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# THE CONTRAST

BETWEEN

## THE JEWISH DISPENSATION

AND

## THE PRESENT ONE.

IN TWO LETTERS TO A FRIEND.

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## LETTER I.

My dear friend,

IN presenting to you (in compliance with your request) the contrast between the last or Jewish dispensation, and the present one, I would, as a preliminary point, advert to the standing of Israel previously to the covenant made at Sinai. The covenant made by God with Abraham was *of grace*: under that covenant it was that the promise of Canaan was given to him and to his seed, as well as the promise of the *possession of it, by his seed in the fourth generation*, after they had been afflicted in a land that was not theirs four hundred years, Gen. xv. 13—16. So that there was not only the promise that Canaan should be given to him and to his seed for an *everlasting* possession, Gen. xvii. 7, 8—and which remains I believe to be fulfilled, and which will be fulfilled when Eze. xxxvii. 1—28 and Rom. xi. 25—27 receive their fulfilment—but his seed were also to come into the land in the fourth generation from the covenant in Gen. xv., and which promise had its accomplishment when Israel were brought into Canaan under Joshua, Ex. xii. 40, Acts vii. 6, 17. By virtue of this promise therefore it was that Israel was brought up out of Egypt, and through the Red Sea into the wilderness—and God's faithfulness to His promise and covenant secured their entrance into the land.

Now God did not force the Sinai Covenant upon them, they voluntarily put themselves under it. If Israel had remembered either their own failures, unbelief, and murmurings, or the faithfulness, longsuffering, and goodness of the Lord, their answer, when the Lord said "Now therefore if ye will obey my voice indeed and keep my covenant, *then* ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people," Ex. xix. 5, would have been, as the seed

of Abraham, 'Canaan and all its blessings are secured to us by the promise, and covenant, and oath of God ; and knowing as we do by experience our own failure, we dare not put ourselves in a position which will make our blessings dependent on our obedience.' But instead of this, in the pride of their hearts they answered, " All that the Lord hath spoken we will do," Ex. xix. 8. The consequence was, that Israel by the Sinai Covenant put themselves off the ground of promise on which they had previously stood, and put themselves on the ground of their own obedience or righteousness. In forty days after, Israel fell into apostacy by making the golden calf, Ex. xxxii. 1—8, and so broke the Sinai covenant ; and, consequently, lost all title to enter into the land on the ground of that Covenant. Now what was to be done ? On the one hand, there stood the promise to, and the covenant with Abraham in Gen. xv. ; and God could not withdraw the one, nor be unfaithful to the other. On the other hand, by the sin of the golden calf, all Israel was become unrighteous. God's justice against the nation was offended and called into exercise, (just as it was against Adam when he sinned by breaking God's commandment,) and God could not consistently with His righteousness, pass over the sin of Israel, without its being expiated or atoned for. How then was it that Israel got into the land under Joshua ? The answer I believe is, by virtue of the foreseen sacrifice of Christ as a Jew, made of a woman, made under the law ; and by his bloodshedding, and his perfect obedience to the Sinai Covenant, expiating the sin of the *nation*—and working out a perfect legal righteousness for the *nation*. Therefore the prophecy of Caiaphas, John xi. 49—52, It was " expedient that one man should die *for that people* that the *whole nation* perish not." " And this spake he not of himself, but being High Priest that year, he prophecied that Jesus should die for *that nation* ; and not for that nation only, but that he

should gather together in one the children of God that are scattered abroad." So that Israel got into the land under Joshua, as they will get into it hereafter under Jesus, the true and antitypical Joshua—exactly on the same principle as you and I and every believer, from the time of Abel downwards, has got into blessing—"by grace through righteousness," Rom. vi. 21. Because that is the only ground, as all previous dispensations have proved, on which fallen man can get into blessing. He has no righteousness, and can obtain no righteousness of his own; he must therefore take all the blessings on the ground of promise, and his righteousness must be that of another, of a substitute and surety, imputed unto him, and not his own. Therefore it is, that the name by which Jesus will be hereafter called and glorified in by Israel, is "The Lord our Righteousness," Jer. xxiii. 6, Isa. xlv. 24, 25. Now it is very interesting and important, as marking the development of God's purposes and God's principles, to observe when and how He revealed the sovereignty of His actings, or the principle of election. God never changes either His purposes, or the principles on which He acts, though there may be different manifestations of them, and He may have different modes or mediums of acting in different dispensations. Israel, as I observed, had been put on the ground of their own obedience by the Sinai Covenant, and they had failed. The whole nation was involved in apostasy, all were become guilty, all had brought themselves under the curse, and deserved nothing but judgment. Then it is that God comes in and reveals his sovereignty, saying, "I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy," Ex. xxxiii. 19. So it is now; the whole world is brought in "guilty before God;" "there is none righteous, no not one. There is none that doeth good, no, not one." "*All* have sinned and come short of the glory of God," Rom. iii. 1—19. Then it is, that God, acting

