

# The Divine Programme of The World's History Chapter VII. The Christian Programme – Part III.



Continued from [Chapter VII. The Christian Programme – Part II.](#)

In his address to the Jews on the occasion of the healing of the lame man at the Beautiful gate of the temple, after showing them what they had done in rejecting Christ,—that they had “denied the Holy One, and the just, and killed the Prince of life,”—Peter re-echoes the Lord’s statement about His departure and its limits, saying, “Whom the heaven must receive until *the times of restitution of all things*, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all the holy prophets since the world began,”—that is, until the dawn of the glorious kingdom of God on earth at the second advent. Peter here places the *same limit* to the present “kingdom of heaven” which our Lord Himself had indicated. He says Christ is gone from earth—heaven had received Him for a time; but it is *for a time only*; and when Israel repents, His absence will terminate,—He will return, and bring “times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord.” Both these expressions, “times of refreshing” and “times of restitution of all things,” refer to *the yet future kingdom of God on earth*,—the kingdom predicted by David and by Daniel, and expected by Israel, and for the coming of which Christ bade us pray. The apostle here, like his Master, interposes *between the time then present and the advent of that kingdom* an age during which, the Jews having disowned Christ, the heavens receive Him; that is, this present time of His absence, in which those who have never seen Him yet *believe* in Him, and are saved.

**Note:** We can see here the influence of John Nelson Darby’s Dispensationalism in the proceeding paragraph. Rev. Guinness seems to be making a distinction between the “kingdom of heaven” and the “kingdom of God.” There is *no* such distinction! There’s no difference between them! God has only one Kingdom because He has only *one* people, the *Ecclesia*, the Called-Out-Ones, the Church! The phrase, “Kingdom of Heaven” is found 32 times in 31 verses in Matthew’s Gospel, but that phrase is found *only* in Matthew’s Gospel and none of the other three Gospels. The other three say “kingdom of God” instead of “kingdom of heaven.” The reason for that is that Matthew wrote his Gospel to the *Jews* who don’t like to use the word “God”. The “kingdom of God” is *also* found Matthew’s Gospel, but

only in five verses. This could be the reason why Darby thought there was a difference between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of heaven.

A primary proof from Scripture that the "kingdom of heaven" and the "kingdom of God" mean the same thing is:

Matthew 3:2 And saying, Repent ye: for the **kingdom of heaven** is at hand.

Mark 1:15 And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the **kingdom of God** is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel.

These two verses from two different Gospels of the same discourse are rock-solid proof that the "kingdom of God" is synonymous with the "kingdom of heaven." Mark wrote his Gospel to the Romans and saying the word "God" to them was not a problem.

Darby also made a distinction between the Church and Israel, but there is *no such distinction*. God's people have always been *only* those of faith.

It seems to me the reason why false interpretations of God's Word occur in the Church is because preachers latch on to pet doctrines without comparing the Scriptures that support their doctrines with other Scriptures. For example, if you compare Matthew chapter 24 with Luke chapter 21, you will see the "great tribulation" of Matthew 24:21 is called "days of vengeance" in Luke 21:22. Days of vengeance upon whom? Upon the Jesus Christ-rejecting Jews who perished during the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple by the Roman army in 70 A.D. The great tribulation of Matthew 24 is therefore fulfilled prophecy and not a future event. Why would, therefore, preachers constantly talk about a *future* "great tribulation" and even try to specify its length as either 7 years or 3.5 years? It's because of their false interpretation of the 70th Week of Daniel in Daniel 9:27! That's not to say we shouldn't expect any future tribulation. I think Christians have already suffered *plenty* of tribulation and persecution over the past 2000 years, and some continue to suffer it *to this very day* in certain Muslim nations.

