

Sunday, March 3, 2013—Grace Life School of Theology—*Grace History Project*—Lesson 95 Rightly Dividing H.A. Ironside: The Publication of *Wrongly Dividing the Word of Truth*, Part 2

Chapter Four: When Was the Revelation of the Mystery of the One Body Given?

- Chapter four commences with a discussion of Bullinger’s later teaching (*The Foundation of Dispensational Truth*, 1913) that the mystery of the one body was not revealed until Paul reached Rome in 63 A.D. This idea is combined with the notion that to Paul alone was the revelation of the mystery given and that Peter and the eleven knew nothing of it. These are the dispensational contentions of Bullingerites and his ilk, according to Ironside. (31)
- After pointing out that the mystery is referred to in Romans 16:25-27, a book written during the Acts period, Ironside takes issue with Bullinger’s postscript theory i.e., the suggestion that these verses were added to the end of Romans after Paul reached Rome in Acts 28.
 - “Does anyone ask, how can any ultra-dispensationalist dare to say in the face of such a Scripture as this, that the mystery had not been made known and had not been previously preached before Paul was imprisoned at Rome? If a simple believing Christian, he will probably be amazed at the answer. Dr. Bullinger and others who follow him suggest that in all likelihood the last three verses of the Epistle to the Romans were not written by Paul when he sent the letter from some distant Gentile city, but that they were appended to the letter after he reached Rome and received the new revelation. Is this unbelievable? Nevertheless, it is exactly what these men teach. It is higher criticism of the worst type and impugns the perfection of the Word of God. For, even supposing their contentions were true, how absurd it would be for Paul to add these words after he reached Rome, to an epistle purporting to be written before he got there! And how senseless it would be for him to speak while he was in prison of a Gospel and a revelation which he was supposed to have preached in all the world, if he had never yet begun that proclamation. Needless to say, the contention of Dr. Bullinger is an absolute fabrication. It is the special pleading of a hard-driven controversialist, bound to maintain his unscriptural system at all costs, even to destroying the unity of the Word of God.” (32-33)
- For the record, *The Grace History Project* does agree with Pastor Ironside on this point (in part). Bullinger’s postscript theory is false and should be rejected. Those interested in reading more about Bullinger’s postscript theory are encouraged to read our essay titled *Did Paul Know the Mystery When He Wrote Romans? An Investigation of E.W. Bullinger’s Postscript Theory*.
- In addition, Ironside takes issue with Bullinger’s exposition of Romans 12:4-5 and I Corinthians 12:12-14. Both of these passages were written during the Acts period and mention the “one body” and speak of both the Romans and the Corinthians as being members of the “one body.” Regarding these passages Ironside wrote,
 - Romans 12:4-5—“Could we have a clearer declaration than this of the truth of the mystery? What ultra-dispensationalist will dare to say that this passage is an interpolation

added in after years in order to make Romans fit with Ephesians? God's Word is perfect and always exact. These unspiritual theorists invariably overtook something that completely destroys their unscriptural hypotheses.” (33)

- I Corinthians 12:12-14—“It is absurd to say, as these ecclesiastical hobby-riders do, that the Body referred to here is not the same thing as the Body of Ephesians and Colossians. It is a Body made up of those who formerly were Jews or Gentiles, bond or free, but are now all one in Christ. And this Body has been formed by the baptism of the Holy Spirit. In no other way was the Body of Christ brought into existence. . . Coming back then to consider the passage in I Corinthians, we have the truth of the Body clearly set forth, and are shown how it was brought into existence in a letter written at least four years before Paul's imprisonment; and he writes that letter to a group of believers who had been brought to a knowledge of Christ through his preaching some years before.” (34-35)
- With respect to the revelation of the mystery, Ironside points out that it was Paul's “devotion to the revelation of the mystery which is part of the dispensation of the grace of God, that resulted in his imprisonment. He did not get his dispensation after he was in prison.” (40) He does however; change his mind from his earlier writings with respect to Paul being the first one to know the mystery. In *Wrongly Dividing the Word of Truth* Ironside states that both John and Peter also knew the mystery.
 - “Was this mystery made known by other servants besides the apostle Paul? It was. The apostle John makes it known in his account of our Lord's ministry as given in the tenth chapter of his Gospel. There we read that the Lord Jesus, as the Good Shepherd, entered into the sheepfold of Judaism to lead His own out into glorious liberty. And cryptically He adds, "Other sheep I have which are not of this fold. Them also I must bring, and there shall be one flock and one Shepherd.