on the principle of election or of sovereignty, says, *Now* "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy ;" and he can thus act (because of the blood shedding and obedience of Jesus) in consistency with himself. In Rom. iii. 4—6, and in Rom. ix. throughout, the Holy Ghost, by the Apostle, condescends to vindicate God's actings in sovereignty, or election, from the charge of unrighteousness or injustice, and "Wisdom is justified by her children." Supposing there are six criminals under sentence of death for high treason, and the Queen, who is the fountain of mercy, and against whom the treason has been committed, in the exercise of her prerogative pardons three of them ; the three are debtors to her grace, but the other three on whom the law is allowed to take its course cannot charge the Queen with *unrighteousness* or *injustice*, because having been found guilty, it was *justice* they should die. It is an act of *justice* that criminals guilty of death should die. It is an act of *grace* to pardon such criminals. Now without a clear understanding of the Sinai Covenant, we shall not be properly intelligent of the necessity for, or of the blessings or the privileges of the New Covenant, of which Jesus is the Mediator, and which has been dedicated by His blood. The Sinai Covenant required perfect obedience to the law which was given under it, and therefore could not make any provision for the *pardon* of sins committed by breach of the law ; and moreover it brought with it *no power* by which obedience could be rendered to the law. It gave a mere naked command, "Do this." It was addressed to men in the flesh, and it was impossible for flesh to keep it, Rom. viii. 3—7, and for this reason—*Love* is the fulfilling of the law, Rom. xiii. 10. This is the only principle capable of fulfilling the law, and the law was given to men in the flesh ; the principle and the only principle of which flesh is, *enmity* or *hatred*, Rom. viii. 7, 8. Now the Abrahamic covenant, under which there is *righteousness by faith*, and also the *hope* of righteousness

by faith, namely, *heavenly glory*, being 430 years before the law, Gal. iii. 17, did not make, and of course could not make provision for the remission of sins under the law, nor for the removing of the curse which was incurred by the breach of the law. Here then we get to see the necessity of the New Covenant and the blessings of it; and I would add, that the term *new* is used in Scripture in contra-distinction to the Sinai Covenant, which had become old and worn out, and has vanished away, Heb. viii. 7, 8—13, and not to the Abrahamic Covenant, which continues for ever, and under which the Church comes into her blessing, Gal. iii. 8—29. You will remember the word of the Lord Jesus at the institution of his supper, “This is my blood of the New Covenant” (*διαθηκη*) which always in Scripture, I believe, signifies *Covenant*, and never in any instance *testament*) “which is shed for you and for many for the remission of sins. So, in Heb. ix. 15, Jesus is called “the Mediator of the New Covenant.” Now this New Covenant is a remedial Covenant consequent upon, and rendered necessary by the breach of the law or the first Covenant, and containing in itself, that which the first or the Sinai Covenant lacked, *viz.*, *blood*, by which there is remission of sins, and *a power* by which obedience can be rendered to the will or commandments of God. “I will put my laws into your hearts, and write them in your minds, &c.” All the argument of the Apostle in the 9th and 10th of Hebrews goes to this very point; and in verse 15 of the 9th chapter he says, “By means of death for the *redemption of the transgressions that were under the first covenant*, we which are called might receive the promise of *eternal inheritance* ;” and he shows that it is by the blood of the new Covenant, that the conscience is made perfect, or cleansed from the guilt of the transgressions under the law. So that the new, or remedial covenant, makes provision for the thorough putting away, even from God’s remembrance, as well as



from the believer's charge and the believers conscience, of all sins,—of entire deliverance from the curse of the broken law, (because Christ has borne the curse); and it has in it the promise of the indwelling of The Spirit—The Spirit *Himself*, the *person* of the Holy Ghost, and not a mere *influence*, as some hold and teach. Rom. viii. 9, 10—16, 1 Cor. vi. 19, 2 Cor. vi. 16, Eph. ii. 21—22, which is our power against sin, our power against Satan, and our power to obey God. Compare Jer. xxxi. 31—34, and Heb. viii. 10—12, with Eze. xxxvi. 27.

Until the law, sin was in the world, Rom. v. 13; and therefore bloodshedding, in order to expiate sin, would have been necessary, even if the law had never been given, “for without shedding of blood there is no remission,” Heb. ix. 22. The Law, or the Sinai Covenant, therefore, did not for the first time make *bloodshedding* necessary, but it made the *new covenant* necessary. God had previously *declared* to man the necessity of bloodshedding, Gen. iii. 21, and also by the institution of sacrifices: the law *proved* to man himself the necessity, because it brought him in guilty before God after the similitude of Adam's transgression, Rom. v. 14; that is, by breach of a positive command of God; and man became subject to the superadded curse which the law brought with it as its sanction, Deut. xxvii. 26, Gal. iii. 13. In the New Covenant it is, not only that there is redemption for the transgressions committed under the first, or the Sinai Covenant, Heb. ix. 15, but the curse of the law is removed.

