



Bible Student's Notebook™

The Herald of His Grace

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

Volume 39
Issue 965

The Mystery Hid from Ages and Generations

A Study of Colossians 1:25-27

(Originally Published in 1939)

Part 1

“Before the Overthrow of the World”

by — J. Eustace Mills

Whereof I am made a minister, according to the Dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfil the Word of God; even the Mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to His saints, to whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this Mystery (Colossians 1:25-27).

Our themes here will be taken from Colossians 1:25-27. The plan of this work will become evident as it is read: each chapter has been designed to pave the way for the one that follows, thus only by reading the chapters consecutively will their purpose be properly appreciated.

As this truth is seen we will be led increasingly into the fuller knowledge of God, and of His Son, our exalted Head, the Lord Jesus Christ.

That which had “*been hid in God*” “*from the beginning of the world*” (Ephesians 3:8-9) and had “*been hid from ages and from generations*” (Colossians 1:25-26) until it was then revealed to the apostle Paul, could **not** have been the subject of any Old Testament prophecy.

Moreover, that which had been “*hid in God*,” and “*hid from other generations*,” very obviously could **not** have formed part of Paul’s testimony during the time when his words were confined to “*none other*

things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come” (Acts 26:22).¹

The truth revealed under the title of “*The Mystery*”² must therefore, of necessity, *be something new and unforeseen* in relation to the things contained in Mo-

(continued on page 8139)

1. [Editor:] For more information see the book, – [None Other Things](#), Charles Welch (on the [order form](#) under “Welch.”)
2. [Editor:] I.e., “*The Secret*” of Ephesians and Colossians. For a look at the uniqueness of these letters of Paul, see, – [Ephesians and Colossians: Scripture for the Present Administration](#), Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr., Bible Student’s Press (on the [order form](#) under “Pilkington.”)

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Bible Student's Notebook™

Paul Our Guide – Christ Our Goal

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Scripture education in a weekly format!

This free electronic publication is dedicated to:

- the absolute sovereignty and deity of God (Romans 11:36);
- the proclamation of the riches of God's abundant, exceeding grace (Romans 5:20; 11:6; Ephesians 1:7);
- the affirmation that God will save all through the death, burial and resurrection of Christ (I Timothy 2:3, 4; 4:10; Titus 2:11);
- the universality of death and resurrection (I Corinthians 15:21);
- the unique gospel of Paul – which he calls "my gospel" (Romans 2:16; 16:25; II Timothy 2:8; I Corinthians 15:1-4; Acts 13-28; Acts 20:24);
- the "preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret in ages past" (Romans 16:25);
- the epistles of the present Secret Administration being Ephesians & Colossians (Ephesians 3:2, 9; Colossians 1:25);
- true freedom and liberty apart from law (Galatians 5:1);
- the organic nature of the One Body (Ephesians 4:16);
- the Secret Administration, being the operational revelation for today (Ephesians 3:9);
- the unprophesied, Celestial hope and calling of the One Body (Colossians 3:4);
- the distinct message and ministry of Paul, the apostle to the nations (Ephesians 3:1-3);
- the importance of receiving all whom Christ has received (Romans 14-15);
- the recovery of rich Biblical truth that has too long remained hidden under the veils of traditionalism, prejudice, misunderstanding and fear (Mark 7:7, 13);
- the completeness of the believer in Christ (Colossians 2:10), with:
 - total freedom from sins (Colossians 1:14);

- union in His death, burial and resurrection and ascended seated position among the celestials (Romans 6; Ephesians 2:6);
- adult sonship position (Ephesians 1:5).

This publication is the product of humble efforts of ordinary men intended to stimulate the earnest study of Scripture. We do not claim infallibility for the contents of this publication; thus they are not meant to imply finality on any subject discussed, or that further research would not add further light from the Word of God. God's storehouse of truth is inexhaustible, so draw on its wealth by prayerful study. Our readers are asked to be as the Bereans and search the Scriptures (Acts 17:10-11; I Thessalonians 5:21).

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

We are always open for discussion, but never for disputation. – André Sneidar

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ses and the prophets and to the earlier ministry of Paul.

This Mystery is clearly *some further light* of truth that was revealed only through Paul in his later epistles. The words “to fulfil” in Colossians 1:25 are rendered in the *Englishman’s Greek New Testament* “to complete.” The same word appears in 2:10, “And ye are complete in Him”; and in 4:12, “that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.” Substituting this alternative rendering, Colossians 1:25-26 would read:

*Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to **complete the Word of God**; even the Mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to His saints.*

This “Mystery” completed the Word of God, and therefore it is not to be expected that any further truth will be revealed, for nothing can be added to that which is complete.