The Book of Acts traces the story of apostolic witness to Christ in Jerusalem and in Judea, in Samaria and to the uttermost parts of the earth, and shows that this was the way in which historically it spread. In these ever-widening circles the gospel was preached when the members of the Church of Jerusalem were "all scattered abroad" by persecution. Samaria received the word with joy; so did the eunuch of Candace, an Ethiopian, who was the first-fruits of Africa unto God. Then Saul of Tarsus, a Jew of the Western dispersion, was converted. Then Cornelius, the Roman centurion, and his household received the gospel and the effusion of the Holy Ghost, to the utter astonishment of the Jews who were with Peter, and to the perplexity and disturbance of the Church in Jerusalem, who even "contended" with Peter about it, so little had Christ's disciples at that time realized that the field was the world! The

rehearsal of Peter's vision, however, brought them to consent, though with surprise, to this new providence, saying, "Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life."

Gospel preaching had at first been deliberately addressed to "none but unto the Jews only"; (Acts xi. 19) but some of the early disciples were men of Cyprus and Cyrene, Jews belonging to the great Western dispersion. On their return from Jerusalem, they began, we read, "to speak unto the Grecians also, preaching the Lord Jesus; and a great number believed and turned to the Lord." Then afterwards Paul, who had from his conversion been designated as the apostle of the Gentiles (Acts ix. 15; xxvi. 17; Rom. xv. 16), went forth with Barnabas or with Silas on his wide and lifelong mission to the nations. Antioch, Seleucia, Cyprus, Pamphylia, and Pisidia received the gospel, the Jews constantly opposing and hindering, until at last Paul formally abandoned them, saying, "It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles. For so hath the Lord commanded us."

By special providences the great apostle is led to cross from Asia to Europe, when Thracia, Macedonia, and Achaia, philosophic Athens, luxurious Corinth, and at last imperial Rome, also received the word. It had then extended from the Jewish metropolis to the metropolis of the vast Gentile world. Thus, under the guidance of the Holy Ghost, it was practically proved that the field was the world, and the sphere of the new dispensation universal.

*But to Paul especially was granted very clear light on the relation of this new Gentile age to the past and to the future of Judaism, and his dispensational programme is peculiarly distinct. He intensely loved his people, and highly appreciated their peculiar privileges. But he recognised frankly in his letter to the Romans that as a nation they had "stumbled," that Christ had been to them "a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence," that they had proved themselves to be "a disobedient and gainsaying people." He announced that though God had not cast them away for ever, they had for the time fallen, and been "broken off" as branches from the olive tree of promise, because of their unbelief, and been made an illustration of "the severity of God." But that, on the other hand, though blindness had befallen the nation as such, there was even then "a remnant according to the election of grace," and that ultimately (if they abode not still in unbelief) they would be grafted again into their own olive tree, clearly predicting "so all Israel shall be saved." He foretells also that this crisis of their recovery would be the riches of the world at large, and like "life from the dead" to mankind in general. If the blessing that had come to the Gentiles through their fall was great, that which should result from their restoration would be far greater.(Rom. xi.)*

**Note:** Please see a deeper explanation of "[And so all Israel shall be saved](#)" on this website.

In the meantime, he says that through their fall *salvation* had come to the

Gentiles. Blindness in part had happened to Israel, *until the fulness of the Gentiles should be come in*. The interval of Jewish rejection was to be filled up with a gathering out of a Gentile Church. Is not this revelation harmonious with what Christ had previously intimated in His parable of the vineyard taken from the wicked husbandmen and given to others, and is not the limit which He fixed in Luke xxi. again laid down here? He said, "until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled," and Paul says, "until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in." Similarly, in his letter to the Corinthians, Paul says that a veil is on the heart of Israel when Moses is read, and that only when their heart shall turn to the Lord will that veil, or blindness, be removed. Israel's repentance is the antecedent to the earthly kingdom of God promised to them, and to the world, and the salvation of a Gentile Church is the antecedent to Israel's repentance. This is Paul's programme, and it agrees with the outline of Christ.