This is perhaps the earliest intimation of the mystery that we have. It was not committed to writing, of course, until some years after the epistle to the Ephesians was written. But it shows us that John, as an apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ, had received the revelation of the mystery even before the apostle Paul did.

Then what of the apostle Peter? We dare to say this same mystery was made known to him on the housetop of Simon's residence in Joppa, when he had the vision of the descending sheet from Heaven and saw in it all manner of beasts and creeping things, and heard the word from Heaven, "What God hath cleansed call thou not common," or unclean.

This was to him an intimation that in Christ the distinction between Jew and Gentile was henceforth to be done away, and he makes it perfectly clear that this was his conviction when he stood up to preach in the household of Cornelius (Acts 10: 34 to end). Moreover, his epistles emphasize the same fact, though not in the full way that those of the apostle Paul do. John and Peter are apostles. Are there any prophets who give evidence of having

in measure at least understood this truth? The greatest of all the New Testament prophets is Luke himself, and in his book of the Acts, the mystery is plainly made known, though not taught doctrinally. We see God working in grace to unite Jew and Gentile into one Body.” (41)

- In chapter five, titled “Further Examination of the Epistles”, Ironside states “Paul makes no claim to being the sole depository of the revelation of the mystery. He says it was made known to Christ's holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit, and so we turn to consider the writings of other apostles and prophets asking, "Have we in them any intimation of a new revelation after Paul went to Rome?" (46)

Chapter Six: Is the Church the Bride of the Lamb?

- In this chapter Ironside takes issue with Bullinger’s teaching that the church is not the bride of Christ. Those interested in learning more about Bullinger’s comments are encouraged to review Bullinger’s *The Mystery: Secret Truth Revealed* or Lesson 68 of the *Grace History Project*.

Chapter Seven: Do Baptism and the Lord’s Supper Have Any Place in the Present Dispensation of the Grace of God?

- For Ironside the answer to the above question is yes. Ironside views the preaching of the gospel and water baptism as being inseparably linked throughout the New Testament. In addition, he teaches that water baptism is an outward expression of faith in the gospel. Lastly, he teaches that the gospel of the circumcision and the gospel of the uncircumcision are just two different aspects of the same gospel.
 - “Wherever the Gospel is preached, baptism is linked with it, not as part of the Gospel, for Paul distinctly says, "Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the Gospel," but as an outward expression of faith in the Gospel. It is evident in the Book of Acts that there is a somewhat different presentation of this, according as to whether the message is addressed to Jews in outward covenant relation with God or to Gentiles who are strangers to the covenants of promise. Paul calls these two aspects of the one Gospel, the Gospel of the circumcision and the Gospel of the uncircumcision. The Jew being already a member of a nation which, up to the cross, had been recognized as in a covenant relationship with God, was called upon to be baptized to save himself from that untoward generation. That is, to step out, as it were, from the nation, no longer claiming national privilege, nor yet being exposed to national judgment. With the Gentile, it was otherwise. He was simply called upon to believe the Gospel, and believing it, to confess his faith in baptism. And this abides to the end of the age as our Lord Himself clearly declared in the closing verses of Matthew 28. There has never been any change in the order.” (59-60)
- In his extended comments on the necessity of water baptism in this dispensation, Ironside echoes many of the same arguments used by Haggai in *O’Hairism!* First, unless spirit baptism is explicitly stated in the context, water baptism is to be implied. Second, the “one baptism” of

Ephesians 4 is taken to mean the “one baptism by which we express our allegiance to that Lord and that faith.” (61-62)

- “It has been said that the baptism of the Holy Spirit superseded water baptism, but Scripture teaches the very contrary. Cornelius and his household were baptized with the Holy Spirit when they believed the Word spoken by Peter. But the apostle, turning to his Jewish brethren, immediately asks: "Who can forbid water that these should not be baptized which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?" And they were at once baptized by authority of the Lord Jesus, which is what the expression "in the name of" involves. This was not a meritorious act. It was a blessed and precious privilege granted to this Gentile household upon the evidence of their faith in Christ.

