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2 Kings 4:1 is evidence that when a debtor could not pay, he or his children could be enslaved by force. There is no evidence, however, that this was consistent with the Law of Moses. The time and place of our example was not one of punctilious law observance.

All this means that there is no reason why we should not translate 'ebed consistently by slave, whenever it refers to the normal relationships of human society, provided we are willing to try and envisage a very different social system to our own. This applies too to its frequent use as a formula of politeness and deference, e.g., Gen. 18:3; 32:4; 'amah (1 Sa. 1:11, 16) and *shipchah* (1 Sa. 1:18) are also used in this way.

[Note: For the sake of new readers we mention that this sub-section, 'Man in Society', began in the April issue and will conclude in next issue.]

‘THE MYSTERY OF GOD, EVEN CHRIST’*

(Concluded from last issue)

T. NORTON STERRETT, TH.M.

The third view of 'the mystery' is that of Dr G. Campbell Morgan, namely, that it is the Incarnation. J. Agar Beet has an equivalent position, apparently. Speaking of the view that the mystery is Christ, he asserts that 'it is confirmed by the context; and by the aim of the whole Epistle, which is to set forth the mysterious grandeur of the Son of God. To know Christ, i.e., to comprehend the purpose of His incarnation with an acquaintance derived from personal contact with Him, is to know the mystery of God, i.e., the purpose kept secret during long ages, and now revealed, viz., that without respect of nationality God will receive into His favour and cover with eternal glory those who believe the Gospel¹. Dr Beet's view may not be quite identical with Dr Morgan's, but in both there is the emphasis on the

* From *Bibliotheca Sacra*, Dallas, U.S. by kind permission.

¹ *Commentary on Colossians*, p. 170.

Incarnation, so they may be discussed together. The chief difficulty with Dr Morgan's view is that the Incarnation was not a mystery hid from the Old Testament. It was clearly revealed more than once. It was revealed that Christ would come to the earth, that He would be born, born of a virgin, that He would be true man, and that He would be God. It is true that all Christ would be and all He would do was not revealed before His coming, so that the mystery is undoubtedly connected with the Incarnation. So perhaps Dr Beet is nearer the truth when he speaks of the 'purpose of the Incarnation', though even that is rather general. Since the coming of Christ, the content of truth comprehended in the Incarnation has unfolded far beyond the bare outline sketched by the Old Testament prophets. In fact, the New Testament revelation concerning Christ grows out of and is based on the Incarnation. It is fundamental in our Christology. Nevertheless, the Incarnation itself was not hid from the pre-Christian era, nor was the main purpose of the Incarnation hid. Prophecy declared that Christ was coming to atone for sin, to be the Saviour. It was revealed that He would come as King to reign, and bring in everlasting righteousness. Consequently, it seems that the mystery must be stated in different terms.

A *fourth* view of the mystery is that of those who identify Col. 2:2 with 1:27 in a way to make the mystery the same in both passages, and to say that it consists in the fact of the indwelling Christ. That is, 'Christ in you, the hope of glory' is clearly the mystery spoken of in the first chapter. If the reference in the second chapter be the same, then it is the same truth of the indwelling Christ to which Paul refers in 2:2. This has the advantage of possessing a reasonable contextual basis. The two passages are separated by only a few verses, so could very easily be thought of as referring to the same thing. Whether or not they do so is a question, and one not easily settled. It should be mentioned that several of the expositors connect the two verses, though they do not arrive at this view of the mystery, strangely enough. Others feel that Paul has a different thought in mind in the second verse. Paul does not mention the fact of Christ's indwelling in the second

passage, so this view depends on whether or not the two are to be connected together. The present writer is inclined to feel that the more immediate context of the same or a contiguous verse should be one's guide in identifying the mystery of chapter 2, before being guided by chapter 1.

The *fifth* view of this mystery which we are to consider is that presented in the course on Mysteries conducted by Professor R. T. Chafer, namely that the mystery is Christ as Head of the New Creation. The New Creation is an aspect of truth which was hidden from the Old Testament. This view has the advantage, then, of emphasizing an aspect of truth which conforms to the definition of a mystery as something hid from the Old Testament, but now revealed. The glorious truth of Christ as Head over His people, those who are indeed a 'New Creation', born again through the Spirit of God, made new creatures in Christ Jesus, is a truth which is an important part of the Christian system, but which is distinctly a New Testament revelation. Another advantage of this view is that it conforms to the message of Ephesians and Colossians. The very first chapter of Ephesians, for example, speaks of this truth. In verses 22, 23 Paul says, 'And he put all things in subjection under his feet, and gave him to be head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all'. Again in Col. 3:10, 11, Paul tells his readers that they have 'put on the new man, that is being renewed unto knowledge after the image of him that created him: where there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bondman, freeman; but Christ is all, and in all'. All through these two books, is this emphasis, particularly in Colossians.