## II. THE SECOND DISTINGUISHING FEATURE OF THE APOSTOLIC PROGRAMME OF THE FUTURE IS THE FOREVIEW OF THE TRUE CHURCH AS GIVEN BY PAUL, AND BY PAUL ONLY.

It is an enlargement or development of our Lord's final and all-important revelation, that the Holy Spirit of God would in future dwell in and abide with the disciples. The further unfolding of this great subject was committed, not to Peter, James, or John, who had been with Christ in His mission to Israel, and whose ministry was mostly confined to the Jews, but to the one who knew Him only in His glory, and who was in a special sense the founder of the Church among the Gentiles.

It is important to note that St. Paul distinctly and repeatedly claims to have received a *special* ministry, to have been commissioned to reveal what had previously been concealed from the beginning of the world, No assertions could be more emphatic than his *reiterated* declarations on this point. There is nothing like them in the Bible; no other apostle uses language at all similar. Paul, we learn, was chosen by God to be the channel through which He would communicate to men—a new conception—the revelation of a *new and quite peculiar relationship to Himself*. He was the messenger through whom a new calling or "vocation" was expounded. This plainly stated fact is not so generally understood as it should be, though ignorance or confusion on the point, a non-recognition of the absolute *novelty*—at the time it was given—of this Pauline revelation, leads to many and most serious mistakes as regards the revealed purposes of God, as we will presently show.

Meantime, let us gather from the following sentences *what the new revelation was*, and let us also note the insistence of the apostle as to the fact that it was *new*. "God," he says, "BY REVELATION MADE KNOWN UNTO ME *the mystery which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men*, as it is now revealed unto His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ by the gospel: whereof I was made a minister, . . . to make all men see what is the fellowship of the *mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God*, who created all things by Jesus Christ: to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by *the Church* the manifold wisdom of God" (Eph. iii, 3-10).

In his letter to the Colossians, Paul says he was made a minister of the gospel of Christ *"for his body's sake, which is the Church: whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfil"* (or fully to preach) *"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 among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory"* (Col. i, 24-27).

Again, in closing his long letter to the Romans, he says: *"Now to Him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, . . . the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began but now is made manifest"* . . . (Rom. xvi. 25, 26).

These sentences, addressed respectively to the Ephesians, Colossians, and Romans, all three *Gentile Churches*, sufficiently attest:—

1. That there was a special element in Paul's Gospel which was of a new and additional character.
2. That this new revelation had been by God *kept secret* until that time; it was a mystery *hidden* from all previous ages and generations, something entirely new.
3. That it is something, therefore, which we cannot find either in the prophets of the Old Testament, or in the Gospels, or in the teachings of the other apostles,—something we must learn from Paul alone, to whom, in the Divine wisdom, a stewardship of this "mystery" was committed, so that through him it was, for the first time, "manifested," or revealed.

Let us observe, first, this is a striking instance of *progressive revelation*. We have here the unquestionable assertion of a *principle* which is of supreme importance to a correct understanding of the Scriptures. For thousands of years God had been revealing His will and His purposes ever more and more clearly to mankind. He had but lately spoken by His own Son, and since then by His Spirit in Peter and John, Philip and Stephen, James and Jude. Yet here was a *new* and most important revelation committed to Paul.

What should we learn from this fact? The duty of not attempting to limit later prophecies by earlier, of not doubting a Divine revelation because it is given subsequently to others and contains additional matter, and especially of not making confusion by saying, *"This new thing is the same as the old."* The ascended Saviour committed to Paul something He had not committed to the twelve, something *not to be found* either in the Gospels or in the Old Testament, something which had been "a mystery" *in all previous ages and generations*.

What then was this new revelation, which Paul calls "my gospel," and says he was specially commissioned to preach among the Gentiles?