“The Mystery” that was revealed to Paul the prisoner was the last and final truth to be made known, and yet it had precedence in respect of *time* to all other purposes. This “Mystery” is distinguished from other mysteries revealed earlier, in that it has to do with purposes formulated “before the overthrow of the world.” A comparison with the “mysteries of the kingdom” in Matthew 13 will exemplify this difference:

*I will open my mouth in parables: I will utter things which have been kept secret **from the overthrow of the world** (Matthew 13:35).*

*According as He hath chosen us in Him **before the overthrow of the world** (Ephesians 1:4).*

There are good reasons for rendering the *King James Version’s* “foundation of the world” as “**overthrow of the world**”;³ but for our present purpose the essential thing is to notice two words, the meanings of which are indisputable: “from” and “before.”

Mysteries concerning purposes kept secret “**from the overthrow of the world**” cannot obviously be the same as a purpose that was “**before the overthrow of the world.**” This being so, the respective purposes should be distinguished in order that the distinctive character of “the Mystery” may be better appreciated.

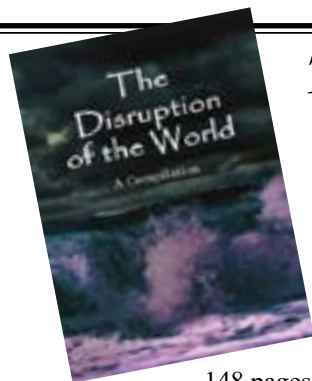
The purposes that are said to be “from” have to do with what is spoken of in Matthew as “the kingdom.”

*Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit **the kingdom** prepared for you **from the overthrow of the world** (Matthew 25:34).*

This stands in contrast to that which was “before the overthrow,” which is connected with (1) Christ and (2) with those who are blessed according to the purpose of “the Mystery” committed to Paul when he was in bonds at Rome.

Let us first take notice of the purposes concerning Christ “before the overthrow of the world,” giving notice to two Greek words: *agapaō*⁴ and *amōmos*.⁵

3. [Editor:] For more information see, – [The Disruption of the World: A Compilation](#), Bible Student’s Press (see [order form](#) under “Compilations”).
4. [Editor:] SEC G25.
5. [Editor:] SEC G299.



The Disruption of the World

A Compilation

A broad study of the crucial, but all-too-often overlooked teaching of Scripture of the events between Genesis 1:1 and Genesis 1:2. Sometimes known as “The Gap,” The Overthrow,” or “The Disruption,” this key event in God’s ages lays the important foundation for the ministry of Paul, the Apostle.

This critical compilation of 13 chapters from 8 authors will be an essential part of a Bible student’s library. Authors include: E.W. Bullinger, A.E. Knoch, Edward Clayton and John Essex.

148 pages

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Father ... Thou lovest [agapaō] Me **before the overthrow of the world** (John 17:24).

But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish [amōmos] and without spot: Who verily was foreordained **before the overthrow of the world**, but was manifest in these last times for you (I Peter 1:19-20).

Now consider those who are blessed according to the purpose of "the Mystery" committed to Paul, as found in Ephesians, noting once again these two Greek words.

According as He hath chosen us in Him **before the overthrow of the world**, that we should be holy and without blame [amōmos] before Him in love [agapē]⁶ (Ephesians 1:4).

The two things spoken concerning Christ "before the overthrow of the world" – agapaō and amōmos – are combined in Ephesians 1:4 to speak of those who were chosen in Him at that time; such is the wonder of the purpose of "the Mystery" that completed the Word of God.

The "mysteries of the Kingdom" were an integral part, the esoteric part, of the purposes of Israel's Kingdom; but "the Mystery" committed to Paul was a purpose entirely in itself, that had its origin in the will of God "before the foundation of the world."

We have just quoted Ephesians 1. This chapter is the first in the canon of Scripture to make known this choice of a specific company of the redeemed, **before the foundation of the world**, who are destined to be blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places.