The subject of this letter may not present any new truth to you, but nevertheless I was anxious to place it before you as a preliminary to my next letter, which will contain the contrast between the last dispensation and the present one.

I remain, &c.

## LETTER II.

My dear Friend.

THE first thing to be considered in viewing the contrast between the last dispensation and the present one, is the *subjects* of them.

In the last dispensation the *subjects* of it were, *the nation of Israel*, the seed of Abraham according to the flesh. A nation, properly speaking, is an association or a body of men *in the flesh*—bound together by the same polity, and having the same locality. Israel therefore was in the proper sense of the term, a *nation*. In this dispensation “the *Church of God*” is “the Holy nation.” Not an association of men in the *flesh*, bound together by the same civil polity, and having the same locality: but the body of spiritual men, “Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience, and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ,” and “who are scattered abroad;” compare 1 Peter i. 1—5, with chapter ii. 5—9. The elect thus scattered abroad, are, “the Holy nation” in this dispensation.

And here I would observe, that it is an entire perversion of the type to look at Israel after the flesh, in the last dispensation, as a type of nations after the flesh in the present. But the true application of the type is this, the nation of Israel or the seed of Abraham *after the flesh*, typical of the Church of the living God—the Holy nation composed of the seed of Abraham—*after the spirit*. Gal. iii. 29, iv. 28—31.

The *carnal* things of Israel typical of the *spiritual* things of the Church.

The *earthly* things of Israel typical of the *Heavenly* things of the church.

So that *flesh* in the last dispensation, typifies *Spirit* in this.

*Earth* in the last dispensation typifies *Heaven* in this ; and not flesh a type of flesh, and earth a type of earth.

II. The *character* of the last dispensation was *righteousness—righteousness by law*. This was clearly the character of the Sinai Covenant, as I showed in my last letter. The obedience of the nation to the law was to be their righteousness, Deut. vi. 25.

I say righteousness by law was the character of *that dispensation*. Righteousness was the principle on which God was acting towards *the nation dispensationally*, and which is to be distinguished from the principle of God's dealings towards *individual believers* in that dispensation, which was *in grace, through faith* : individuals, such as David and others who believed, got the hope of righteousness by faith, even as we, Gal. v. 5. Compare Heb. xi. 10, 13—16, 39, 40, xii. 22—24. Their faith brought them into blessing *ultra* the dispensation. As Jews in the flesh, they had a title to the dispensational earthly blessings ; but as spiritual Jews also, they obtained a title to the heavenly blessings, which were far higher and better.

As righteousness was the principle of God's dealings with them dispensationally, so was righteousness the principle of the commandments, which God gave to regulate their conduct to one another. "Life for life," "eye for eye," "tooth for tooth," "hand for hand," "foot for foot," "burning for burning," "wound for wound," "stripe for stripe," Ex. xxi. 24, 25, Levit. xxiv. 20, 21, Deut. xix. 21. This was justice or righteousness.

The character of this dispensation is *grace*, and not righteousness ; "righteousness *without law*," "even the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ," Rom. iii. 21, 22, and it is of *faith* that it may be by *grace*, Rom. iv. 16.

Righteousness or justice is dealing with men according to their deserts, and therefore it is a righteous, or a just

thing to punish the guilty, as it is also to acquit the innocent. Grace is the pardon of the guilty, the showing mercy to, and the bestowing blessing on the unworthy and the evil: it deals with man independently, and in spite of his demerits.

We see the contrast in Ex. xxiii. 7, and Rom. iv. 5.; "I will not justify the wicked,"—that was *righteousness*; "God that justifieth the ungodly,"—that is *grace*.

As *grace* is the character of this dispensation, with reference to God's dealings with the subjects of the dispensation, John i. 17, so is *grace* now to be the principle of their conduct towards one another, and towards the world. It was said to them of old time, "An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth; but I say unto you, that ye resist not evil," &c. Matt. v. 38—48, Luke vi. 27—38. Matt. xxviii. 20, John xiv. 15, 21—24, 1 Peter ii. 20—25, 1 Cor. iv. 12, 13, Rom. xii. 19. The believer, having, by God's dealings with him in grace, received the full and entire forgiveness of all his sins, and the gift of life, and of all spiritual blessings in the heavens in Christ Jesus, Eph. i. 3—7, Coloss. ii. 13, Rom. vi. 23, is to deal in the same grace towards others; and not in righteousness or justice and judgment, towards those who wrong or injure him. This is the principle of all the precepts of the New Testament, with reference to the believer's walk in the Church and in the world.