*It was that of the Church,—it was the revelation that a vital, spiritual, organic union existed between the ascended Saviour and all His believing*

*people, whether Jew or Gentile, so that they together formed ONE BODY, OF WHICH HE WAS THE LIVING HEAD.*

Was not this revelation peculiar to Paul? Can the doctrine be found anywhere else save in *his* Epistles? This conception of *one body* composed of the God-man, Jesus Christ, and redeemed men and women, whether Jew or Gentile, can nowhere else be found. Paul only presents it, but he does so constantly. He dwells much on its varied, deeply important, present, practical consequences, and traces it also to its glorious results in the future.

How had he learned this great truth? The very circumstances of his conversion had been a revelation of it! The position of Christ at the time, the glory from amid which He had called the zealous Pharisee breathing out threatenings and slaughter, the question which he had addressed to him,— all these were in themselves an unveiling of the mystery. For the glorified Christ had identified Himself with His suffering saints on earth, as the head with the members of the body. He had said to Saul of Tarsus, who had been persecuting men and women on earth: “Why persecutest thou ME?” That was a revelation of *oneness*. And He had then sent the new apostle to bear His name before “*the Gentiles and kings, and children of Israel,*” not *excluding* the latter, but giving them no pre-eminence. How *natural* then for Paul to understand and teach first that the members of the Church are vitally connected with the risen Christ, and that Jews and Gentiles are alike called to fellowship with Him, and with each other in Him, A more formal and explicit revelation may have been and probably was made to Paul on the subject, though no particulars of it are recorded. But the circumstances of his call to the apostolate were in themselves almost sufficient.

We must now consider a little more fully what this Pauline doctrine of the Church was,—what it involved. “The Church, which is HIS BODY, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all.” What does this mean? How was it a new revelation?

To answer these questions we must ask another—What is a body? It is an organized whole, made up of parts and members? It is the temple of a spirit—a living temple; it is the visible dwelling of the invisible soul, the material house of the immaterial mind; it is an organic unity, not a mere collection of separate individuals, like a nation or other community. The Church is a Spirit-born and Spirit-governed *body*, whose Head is a risen and exalted Saviour, whose very life is Christ; a body to every member of which He says, “Because I live, ye shall live also.” It is a body controlled by internal spiritual intelligence and vitality, not by external laws and regulations merely; it is a community in which nothing is lacking and nothing superfluous, but in which each member is necessary; an organization in which there is the greatest diversity of gifts for the well-being of the whole, and all under the control of the Head. As a living body, it is, moreover, *separated from all else*,—it may grow, develop, and change, but it remains still the same distinct entity. “Now ye are THE BODY OF CHRIST, and members in particular.”

It is easy to see that this new truth is closely connected with our Saviour’s earlier revelation of the advent and indwelling of the Holy Ghost, but it

goes beyond it, showing *results of that indwelling*, which He did not *develop* and *define*, though in His parable of the vine and its branches, and in the prayer which followed, He anticipated some of them.

Now the Pauline *revelation* is that the new dispensation of Providence inaugurated at Pentecost and by the descent of the Holy Spirit, was *characterised and distinguished from all previous dispensations* by the existence of such a body composed of *the risen Christ and all true believers*.

He represents this body as having been formed for the first time, not by Christ's advent and call of the twelve, not by the group of disciples which gathered around Him in the days of His flesh, but by the effusion of the Holy Ghost at Pentecost. (I Cor. xii. 13) And he represents it as *continuing on earth* until "the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then *we which are alive and remain*" (i.e. the then existing generation of the Church) "shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord."

Hence, until the glorious advent of Christ at the end of this age, until the resurrection of those that are Christ's at His coming, there was to be on earth a Church which would be vitally united to Christ. There was to be, in other words, not merely the Christendom which Christ had predicted in the parables, with its tares, its foolish builders, and its unfaithful servants, but a *body of Christ*, of which nothing spurious, nothing evil, nothing dead, could ever form part, but only those between whom and the Divine, yet human, Head there existed a bond of life;—only those in whom the Holy Spirit dwelt abidingly; for "if any man *have not the Spirit of Christ*, he is none of His"—no member of this wonderful, living body.

