God is not getting this church ready to leave the earth, but to live upon the earth in the kingdom of our God.