It has been objected that the apostle Paul himself makes light of baptism and was really glad that he had not baptized many at Corinth. It is surely a most shifty kind of exegesis that would lead any one to make such a statement. In the record in Acts, where we read of Paul's ministry in Corinth, we are told that many of the Corinthians hearing, believed and were baptized. Paul did not himself do the baptizing, save in a few instances, but he certainly saw that it was done, and the Holy Spirit evidently quotes the record with approval. Why then did Paul thank God in First Corinthians 1, that he had baptized so few? The answer is perfectly plain. Because the Corinthians were making much of human leaders and he saw the tendency to glory in man. He knew that if there were many there who had been baptized by him, they would be likely, under the prevailing conditions, to pride themselves upon the fact that he, the apostle to the Gentiles, had been the one who baptized them. But far from making light of baptism, when he chides them for their sectarian spirit, he shows them that the only name worthy of exaltation is the name of the One by whose authority they had been baptized.

As to the various disputed scriptures in Romans 6: 3, 4; Colossians 2: 12; Ephesians 4: 5; and Galatians 3: 27, where baptism is mentioned without any definite indication as to whether it is water or Spirit, one thing at least is perfectly clear. Water baptism is necessarily implied, because Spirit baptism is but a figurative expression, and water baptism was the act upon which the figure was based. This comes out in the first mention of Spirit baptism. "I indeed," says John, "baptize you with water" (this then was the actual literal baptism), "but He shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire." It is not literal baptism in the Holy Spirit. It is not literal fire, but figurative. If this be but kept in mind, there would be no confusion. Baptism in water pictures both burial and resurrection. On this Paul bases his instruction in Romans 6 and Colossians 2:12. Thus water baptism marks people out as belonging to Christ by profession, and therefore is the basic thought in Galatians 3: 27, even though it is by the Spirit's baptism that people are actually united to Christ.

There has been much disputation regarding the passage in Ephesians 4, but without laying special stress on the importance of water baptism, it is very evident that the passage would have no meaning if water baptism, as well as that of the Spirit, were not in

view. Let me try to make this plain. In the opening verses, the apostle calls upon the Ephesian believers, and of course all Christians, to walk worthy of the vocation wherewith they have been called, and he lays stress on the importance of endeavoring to keep the Spirit's unity in the bond of peace. Then he explains this unity as being sevenfold. In verse 4 he emphasizes three special things, one Body, one Spirit, and one hope. Now there can be no question that the Spirit is brought in here as forming the Body, and the Spirit forms the Body by what is called elsewhere the baptism of the Spirit. Then in verse 5 we have another trio, one Lord, one faith, one baptism. Here it seems to me clearly enough we have, not a duplication of what we have already had in verse 4, but something that is more outward. One Lord in whom we believe; one faith that we confess; and one baptism by which we express our allegiance to that Lord and that faith. In verse 6 we have God Himself as the Father of all, the Founder of this blessed unity.

Now without going into any disputation as to whether the term "one baptism," is to be confined to the baptism of the Spirit, or the baptism of water, it is certainly evident that it at least implies water. No man confesses his faith in Christ by the baptism of the Holy Spirit alone, for millions have been baptized by the Holy Spirit, and yet the world knows nothing of it. On the other hand, of course, many have faith in Christ who have never been baptized in water, but that does not alter the fact that, according to the Lord's own instructions, water baptism should follow confession of Christ. The Lord has never rescinded this order, and for men to attempt to do so is but to substitute human authority for divine." (61-62)

- Ironside concludes chapter seven by taking issue with Bullinger's teaching on the Lord's Supper. Bullinger argued that the Lord's Supper like Baptism has no place in the dispensation of Grace. For the record, J.C. O'Hair never accepted Bullinger's view on the Lord's Supper.

Ironside Changes His Mind

- In *The Controversy*, Pastor Stam devotes an entire chapter to chronicling the "About Face" in the dispensational teaching of Ironside. Stam accomplishes this by quoting, in parallel columns, comments made by Ironside before the 1935 publication of *Wrongly Dividing the Word of Truth* and after. Moreover, on May 20, 1935 Pastor O'Hair drafted a pair of letters addressed to Ironside objecting to his portrayal of "ultra-dispensationalism" in *Wrongly Dividing the Word of Truth*. O'Hair wrote *Wrongly Deriding Christian Brethren* to address the subject of the dispensation of the mystery raised by Ironside and *Puerile and Childish Diatribes* to address his teaching on water baptism. Lastly, Pastor Stam informs his readers that he first encountered Ironside's book in 1937 and that as the circulation of *Wrongly Dividing* grew, he published excerpts from his earlier writings under the title: *Dr. H. A. Ironside's Former Testimony As To Pauline Truth*. The *Grace History Project* believes that it is quite possibly this pamphlet by Stam to which Ironside refers to in the preface to the third edition of *Wrongly Dividing the Word of Truth* printed in April 1938.