Edited & Abridged

(to be continued)

[Editor:] See Mills' other material in the *Bible Student's Notebook*:

- "The Mystery of this Dispensation," BSN 62;
- "The New Covenant," part 1: [BSN 701](#); part 2: [BSN 725](#); part 3: [BSN 726](#);
- "Acts 28:28, Before and After," [BSN 916](#);
- "The Only Source of Truth," (Excerpt) Tidbits of Truth #43, [BSN 931](#)

TOPICS:

Major: Colossians (1:25-27); Disruption; Disruption, Before and From; Mystery

Minor: Completed Scripture; Paul

6. [Editor:] SEC G26, "From G25."



"None Other Things"

by — Charles H. Welch (1880-1967)

This is a study of Acts 26:22, "Saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come." It demonstrates that Paul had two ministries and that the end of his first ministry and the beginning of his second was Acts 28.

84 pages

See [order form](#) under "Welch."



Ephesians & Colossians

Scripture for the Present Administration

by — Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

Ephesians and Colossians are the present truth for the current dispensation. Ephesians introduces the Secret Administration in which we live, while Colossians, its companion epistle, completes the Word of God. There are no other Secret Administration letters beyond Ephesians and Colossians.

76 pages (2nd edition)

See [order form](#) under "Clyde Pilkington."

What God Is Not

Bible Student's Courses

Course 1: GOD / Unit 1 - An Introduction / Lesson 4 - What God Is Not

by — Mark D. Vogt

When talking about our heavenly Father it is wise and prudent to dwell on who He is and what He is doing. But let us not forget to spend some time on what He is *not*.

Father is the one being in this universe that has been the most maligned and disrespected of all beings. Realizing that this is all in His council, purpose and foreknowledge, nevertheless it behooves us to think about this for a time.

While God works in the *absolute*, we have our being and activity in the *relative*. We change all the time, but God does not. Malachi 3:6 says that God changes not. He does not change who He *is*. His essence certainly doesn't change, nor do His attributes. What changes are His dealings with mankind over time. God is not arbitrary and does not do things on a whim, as we are prone to do, or as some religionists understand their god to be doing.

Religion's many gods all require man to do something to placate the particular deity that they worship. Many times, in the minds of the adherents of a particular religion, their god can be finicky and arbitrary, with the worshippers never knowing if they have done enough or said the correct thing to avoid the displeasure of their god. This is the carrot and stick approach that religious systems employ. Religion can't allow their worshippers to get too comfortable, or horror of horrors, give them any sense of liberty, freedom or peace – for if they did this, where would their control over the worshippers go? Therefore, the religious system holds out the idea of liberty or peace only if the adherents would perform for their god, but unfortunately, there is never enough that can be done to accomplish this task.

Picture, if you will, the little wheel that the pet gerbil



runs on in its cage. It runs and runs and never gets anywhere. This is the picture of religionists and their adherents.

The God of the universe and of the Scriptures never worked this way. Even when He did institute a performance system (the Mosaic Law) it was given to Israel, His chosen people, the purpose of which was to demonstrate to them that they could not perform in their flesh to His standard. God was teaching them simply just to rely on Him and Him alone for their welfare.

Much of religion “persuades” their followers to give money to the church on the pretext that their contributions will help with the “eternal destiny” of departed loved ones or even themselves as the case may be. This is pure extortion of vulnerable and sometimes terrified people. This is not how the God of Scripture operates. God is not in the business of terrifying people in order to scare them into obedience or to have them say or do the “right” thing. God has programed each of us to fail and to fall short, and therefore in time (His time) all will come to see that He is our “*All in all*.”

Numbers 23:19 tells us that,

God is not a man that He should lie.

Man lies and religious systems are headed by men who lie. Sometimes they are complicit in their lies and sometimes they lie out of sheer ignorance. Nevertheless, they lie by substituting manmade doctrines and teachings for the sure Word of God.

Typical of this were the Pharisees during the earthly ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ. In Matthew 23:27 Jesus accuses the Pharisees of being “*whited sepulchers*.” It looks great on the outside; but within lies

(see *WHAT GOD IS NOT*, last page)

God Is Not the God of Calvinism

Bible Student's Courses

Course 1: GOD / Unit 1 - An Introduction / Lesson 5 - God Is *Not* the God of Calvinism

by — Mark D. Vogt

John Calvin (1509-1564) was a contemporary of Martin Luther (1483-1546) and was part of the reformation movement hundreds of years ago. He is the founder of the false doctrine known as Calvinism, of which a portion of Christianity adheres to today. It is a harsh and inflexible teaching that says that God has elected a limited number of people to be saved, and equally so the rest of humanity to be lost or doomed to the imaginary place of eternal conscious torment called "hell."