So that in each dispensation, the *subjects* of the dispensation were to exhibit the *character* of the dispensation. The Jews standing in *righteousness* were to exhibit *righteousness*, and the church standing in *grace* is to exhibit *grace*.

III. The *blessings* of the last dispensation were *carnal* and *earthly*; compare Gen. xv. 13—16, 18, Ex. iii. 8—17, xxiii. 23—31, Deut. vii. 12—15, viii. 7—18, xi. 8—15, 21.

I say these were the *dispensational* blessings; the *hope*

of the Jew therefore, as a Jew, was *blessings upon earth*; riches, long life, abundant fruit of the land, &c., were his portion; they were to be tokens of God's favor to him. Sufferings, either in person or property, were a token of God's displeasure towards him. The character of the Jew's blessings, were *carnal*; the place of having and enjoying them, *earth*, i.e. the land of Canaan. The blessings of this dispensation are *spiritual*; and the place of possession and enjoyment, *heaven*, Eph. i. 3, Col. iii. 2—3; and to mind earthly things now is to be an enemy of the cross of Christ, Phil. iii. 18—21. But not only so, but *suffering* is the portion of the believer on earth now;—the thorough crucifixion of the flesh, the thorough denial of self, the thorough renunciation of the world, hating our life, and suffering the loss of all things for Christ's sake, this is the disciple of Christ's *earthly* portion; his *heavenly* portion is fellowship with the glory of the risen Jesus, and this in spirit and by faith *even now*; his *hope*, the redemption of the body—the seeing of Jesus as He is, and being made like him, compare Mat. xvi. 24, 25; Luke xiv. 25—33; John xii. 25, 26, xv. 18—21; Acts xiv. 22; Rom. viii. 23—25; 1 Cor. i. 7, xv. 54; Gal. ii. 20, vi. 14—17; Eph. i. 15—20, ii. 4—7; Col. iii. 4; 1 Cor. iv. 11—13; 2 Cor. iv. 8—12; 2 Thess. i. 4—7; 2 Tim. ii. 3, iii. 10—12; Heb. x. 32—37, xii. 1—4, 22—24; 1 Pet. ii. 19—25, iv. 1, 12—16; James iv. 4; 1 John ii. 15, 16, v. 19; Heb. iii. 1.

IV. The blessings of the last dispensation were *conditional* on the *obedience in conduct* of the subjects of the dispensation; viz., the nation of Israel, Ex. xix. 5, Lev. xxvi. 1—46, Deut. xxvii. 12—26, xxviii. 1—68, and the chapters in Exodus and Deuteronomy referred to under head III.

The blessings of this dispensation are *not conditional on the obedience in conduct* of the subjects of the dispensation. They are by grace, through faith, made partakers of the blessings first; and the call to an obedient walk, is

consequent on the blessings already received. Compare 1 Pet. ii. 3—5, 9, and Col. i. 9—14, with Ex. xix. 5; see also Heb. xii. 22—24. All the precepts in the New Testament relating to the walk and conduct, are addressed to living men, (*i.e.* spiritually alive,) and not to dead ones; to men, having everlasting life, and therefore *saved*; and not to men, dead in trespasses and sins, and therefore *lost*, 2 Cor. iv. 3—4, John iii. 36, vi. 47, Eph. ii. 4—6, Col. ii. 13. The believer *begins with being saved, and ends with being glorified*; he gets *salvation at the beginning, and glory at the end*; he stands in the hope of glory, and rejoices in this hope, because he is saved, Rom. v. 1, 2, 1 Pet. i. 3—9.

In this dispensation we are under a “better covenant, established on better promises;” better, because the inheritance is an eternal one, Heb. ix. 15, and because the promises are not “*if ye keep my commandments, ye shall be a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation*,” but, “*since ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious*,” “ye are a *spiritual house, a holy priesthood, a royal priesthood, a chosen generation, a holy nation, a peculiar people*.” In the last dispensation, they were *servants*; in this, *sons*. Gal. iii. 26, iv. 1—7.