- The following chart is a hybrid of Stam's from *The Controversy* as well as a few additions of our own.

Rightly Dividing H.A. Ironside

Before <i>Wrongly Dividing</i> (1935)	After <i>Wrongly Dividing</i> (1935)
<p>“To the epistles of Paul alone do we turn for the revelation of this mystery. He was the special vessel chosen to make known the heavenly calling. The twelve were, as we have seen, connected primarily with the testimony to Israel. Paul, as one born out of due time, was selected to be the messenger to the nations, announcing the distinctive truths of the present dispensation.” <i>(Mysteries of God, 1908, 74)</i></p>	<p>“It is contended by Bullingerites, and others of like ilk, that Paul did not receive the revelation of the mystery of the one Body until he was imprisoned in Rome, 63 A. D. Generally, too, the ground is taken that this revelation was given to him alone, and that the twelve knew nothing of it. Let us see if these assertions will stand the test of Holy Scripture.” <i>(Wrongly Dividing, 1935, 31)</i></p>
<p>Throughout the writings of the Apostle Paul, he again and again refers to a wonderful secret, which he designates in a special way as "the mystery," or "the great mystery." <i>(Mysteries of God, 1908, 50).</i></p>	<p>“The Bullingerites tell us that the mystery was only made known to the apostle Paul, not to other apostles. The apostle himself tells us here that "it is now revealed unto His holy apostles and prophets." Note not only the plural, but that others besides apostles had this revelation. How utterly absurd would words like these be if he were referring to something that had just been secretly made known to him! But is it true that other apostles and prophets had already known if the mystery? It is.” <i>(Wrongly Dividing, 1935, 40)</i></p>
<p>“That a doctrine so clearly revealed in the Scriptures could have become so utterly lost is only to be accounted for by the Judaizing of the Church, and the consequent minding of earthly things that beclouded the heavenly ones.” <i>(Mysteries of God, 1908, 51)</i></p>	<p>“Was this mystery made known by other servants besides the apostle Paul? It was. The apostle John makes it known in his account of our Lord's ministry as given in the tenth chapter of his Gospel. There we read that the Lord Jesus, as the Good Shepherd, entered into the sheepfold of Judaism to lead His own out into glorious liberty. And cryptically He adds, "Other sheep I have which are not of this fold. Them also I must bring, and there shall be one flock and one Shepherd.”” <i>(Wrongly Dividing, 1935, 41)</i></p>
<p>“Now if the mystery be for those who have faith to obey, it is certainly of vast importance that every child of God be instructed as to its true character.” <i>(Mysteries of God, 1908, 52)</i></p>	<p>“ . . . John, as an apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ, had received the revelation of the mystery even before the apostle Paul did.” <i>(Wrongly Dividing, 1935, 41)</i></p>