The tenets of Calvinism are fixed in the minds of people by what is a mnemonic device. This device is familiar to some as "TULIP".

T stands for *Total Depravity* of man;
U stands for *Unconditional Election*;
L stands for *Limited Atonement*;
I stands for *Irresistible Grace*;
P stands for *Perseverance of the Saints*.

It bears noting that in Calvin's latter years he might have softened on the severity of some of his points of "TULIP". Nevertheless, the question should be asked, "Is TULIP a true representation of the God of the Scriptures"?

Total Depravity of mankind is the first tenet of Calvin's five points. In contemporary thought depravity means committing sin that is so heinous that a civilized society is repulsed by it and that cultured people would never commit such sins.

In the scriptural sense, the idea of depravity means that the individual, all individuals, cannot meet God's standard (Romans 3:10-12, :23) and are wholly unable to receive the things of God by themselves. This does not mean that humans cannot do good and beneficial things for others. They can, but nobody

seeks after God on their own (Romans 3:11). God seeks the individual.

Depending on how the *T*, *U*, *I* and *P* points of Calvinism are defined, Scriptures may be seen to be in harmony with them. Yet sadly, the context of the *U*, *I* and *P* in Calvin's world was applicable only to the elected ones, or those God chose for salvation, while all the rest of humanity were chosen for destruction in eternal conscious torment.

Salvation is of God completely and man has no part in it whatsoever. Where Calvin seriously diverges from the Scriptures is in the truth that God will save *all* mankind, without exception, in His own time.

God is *not* limited by Calvinism's doctrine of Limited Atonement. God doesn't just cover up sin (that is what "atonement" means). He takes it away, and not only for believers during this age, but for all mankind, for all time.

Israelites under the Mosaic Law received atonement for their sins when they brought a sacrifice to the priest. When they sinned again, they had to bring another sacrifice to get atonement for that sin. As you can see, that could get quite tiresome over time.

Two thousand years ago God's Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, was sacrificed on Calvary to take away sin once and for all. There is no longer a necessity for a sacrifice to cover sin, because it has been taken away by the one sacrifice. God has conciliated the world to Himself because of this (II Corinthians 5:18-19; Colossians 1:20; I Timothy 4:9-10, *CLV*).

God is not a Calvinist. He is not mean or vindictive,
(see CALVINISM, last page)

God Is Not the God of Arminianism

Bible Student's Courses

Course 1: GOD / Unit 1 - An Introduction / Lesson 6 - God Is Not the God of Arminianism

by — Mark D. Vogt

The Dutch theologian Jacobus Arminius (1560-1609) came on the scene a generation after John Calvin, whose views contrasted with Calvin to a large degree. There were several points (five to be exact) which ran counter to Calvin. For brevity's sake his position will not be enumerated in its entirety. What he believed, in a nutshell, was that God wants to save all mankind but He simply can't. He wants to and, oh does He want to, but He can't. Provision was made for all mankind, but not all people will be able to take advantage of the opportunity that has been provided to them.

In the Arminian system God is somewhat of an observer rather than being proactive in His plan and purpose. Grace can be resisted and is not completely efficient. Those who are saved may be able to resist temptation, but if not, may therefore be lost. In other words they can lose their salvation, hence, no eternal security.

In this system God is relatively weak, and He can't do what He would like to because of an apparent inability to accomplish what He wants. He wants to accomplish things, but He can't. He is bound by the individual will of people who can resist Him or not.

The scope of this lesson cannot go into detail concerning this doctrine, but suffice it to say that God is viewed as weak and impotent. He is a weakling of a god who can't do what He says He wants to do.

Yet, I Timothy 4:9-10 tells us that God is the Savior of all mankind. I Timothy 2:4 states that God wills that all mankind be saved and come into a realization of the truth. This is clear and does not need to be debated. These verses cannot be any plainer.

Problems arise when theologians get ahold of the Scriptures and begin to tell us what the Bible should

have said if only they were the ones writing it. Nobody today is aware of the opinions and beliefs of those around Arminius or Calvin, or what pressures they were under, or more so, what their motivations were in formulating these doctrines and teachings.

In formulating these doctrines, both Arminius and Calvin did a great disservice to the reputation of God Himself by painting a picture of God as being either worse than the worst of the characters and despots who have come on the pages of history (Calvinism), or who is too weak and impotent to be able to do what He really wants to do (Arminianism). Apparently, few people read such verses as Isaiah 46:9-10. God will do all His desire and none can stop Him or waylay His plans. He is God, don't you know.