V. The *worship* of the last dispensation consisted of carnal ordinances, imposed until the times of reformation, Heb. ix. 9, 10. The place of worship was a worldly sanctuary, made with hands, pitched by man upon earth; the priesthood, by whom the gifts and sacrifices were presented to God, were made after the law of a *carnal commandment*, Heb. vii. 11, 12, 16—23, whose title to the priestly office rested entirely in the flesh, on their being of the family of Aaron; and not on any moral or spiritual qualification. Further, priesthood was limited to a class among Israel, even to the family of Aaron; and the service of the tabernacle, to the tribe of Levi. The service of the priest was at the brazen altar, offering the sacrifices, and inside

the tabernacle burning the incense, which represented intercession. The service of the Levites was not worship, *i.e.* offering sacrifices and making intercession; but they had to do *the service* of the tabernacle, in taking charge of the tabernacle and the instruments of it. So that Israel was divided into three classes,—Priests, Levites, and common Israelites. The mistake in the typical application has been in supposing them types of three different classes in the church of God in this dispensation; whereas, they represent not *classes* in the church, *but the whole church in three different aspects or characters*. In this dispensation every believer is a priest, 1 Pet. ii. 5, 9, Rev. i. 6, v. 8—10. Every believer has a title to enter into the holiest of all, by the blood of Jesus, Heb. x. 19—22. Every believer is called on to present spiritual sacrifices, Heb. xiii. 10, 15, 1 Pet. ii. 5. Every believer is to make intercession for all saints, or the whole church, Eph. vi. 16.

Every believer is a servant *in* the church, (or the house of Christ here on earth, Heb. iii. 6,) and *of* the church, John xiii. 14, 15, Rom. xv. 1, 2, vi. 22, xiv. 19, Gal. v. 13, Phil. ii. 4, 1 Cor. xii. 25, 26, vii. 22, xii. 12—27, Rom. xii. 4—8, 1 Pet. iv. 10, 11, (where for *the* gift, read *a* gift, see the Greek,) 1 John iii. 16, 1 Tim. iii. 15.

So that in this dispensation every believer is an antitypical priest, or son of Aaron, and an antitypical Levite; Christ being himself the antitypical Aaron.

The *priests* therefore under the law, were a type of the church of God in *worship*. The *Levites* were a type of the church of God in *service*.

Israel, looked at *corporately and collectively*, without reference to the classification of priests and Levites, were a type of the church in its *corporate and collective character*.

So a *common Israelite* was a type of a *believer*, looked at simply with reference to his standing in Christ, and not in his priestly or Levitical character.

Now while a priest always maintained his character and title as such, yet he could only *exercise* his priestly office at *the tabernacle*, or, after Israel got into the land, *at the temple* ; it was only at the place where the Lord set his name that sacrifices could be offered, only where the brazen altar was, which was before the tabernacle ; and it was only on the golden altar within the tabernacle, that the incense could be burned, or the intercession made.

So now, if believers are priests, then must they have a tabernacle at which to present their sacrifices, and into which they can go to burn their incense.

This tabernacle is *in heaven*, into which Jesus the great Highpriest has entered by his own blood ; on the mercy-seat of which, and before the mercy-seat of which, he has sprinkled his own blood, and which ever speaks better things than that of Abel, Heb. xii. 24, viii. 1—4, ix. 1—24, x. 19—22, vii. 24—28, iv. 14—16, iii. 1.

They are a *spiritual* priesthood, who are to offer *spiritual* sacrifices ; their tabernacle, and consequently their place of worship of God, and of communion with God, is in the *heavens*. There is in this dispensation no priesthood after the flesh, no carnal ordinances, no worldly sanctuary, no place of worship or communion on earth : the place of communion now is at the mercy-seat ; and that is in heaven, where the Highpriest is, Ex. xxv. 21, 22, xxix. 43, Numb. vii. 89, John iv. 23, 24, Heb. ix. 11, 12, viii. 4, ix. 24. Worship is spiritual and not carnal ; in and by the Holy Ghost, and not in and by ordinances. The priesthood is spiritual and heavenly, and not carnal and earthly. The tabernacle is in heaven, and not in the world—pitched by God, and not man. The place of communion or of converse with God is only where God dwells, and that is in the holiest of all, in heaven, and not in the Shechinah from between the cherubims in the worldly sanctuary. The believer's *title* to go into the holiest of all, in the Heavenlies in worship, is the blood of Jesus, Heb.



x. 19. The *power* by which his soul gets there is the Holy Ghost which dwells in him, Eph. ii. 18, Rom. viii. 9, 10, 1 Cor. vi. 19, 2 Cor. vi. 16.\*