Here, then, we have the crowning prophetic revelation of the Apostle Paul. The dispensation then commencing would, it is true, be marked by the substitution of one *outward* constitution of things for another—of Christendom for Judaism, of a professing Christian *world* for the Jewish and heathen worlds of the first century; but in the midst of that mixed state of things there would be something very different, a new thing in the earth, a new incarnation of Deity,—THE BODY OF CHRIST,—a true and living Church, its Head in heaven, its members here, its animating spirit Divine, its earthly form human.

This revelation, be it observed, is something wholly distinct from any mere call of the Gentiles to share Jewish blessings. That call had been distinctly predicted in the Old Testament; even from Abraham's day it had been promised that, not his own family only, but all the nations of the earth should be blessed in his seed, which is Christ. The new revelation is something wholly different, or it could never have been spoken of as a mystery *hidden* from all previous generations.

Peter had received and taught the call of the Gentiles; and the Church at Jerusalem, after hearing his account of Cornelius, had admitted that God had "to Gentiles also granted repentance unto life." They perceived—for *facts proved it*—that Gentiles were to share in Christ's salvation. That was not,

therefore, Paul's new and distinctive gospel. It was not that Gentiles were to come into a Jewish faith, or share Israel's privileges merely, but that out from among Jews and Gentiles alike individuals would be gathered and formed into a *new organization*, a body of which Christ was the Head, and the Spirit of God the life. This truth is fully and frequently asserted in Paul's Epistles, and was no doubt very prominent in his preaching. In writing to the Colossians, and enumerating some of the glories of Christ, he says:

"He is before all things, and by Him all things consist; and He is the Head of His body, the Church." (Col. 1:18) In the First Epistle to the Corinthians, he dwells very fully on the subject, showing that the phenomena of spiritual life in the Church correspond very closely with those of physical life in the natural body. "For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. For the body is not one member, but many. If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling? But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased Him. And if they were all one member, where were the body? But now are they many members, yet but one body. And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary: and those members of the body, which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour; and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness. For our comely parts have no need: but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that part which lacked: that there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured all the members rejoice with it. NOW YE ARE THE BODY OF CHRIST, AND MEMBERS IN PARTICULAR." (I Cor. 12:12-27)

Sixteen times over in this one passage is "the body" mentioned, and so perfect is the union, so complete the identification, that the words "so also is Christ" speak—wondrous fact!—of the Head *and all His members* under that one name!

In the Epistle to the Ephesians (chap. v.) the apostle presents the same truth, that the Church is the body of Christ, under a somewhat different form, speaking of it as "the bride" which He loved and for which He sacrificed Himself, and arguing that man and wife are one, that "he that loveth his wife loveth himself," and that though it is a great mystery, this is so as regards Christ and the Church, "for we are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones."

It is clear, then, if we combine into one programme our Lord's earlier predictions of the kingdom of heaven with Paul's revelations as to the bride and body of Christ, that two greatest and most characteristic features of the



Christian dispensation of the last 1,800 years were foreseen and foretold in the first century of the era. Christ foretold the history of CHRISTENDOM, and Paul unveiled the mystery of the TRUE CHURCH.<sup>1</sup> (Eph. v. 32; 1 Cor. xv. 51; 1 Thess. iv. 15.)

<sup>1</sup> In Matt. xvi. 18, our Lord uses the word ἐκκλησίαν, which we translate Church. It was one in common secular use at the time, meaning a gathering out of any kind. It had not acquired the distinctly religious meaning which we now apply to it, So that our Lord's prophecy that the doctrine of His own Messiahship and Divinity which Peter had just confessed would be the rock on which He would in the future *build His Church*, was no revelation to the disciples of the true nature of that Church as His own Body and Bride. He used the expression, but He *did not define the reality*.