If the above view has a weakness, it would lie in the fact that the new creation is not directly mentioned in the key passage under discussion. And, after all, the identification of the mystery will depend on what is written, not on what seems reasonable. If it be assumed that all through the books of Ephesians and Colossians Paul is speaking of one mystery, then this identification is almost certain, and the question is settled. However, the indications are that Paul has more than one mystery in view, more

than one aspect of Christian truth which he classifies under this name, so that other considerations must determine the validity of this position. It is to be granted, to be sure, that the failure of Col. 2:2, 3 to mention the new creation is not an insuperable objection against this view, and there is much to be said for it.

The final view to be cited is that of Bishop Lightfoot. Again the mystery is seen to be Christ, but not Christ in a general sense. In his own words, commenting on Col. 2:2, 'The mystery here is not "Christ", but "Christ as containing in Himself all the treasures of wisdom"'. Bishop Lightfoot seems to say that the mystery is Christ as the fulness of wisdom for His people. If this be his position, it has the advantage of being based on the immediate context, finding its support in verse 3, 'in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge'. The queer thing about Lightfoot's view is that he apparently states an entirely different position in another place. From his remarks on 1:27 the following words are taken: 'But the one special "mystery" which absorbs St Paul's thoughts in the Epistles to the Colossians and Ephesians is the free admission of the Gentiles on equal terms to the privileges of the covenant. . . . In one passage only throughout these two epistles is *μυστήριον* applied to anything else, Eph. 5:32'. This quotation would indicate that his view is nearer to that of Ironside or Eadie and is hard to fit in with the preceding words. Perhaps it is well not to be too dogmatic on just what Bishop Lightfoot's view is.

The above array of opinion regarding this mystery may seem confusing, and cause wonder if there is any certainty at all in the interpretation. If these various expositors cannot agree on the identification of this mystery, is it possible that anything can be known for sure about it? But the prospect is not as indefinite as it may seem at first. To begin with, there is the grammatical and syntactical basis established at the beginning of the discussion to the effect that the mystery is Christ. This is reasonably certain, and gives something on which to start. We are then to seek the mystery in something connected with the person of Christ or in His relations to His people. Another fact which may be pointed out is the fact

that all the above views of the mystery are not so far apart. They are closely related and connected. The new creation includes the truth of Jews and Gentiles in one body; this truth is part of the Gospel, and is part of the purpose of the Incarnation. So there may be a sense in which some of the views, at least, are not mutually exclusive, and the truth may not be confined entirely to one. Thus the subject is not as ambiguous as it may seem at first glance.

The only way to find any more certainty or knowledge regarding the mystery is to go to the Scripture itself, and seek to determine the exegesis of the passage with its implications. While there may still be no finality to be obtained, yet valuable suggestions will be gathered to aid in the interpretation of the mystery. We pass on, therefore, to an investigation of Col. 2:2, 3, to see what light can be obtained from the verse itself.

First, this verse depends on verse one of the chapter. There Paul bears testimony that he is striving greatly for those at Colossae and also those at Laodicea, for a multiple purpose, part of which is 'that they may know the mystery of God, even Christ'. The word for 'know' is ἐπίγνωσις of which word Trenchard says that it signifies a 'deeper and more intimate knowledge and acquaintance'* than the word in the simplex. This bears out the feature of a mystery that it is something which is now revealed. Paul says it is something he wishes them to know, and he uses the intensive word, a real, full knowledge. This full knowledge, then, is something which every Christian does not have. This suggests that the mystery belongs, not to the fundamental truths of Christianity, the elements of the Gospel concerning Christ, but rather to the deeper things of the faith.

In the *second* place, there is the definite suggestion that this mystery is connected with that mentioned in 1:26, 27. If the thought of the passage be followed through, it is evident that there is a close connection. In chapter one, Paul declares that God has made known the mystery, 'Christ in you, the hope of glory'. Paul then says that he proclaims Christ to present every man perfect in Christ. In this ministry he labours,

* *Synonyms of the New Testament*, p. 274.

and then follows his appeal to them to realize how much he labours for them, in order that they might know the mystery. The progress of thought is so close that there seems to be good grounds for thinking that Paul has the same mystery in mind. The thought of the readers getting to know the mystery is present in both verses.