\* The texts referred to under this head, to prove that every believer is a Priest, show also the fallacy of a statement that has been lately put forth, namely, that although Israel was a kingdom of Priests, yet notwithstanding that, there was a distinct class or family (the family of Aaron) consecrated to the service of priesthood, any usurpation of whose office, by an Israelite, not belonging to this class, was punishable with death, Numb. iii. 10, 38 ; and consequently, that in this dispensation, while every believer is a Priest, yet that the sons of Aaron are also to have their antitype in a distinct class of persons consecrated or separated to the service or office of priesthood, and whose service must not be intermeddled with by any one not belonging to this separated class, although a Christian : and Jude 11, "perished in the gainsaying of Core," is commonly referred to as containing a denunciation against the usurpers of the priestly office now. This notion proceeds on the mistaken application of the type of the Aaronic priesthood already noticed, that is, in referring it to a *class* in the church, instead of the *whole church*, in the aspect of worship. The answer to it is this : 1st., That there is no mention in the New Testament of any class of Priests in the church of God, distinct and separate from the whole Church. 2ndly, That every believer has the same standing in Christ,—he has been quickened together with Christ—raised up together, and made to sit together in the heavenlies *in* Christ, Eph. ii. 5, 6. Every believer therefore is not only *in* Christ, 1 Cor. i. 30, but he is *in Him where He is*—and that is in the Holiest of all, in the tabernacle which is in Heaven, into which Jesus has entered by his own blood, now to appear in the presence of God for us, Heb. viii. 1—6, ix. 1—12. The holiest of all therefore in the earthly tabernacle represented in type the dwelling place, or presence of God. Into this none but the High Priest could enter, and that only once a year on the great day of atonement, Lev. xvi. 2, 29, Heb. ix. 7. The sons of Aaron never went beyond the veil, that divided the holiest of all from the holy place—their service was limited to the *latter*, and into that they went always, accomp'ishing the service of God, Heb. ix. 6. The union which every believer has with Christ—his being *in* the risen and glorified Jesus, gives him a standing in the holiest of all in Heaven ; and he has a perpetual title or liberty by the blood of Jesus to enter into it, Heb. x. 19—22. There can be no place of greater nearness to God, and no higher privilege than this, and this is the common standing and privilege of the *whole church* of God, and

All the carnal ordinances, indeed the whole Jewish economy, has passed away ; it has become “weak and beggarly elements ;” and to attempt to draw nigh to God by Jewish ceremonies, a carnal priesthood, carnal ordinances, or to set up again the things which God hath set aside is idolatry, 2 Cor. iii. 7, 11—13, Gal. iii. 19—24, 25, Acts xv. 10—12, 18—20, Heb. vii. 11, 12, viii. 4, 5, 7, 8, 13; and with this last quotation compare Deut. iv. 13, and Ex. xxxiv. 28.

Idolatry consists, not merely in worshipping some other *object* than the one, true, and living God, but in seeking or professing to worship Him in a *way* that *He has not appointed*. It consists, not merely in a wrong *object* of worship, but in a wrong *mode* of worship. God can only recognize and accept worship that is offered in His own appointed way. Worship must be either true or false ; if it is not true, it is not worship at all, it is idolatry.

*not of any particular or distinct class in it.* It is the standing and privilege of *all* believers, and not of *some*, to the exclusion of the rest. 3dly, That all the service of the sons of Aaron, namely, the offering of the sacrifices and the making of intercession is expressly attributed to the *whole church* and *not to any distinct or separate class in it*, 1 Pet. ii. 5, 9, Rev. i. 6, v. 8—10, Heb. x. 19—22, xiii. 10, 15, Eph. vi. 16. The *whole church* of God having liberty to enter into the *Holiest of all*, into which the *High Priest* alone went, and being also called and privileged to do the service which the *sons of Aaron* performed in the *Holy Place*, it follows, that no class of men in the Church can have any priestly standing, or title, or office, or service, separate or distinct from the whole Church, and which is not common to the whole Church. The reference in Jude 11 is indeed a word of most solemn import—the Lord grant that any to whom it applies may have grace seriously to consider it, and escape its fearful application. The sin of Korah appears to have been a denial of God’s dispensational order of priesthood, and an attempt to usurp its exercise and privileges. The example therefore applies to any who in this dispensation deny God’s order of priesthood, and lay claim to the exclusive enjoyment and exercise of the name, the office, and the privileges of the antitypical sons of Aaron. In this dispensation, the persons who have been made priests to God by Jesus, are the whole body of true believers who constitute the

In this dispensation, the only acceptable worship is that which is in the Spirit, John iv. 23. Any other mode of worship is false. God is not truly worshipped and honored by any other ; and therefore in Gal. iv. 8, 9, the Apostle expressly says, that the adoption by the Galatians of Jewish ordinances, now become as they are weak and beggarly elements, was a going back to the idolatry to which they had been in bondage. The Galatians had been Gentiles and not Jews, and they were going back again to the things whereunto they had been in bondage. For they were going back to carnal ordinances—to worship God in the flesh ; and it matters not what form the flesh assumes—whether the grossness of Pagan idolatry, or the more refined form of Jewish ordinances. God cannot now accept such worship. They that worship Him *must* worship Him in spirit and in truth ; not now through the shadows of Jewish ordinances and ceremonies, but through Jesus who is “the truth,” that is, the substance and reality