The two things are as distinct as the kernel of the nut from its shell, as the outer nature from the inner core. The first—Christendom, the professing Church—is the sphere in which the preaching of the word has taken effect as distinguished from heathendom, which has scarcely heard the gospel. In this sphere there is, and always has been, a twofold result—good and bad, false and true, profession and reality. That is one thing.

On the other hand, *from* that sphere has been gathered out, by the action of the Spirit of God, A BODY which, although invisible as such, has yet made its presence and power felt in the world. It has been the salt of the earth, the light of the world, the teacher of heathendom, the transformer of the Roman society of the first century to the Christian society of the nineteenth. It has been the mother of the multitudes, which no man can number, who have already joined the glorified Head in heaven. It has been the living temple of the Holy Ghost, the body through which Christ has acted in the world for the last 1,800 years. Through its eyes He has seen and wept over the sins and sorrows of men; through its heart, moved with compassion, He has healed, and fed, and taught, and saved; through its lips He has uttered the invitation, "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest"; by its feet He has gone into all the world, and proclaimed the glad tidings of salvation among all nations. In its actions. He has glorified God on the earth, and in its sufferings He has continued to manifest His own self-sacrificing love. Yes! in spite of the false pretensions of all who merely profess His name, in spite even of the inconsistencies, errors, and sins of true believers, there has been a body of Christ on earth ever since Pentecost, and it is here still.

Was not Stephen a member of it when he said of his murderers, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge"? Was not Paul a member of it when he said, "I, yet not I, but Christ that dwelleth in me"? Were not the martyrs, who died that they might not worship idols, members of it? Have not the very thoughts and tones of Christ been heard hundreds of times since He personally left the earth? Are we not ourselves true believers, conscious of a heavenly life, a Divine spirit indwelling and influencing us—a fellowship with each other and with our Head in heaven?

As surely as Christ's predictions of Christendom have come to pass, so surely has the Pauline programme of a body of Christ on earth, during the age which opened at Pentecost, been realized in human history. It has been sustained

amid persecution, preserved amid corruption, revived even when apparently dead, and enabled to withstand all the fiery darts of the wicked. The gates of hell have not prevailed against it, and after 1,800 years of perils from without and from within, it is more conspicuous by its action on the world now than ever before. This is not only a miracle of grace, but a marvel of history, and a marked fulfilment of Pauline prediction.

Continued in [Chapter VII. The Christian Programme – Part IV.](#)

## **All sections of The Divine Programme of The World's History By H. Grattan Guinness**

- [Introduction](#)
- [Chapter I. The Adamic Programme. – Part I](#)
- [Chapter I. The Adamic Programme. – Part II](#)
- [Chapter II. The Noahic Programme. – Part I](#)
- [Chapter II. The Noahic Programme. – Part II.](#)
- [Chapter II. The Noahic Programme. – Part III.](#)
- [Chapter III. The Abrahamic Programme – Part I.](#)
- [Chapter III. The Abrahamic Programme – Part II.](#)
- [Chapter III. The Abrahamic Programme – Part III.](#)
- [Chapter IV. The Mosaic Programme – Part I.](#)
- [Chapter IV. The Mosaic Programme – Part II.](#)
- [Chapter V. The Davidic Programme. – Part I.](#)
  
- [Chapter V. The Davidic Programme. – Part II.](#)
- [Chapter VI. The Daniel Programme – Part I.](#)
- [Chapter VI. The Daniel Programme – Part II.](#)
- [Chapter VI. The Daniel Programme – Part III.](#)
- [Chapter VI. The Daniel Programme – Part IV. The Prophecy of the Seventy Weeks](#)
- [Chapter VII. The Christian Programme – Part I.](#)
- [Chapter VII. The Christian Programme – Part II.](#)
- [Chapter VII. The Christian Programme – Part III.](#)
- [Chapter VII. The Christian Programme – Part IV.](#)
- [Chapter VII. The Christian Programme – Part V. The Apocalyptic Section of the Programme](#)