God is operating *all* in accord with the counsel of His will (Ephesians 1:11-12). He is operating all. Not just some things, or most things, but all things. The most comprehensive verse in God's Word is found in Romans 11:36.

Seeing that out of Him and through Him and for Him is all.

The issue then is whether people believe this. The reality and the absolute truth is that God is the One Who gives individuals faith (Romans 12:3; Ephesians 2:8-9; Philippians 1:29). While Calvin and Arminius came up with somewhat opposite views on God's provision for salvation, both were given what faith and knowledge they had by God Himself; and if God is maligned by these doctrines it is only because He wants it that way for His purposes and His alone. It is not as if God's truth is somehow taking the best of both systems, but it is the reality that both men had some light and understanding, and in the process

(see *ARMINIANISM*, last page)

WHAT GOD IS NOT (continued from page 8141)

hypocrisy, lies and evil surmisings. He goes so far as to liken it to dead men's bones. Jesus also condemned them for holding their traditions above the word of God (Mark 7:7-9). This is not the God of Scripture, the God who lovingly guides His whole creation according to His Logos or Masterplan. The God of the

universe does not try to terrorize people into doing His bidding. He lovingly works His plan for His glory and for our benefit, for ALL of humanity's benefit, not just the presently called ones. **BSN**

TOPICS:

Major: God;
Minor: Religion; Tradition

CALVINISM (continued from page 8142)

nor does He arbitrarily pick some for salvation and others to be lost simply for being born in the wrong part of the world where God's love is not made known, or not being in a place to hear the gospel, or any number of things that would automatically "disqualify" one from being "picked" by God for salvation. The cruelty of Calvinism is reflected in the attitude of a father who, when asked if one of his children were not elected to salvation what would he think? His reply, "praise God."

No! God has a Masterplan, or Logos, and He is working His plan to perfection, and that plan is all for His glory and for the benefit of *all* of mankind. God, contrary to the evil doctrine of Calvinism, will include all of creation, including all of humanity in His wonderful plan to eradicate sin and evil from His universe for all time. To God be the glory. **BSN**

TOPICS:

Major: Calvinism; God
Minor: Salvation of All

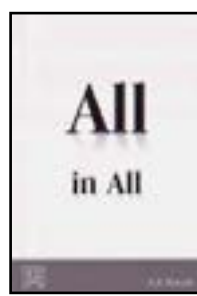
ARMINIANISM (continued from page 8143)

formulated these teachings that in total do not really reflect the plain truth of God's Word. Nevertheless, some knowledge (not much) and understanding can be found in each teaching if only used for contrast.

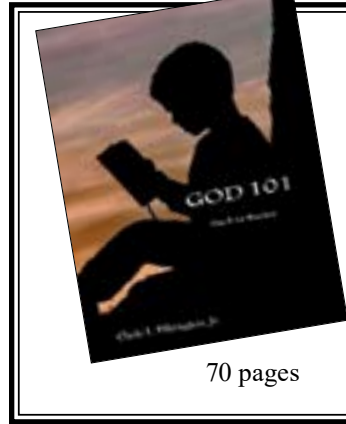
The bottom line is that, while Calvinism has a god who *could* save all, but is *unwilling* to do so, and Arminianism has a god who *wants* to save all, but is *unable* to do so, the true GOD of Scripture is both willing and able to save all, and will accomplish His grand purpose without any interference. **BSN**

TOPICS:

Major: Arminianism; God
Minor: Salvation of All



ALL in All: The Goal of the Universe
by — A.E. Knoch (1874-1965)
(#6269) 219 pages
(See [order form](#) under "Knoch.")
This publication is a compilation of the writings of A.E. Knoch on human destiny. The author examines three major theories on this topic current among students of Scripture. The striking phrase "All in all," which pertains to the vivification of all mankind in I Corinthians 15:28 and relates to the reconciliation of the entire intelligent creation in Ephesians 1:23, is discussed at length. Two extensive appendices are included, exploring the usage of the terms "eon" and "eonian" in the Scriptures.



God 101: Back to Basics

by — Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

Sadly, there are some who would teach of a god who somehow does not know all things, is not all powerful, is not sovereign, and is always changing his mind. This may be a god of religion, but it is not the God of Scripture. This work goes back to the basics, back to a scriptural foundation of the True and Living God.

See [order form](#) under "Clyde Pilkington."