Church of God—men in the Spirit, men not of the world, men who have been washed from their sins in the blood of Jesus, and who have died and are risen together with him ; and not men in the flesh, men of the world, men dead in trespasses and sins, unwashed and unquickened. It is Jesus, and he only, who makes them priests ; their appointment, their title, their privileges are from him, and him only, and that without any intervention, or sanction of man, Rev. i. 5, 6. The nature of their priesthood is spiritual, its order Melchisedec, the place of its exercise heaven, Heb. viii. 4, 5. In the present dispensation, for any man or any body of men to presume to constitute priesthood at all, much more to constitute priesthood after the flesh, by accrediting and acknowledging as priests, men of the flesh, men of the world, and men having not the Spirit—by making their *qualification* to depend on education, or human distinctions—by making the *appointment* to depend on man’s authority, or man’s will,—and by making the *title* to rest upon succession, or transfer from man to man ; or to set up a claim to its name and office and privileges to the exclusion of any who are in Christ, or to make the place of its exercise earth, or a worldly sanctuary, is in principle to follow the example of Korah, it is a denial of God’s dispensational order of priesthood, and a usurpation of its office and privileges.

which those ordinances shadowed forth, John i. 17, Col. iii. 16—23. In which latter passage we see that the believer is looked upon as risen together with Christ out of the flesh and out of the world, and therefore is not to be subject to ordinances, which are for the flesh and for a worldly sanctuary.

It matters not that *God* is the object *intended* to be worshipped through these ordinances, and that *idolatry is not intended*. We find in Ex. xxxii. 1—5, that Aaron called the worship of the golden calf “a feast to the Lord.” So in the very worst times of Jewish apostasy, in the reign of Ahaz, when altars were multiplied in every street of Jerusalem, the heads, and priests, and prophets of Jerusalem, would lean upon the Lord and say, “Is not the Lord among us, none evil can come upon us,” Micah iii. 9—11. Compare the first and second chapters of Micah with 2 Kings xvi. 1—20, and 2 Chron. xxviii. 1—27. See also Jeremiah vii. 1—11. So in the time of our Lord’s personal ministry, while the Jews were calling themselves the seed of Abraham, our Lord said they were the seed of the devil, John viii. 33, 39—44; and while they were very zealous for the law and for all outward ordinances, our Lord applies to them the prophecy in Isaiah xxix. 13, “*In vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men,*” Matt. xv. 9. Now in Col. iii. 20—22, Paul expressly says of the Jewish ordinances which he there warns the church at Colosse against, that they were “after the commandments and doctrines of men.”

But just as we have seen that in this dispensation priesthood and worship are spiritual, so is all *service or ministry* spiritual also: as the believer is a spiritual priest, so is he also a *spiritual Levite*.

It is important to mark the distinction between priesthood and ministry. In priesthood there is equality among believers, all are priests; there is no difference with respect to the service which is *within the veil*—all are

alike privileged, and called to perform it. But with respect to *ministry*, or service *without the veil*, there are diversities of gifts and offices, as in the natural body, there are many members, and each member has a different office. It is this very diversity of gift and office which enables the body to perform its various functions : compare 1 Cor. xii. 4—30. This diversity in the mystical body of Christ, is *by the sovereignty of the Spirit*, 1 Cor. xii. 4—11. He divides to every man severally as He will ; “and God has set the members every one of them in the body as *it hath pleased him*.” It is quite a mistake to suppose that ministry, or service in the church of God, is confined to teaching or preaching the word. The deacons were servants or ministers ; as the word deacon itself, and the service they did, proves. Phœbe was a minister, or servant of the church at Cenchrea, Romans xvi. 1. The house of Stephanas addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints, 1 Cor. xvi. 15. Washing the saints’ feet is ministry or service to the church, as truly as teaching in the word, only in another way, John xiii. 14, 1 Tim. v. 9, 10, Titus iii. 4. So that it is clear that women are ministers or servants in the church as well as men, but *not in the word*, 1 Tim. ii. 8—12. A woman is not to teach, they are to keep silence in the church, 1 Cor. xiv. 34, 35. With respect to those who are ministers, or servants in the word, they are ministers of the *new covenant*, and not of *the old* ; not ministers or servants after the Jewish manner, which is after the flesh, as the Levites were ; nor ministers of Jewish ordinances ; but ministers of *the Spirit*, 2 Cor. iii. 6 ; where for “has made us able ministers,” read, “has sufficed us to be ministers,” or, “has made us competent,” or “qualified us to be ministers ;” (ικανω), the sufficiency or qualification being ascribed to *God alone* ; and not to *man’s authority*, nor to *any natural or acquired gift or endowment of man’s own*. The subject of ministry in