<p>“But this doctrine of the one body is never referred to by any other apostle than Paul. He calls it "the dispensation of the mystery" which he had especially been entrusted with.” (<i>Sailing With Paul</i>, 1913, 44)</p>	<p>“Then what of the apostle Peter? We dare to say this same mystery was made known to him on the housetop of Simon's residence in Joppa, when he had the vision of the descending sheet from Heaven and saw in it all manner of beasts and creeping things, and heard the word from Heaven,” (<i>Wrongly Dividing</i>, 1935, 41)</p>
<p>“To Paul was committed a two-fold ministry—that of the gospel (as linked with a gloried Christ) and that of the Church—the mystery hid in God from before the creation of the world but now revealed by the Spirit. See this double ministry as set forth in Col. 1:23-29 and Eph. 3:1-12. “The mystery: was not something of difficult mysterious character, but a sacred secret never known to mankind until in due time opened up by the Holy Spirit through the apostle Paul, and by him communicated to all nations for the obedience of faith. It was not hid in the Scriptures to be brought to light eventually; but we are distinctly told it was hid in God until such time as He chose to manifest it. . . The “mystery” of Romans 16:25 is the same as that of the later epistles, and ever formed an integral part of his messages. It would not be necessary to say this were there not some today who would divorce completely Paul’s ministry in Acts from that which he embodied in the last of his letters written after the rejection of his message by the Jews in Rome as recorded in Acts 28.” (<i>Romans</i>, 1928, 174-176)</p>	<p>“The greatest of all the New Testament prophets is Luke himself, and in his book of the Acts, the mystery is plainly made known, though not taught doctrinally. We see God working in grace to unite Jew and Gentile into one Body.” (<i>Wrongly Dividing</i>, 1935, 41)</p>
<p>“Of the Church Paul was made minister according to the dispensation of God given to him on our behalf to complete the divine testimony, or to fill up the Word of God. The whole counsel of God was not made known until Paul received the revelation of the mystery. . . It was not special revelation given to the twelve, but to him as the apostle of the new dispensation.” (<i>Colossians</i>, 1929, 57)</p>	<p>“The apostle comes now to the unfolding of the great secret which had been in the heart of God from eternity, but in this glorious dispensation of grace has at last been fully revealed. It is my thought we should see that in a very special sense Paul was the chosen one to make known this mystery in all its fullness. On the other hand we need to guard against the idea that no others participated in this knowledge. . .” (<i>Ephesians</i>, 1937, 146)</p>

<p>The mystery of the Church as the Body of Christ was never made known in Old Testament times, nor yet in the days when our Lord was on earth. We are told distinctly that it had been ‘hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to His saints.’ The divine method of making it known was by a special revelation to the Apostle Paul, as he tells us in Ephesians 3. But this ministry was not for him only. It was a ministry committed to him to pass on to the saints. . . (<i>Lectures on Colossians</i>, 1929, 58)</p>	<p>“No one else speaks of the Body of Christ, among all the New Testament writers. To Paul this revelation came first that he might communicate it to others. But the truth that Jew and Gentile were to be blessed alike on the grounds of pure grace was made known to the twelve. Our Lord sets forth this truth in John 10:4, 16. “His own sheep” from the Jewish fold, and “other sheep” of the Gentiles were to form “one flock” under the fostering care of the “one Shepherd.” Peter’s vision of the sheet let down from heaven set forth the same glorious mystery. But the revelation of the one Body was the special truth committed to Paul and made known in germ at the very time of his conversion as the words, “Why persecutest thou Me?” imply.” (<i>Ephesians</i>, 1937, 146)</p>
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- According to Pastor Stam, the publication of *Dr. H. A. Ironside’s Former Testimony As To Pauline Truth* so enraged the Doctor that he sent him the following letter dated September 18, 1940.

- “Dear Mr. Stam:

My attention has been drawn to your contemptible effort to make my teaching (which is unchanged through the years) as to the mystery agree with the unscriptural Bullingerite theories you are advocating.

As one who loved and esteemed your noble father I am grieved to think that a son of his would stoop to such methods.

I teach today just what I taught in the books you quote from. But these teachings are as far removed from Bullingerism as from Seventh Day Adventism.

Can you not *read*? In my book "Wrongly Dividing" I am referring not to the mystery of the Body, but to the mystery that Jew and Gentile are both saved on the ground of pure grace - as common to all the apostles.

This mystery - not "the mystery of the Body," was clearly enunciated by the Apostle Peter as recognized truth in Acts 15:11, and this Peter had preached from the beginning.

The preface to the second edition of "Wrongly Dividing" makes this clear for those who read the first edition carelessly, and leaves no excuse for such ignorance now.

You are making a sorry spectacle of yourself by trying to build up a reputation as a teacher through attacks on men of God, many of whom were in Christ and preaching the mystery of the Body before you were born.

God grant you may see your folly and retrace your steps before you go the full length, as others have done, and wind up where Bullingerism leads– in universal reconciliation and the denial of all practical truth for the conscience.

Sincerely yours, S/ H. A. Ironside” (Stam, *Controversy*, 78-79)

Works Cited

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O’Hair, J.C. *Wrongly Deriding Christian Brethren*. 1935.

Stam, C.R. *The Controversy*. Germantown, WI: Berean Bible Society, 1963.