A *third* suggestion comes from verse three of the second chapter. The verse is an incomplete sentence, 'in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge'. The relative 'ὃ most naturally refers to Christ. Some would refer it to the mystery (Alford, Eadie), but as Beet remarks, 'To refer it to the more distant word "mystery" would be an impossible leap over the word "Christ", and over the important implied assertion that He is "the mystery of God". And it would make the word "hidden" almost meaningless: for all mysteries are hidden.*' Therefore, with many of the expositors we understand the antecedent to be Christ. It is in Him that all treasures are hidden.

In what sense are the treasures hidden? Some might think that this is a contradiction to the statement that a mystery is that which has been hidden, but is now revealed. The explanation for this paradox is well stated in the International Standard Bible Encyclopedia. In the article on mysteries, it is pointed out that there are two ways in which Scripture mysteries are hidden. They are hidden from the natural man, the one outside the kingdom, and they are also hidden from the Christian who is in the elementary stage, the carnal Christian. Yet there are passages which speak of the truths being freely revealed to all. "The explanation is that the communication is limited, not by any secrecy in the gospel message itself or any reserve on the part of the speaker, but by the receptive capacity of the hearer. In the case of the carnally-minded, moral obtuseness or worldliness makes them blind to the light which shines on them. In the case of the "babe of Christ", the apparent reserve is due merely to the pedagogical principle of adapting the teaching to the progressive receptivity

* *Op. cit.*, p. 171.

of the disciple'.* Thus the mystery is hidden in Christ, for He is that mystery. All the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hid in Him. Nevertheless, those who are taught by the Spirit have these treasures revealed to them, and to them the mystery is revealed.

Yet even to these there is an element which still is beyond knowledge. No finite man can plumb to the depths of the mystery of God. 'Then, too, as in the most simple things, there may be something inexplicable, so in the doctrines of Revelation—plainly stated and easily comprehended—there may be great depths unsounded'¹.

This discussion must be concluded, and yet we seem not to have come to a conclusion. What is the mystery of God, even Christ? Is it not Christ as the fulness of the Godhead, with all the treasures of wisdom and grace for His people? Is the apostle confined in his conception of Christ as the mystery here? Is not the richness and fulness in the person of our Lord such that Paul's thought must of necessity encompass the wealth of blessing which the indwelling person of Christ brings to the believing heart? Does not the language suggest that Christ in His fulness progressively unfolding to the Christian is the sacred secret which is withheld from the unregenerate but which shines upon the trusting soul? We are constrained to answer affirmatively.

To conclude, we can do no better than to quote the inspiring words of Bishop Moule: 'He is the Father's glorious Casket, in which are shut all the mysteries and treasures of grace, planned and wrought by the eternal Mind, and so "hidden" in Him that, outside Him, "eye hath not seen them, nor have they entered into the heart of man to conceive"; aye, and even in Him they are hidden still, veiled in their own glory, as to our completed knowledge. JESUS CHRIST—anyone could read the syllables, who knew the alphabet. Anyone could learn the facts of the history. Anyone, possessed of a mind, could apprehend the proof of them as facts, the Resurrection from the garden-tomb

* *I.S.B.E.*, Vol. 3, p. 2105.

¹ J. N. H. Peters, *Theocratic Kingdom*, pp. 141, 142.

included. Yet Christ remained a Secret, till men had come to Him, and had asked to enter in, and had entered in believing. Then He was revealed. Seen from within, He shone from all sides upon the wondering sinner's soul, the Secret of God—disclosed. He proved Himself then the Answer of the Eternal to the questions of the agonized conscience, of the weary heart, of the broken will, of the man "who through fear of death was all his lifetime subject to bondage". "I know whom I have believed"'.*

NEW TESTAMENT WORD STUDIES

W. WILCOX

KATARTIZŌ = 'to perfect'

This word is variously translated in our versions: 'to send', 'restore' 'perfect', 'complete', etc. There is another word, *teleioō*, meaning 'to bring to completion, or maturity', and so to 'perfect', but this is different, in that *katartizō* really means 'to make fit, sound, able to do the work'. Wuest in commenting on 1 Pet. 5:10, says 'it means to fit or join together.' The predominating idea in the word is adjustment, the putting of parts into right relationship and connection with one another. Biggs in his comment on the same passage says: 'Lightfoot notes that *katartizō* is used as a surgical term for setting a broken bone'. The word is used in Matt. 4:21 and Mark 1:19 of *mending* nets, and in Gal. 6:1 of *restoring* an erring brother to the right way wherein his powers may be so adjusted to serve useful ends. Westcott says, 'the idea is of the perfect and harmonious development of every power for active service in due relation to other powers'.

Of the many passages where this word is used in the New Testament we can but consider a few in this article, but it will repay the student to note, by means of a Greek Concordance, other passages where the word is used.

* *Colossian Studies*, pp. 127, 134.