this dispensation is "the things of God," 1 Cor. ii. 6—16 ; now "no man knoweth the things of God, but the Spirit of God;" a man, therefore, who has not got the Spirit of God, cannot *know* the things of God himself, and therefore he is unable to *teach* them to others. 2 Cor. iii. shows what ministry now *is* in its *nature and character*—it is of the new Covenant, it is of the Spirit, it is the ministry of righteousness and glory ; and it also shows what it is *not*,—it is not of the old Covenant, it is not of the letter or the law, it is not of the flesh, for the flesh is the veil which hinders the Jew from seeing the glory of Christ, and hinders the natural man from receiving or knowing the things of the Spirit. Ch. iv. shows what ministry or service is *in exercise*, and what it leads to, ver. 7—17, and ch. vi. 4—10. If the character of ministry had not been entirely lost sight of, and ministry itself perverted, it never could have become a thing of credit and respectability in the world ; see also Matt. xx. 25—28 ; but the servants of the Lord would to this day have been counted by the world "the filth of the earth, and the offscouring of all things."

VI. The next point of contrast is in the *enemies* of the Jews and of the church. Israel was called to the possession of an *earthly* inheritance which was in the occupation of *men in the flesh* ; they were to drive them out with the *sword* and exterminate them, Deut. vii. 1, 2, 16—26. Their *enemies* were *carnal*, for they had constantly to defend the land against the invasion and irruption of other nations, and their *weapons* were also *carnal*. In this dispensation our enemies are not flesh and blood, but the principalities and powers, the wicked *spirits* in the *heavenlies*, Eph. vi. 12.

*Now*, the enemies being spiritual, they can only be opposed by *weapons* that are *spiritual*, 2 Cor. x. 4, Eph. vi. 10, 13.

The difference of dispensations in this respect is, I believe, one of the points taught by our Lord in the parable

of the Wheat and the Tares, in Matt. xiii. 24—30. In the last dispensation, circumcised, separated Israel, were to dwell alone (Num. xxiii. 9) in a separated place on earth, the land of Canaan; and if they had fully obeyed God, there would not have remained one uncircumcised person in the land, Judges ii. 2, 20—23, iii. 1—5. But in this dispensation, the Church, consisting of “the elect scattered abroad,” have no place or locality given them upon earth to dwell in, because their calling is a heavenly one (Heb. iii. 1), and they are pilgrims and strangers here, (1 Pet. ii. 11) and the church’s place now is in the heavenlies in Christ, Eph. ii. 6. They are, therefore, not to be seeking to root up the tares which the devil sows *in the world* (for the field in which the wheat and the tares grow, is the *world* and not the *church*, Matt. xiii. 38). Those who are spiritually circumcised (Rom. ii. 29, Col. ii. 11—13, Phil. iii. 3), are to allow those who are spiritually uncircumcised to remain in the world, and are not to attempt, by the exercise of temporal judgment, to pluck them up or rid the field of them. The persecutions of popery, the horrors of the Inquisition, and the sanguinary warfare of the crusaders, are to be traced to a misunderstanding of the dispensation on this point. They were, in principle, an attempt to pluck up the tares. It was an acting on the principles of Judaism, instead of the principles of the gospel. The burning of heretics was adopted and justified by the analogy of the destruction of the devoted nations of Canaan. This is a very practical and solemn instance of the danger of misunderstanding the character of the present dispensation, and acting on the principles of the analogy of the Jewish economy.

Below I have placed the points of contrast in a tabular form.

**Last Dispensation.**

**THE SUBJECTS**—The nation of Israel, the seed of Abraham after the flesh.

**THE CHARACTER**—Righteousness.

**BLESSINGS**—Earthly and Carnal.

**BLESSINGS**—Conditional on obedience.

**WORSHIP**—Carnal ordinances  
Carnal sacrifices.  
A worldly sanctuary.  
Carnal priesthood.

**MINISTRY OR SERVICE**—After the flesh.

**HOPE**—Earthly power, riches, and glory.

**ENEMIES**—Carnal.

**WEAPONS**—Carnal.

**Present Dispensation.**

**THE SUBJECTS**—The elect church, the seed of Abraham according to the Spirit.

**THE CHARACTER**—Grace.

**BLESSINGS**—Spiritual and heavenly.

**THE BLESSINGS**—Secured, and a title to them given unconditionally.

**WORSHIP**—In spirit and in truth.  
Spiritual sacrifices.  
A heavenly tabernacle  
Spiritual priesthood.

**MINISTRY OR SERVICE**—Of the Spirit.

**HOPE**—Heavenly and eternal glory.

**ENEMIES**—Spiritual.

**WEAPONS**—SPIRITUAL.

I remain, &c.



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