

PAUL AND THE “MYSTERY”

By Philip Mauro (1923)

“The preaching of Jesus Christ according to the revelation of the mystery which was kept secret since the world began.” (Romans 16:25)

It is astonishing to find how prevalent has become the idea that the Church was a “mystery” first revealed to the Apostle Paul, and of which other Apostles and servants of Christ were ignorant until Paul made it known. We meet this idea again and again in current writings; (1923) and when we ask what basis there is for it, we are referred to Ephesians 3:1–13 and Colossians 1:23–29. But we are unable to find a trace of that idea in those Scriptures. On the contrary, they show clearly that the “mystery” (to which Paul made frequent reference in his writings) was not the Church of God, and that Paul was not by any means the first to whom that “mystery” was revealed.

In the first place the “mystery” (whatever it be) whereof Paul was speaking in the Scriptures cited above was one which, according to his own testimony, had been made known — not to him exclusively, nor to him primarily, but — to others as well as to himself. For it was, as he himself declares in those very Scriptures, **“the mystery of Christ which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now” — in this age — “revealed unto His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit”** (Ephesians 3:5), Thus it clearly appears that Paul claimed no exclusiveness and no preeminence in the knowledge of this mystery. The Spirit of God revealed it to God’s “holy apostles and prophets,” Paul being one of the number to whom the revelation had been given. The comparison (as regards knowledge of the mystery) is not between Paul and other servants of Christ, but between the sons of men “in other ages” and God’s apostles and prophets in this age — “now.”

What Paul is emphasizing here, as in other of his writings to converted Gentiles, is that his qualifications as “a minister and a witness” to them, Gentiles, (Acts 26:16, 17) were of precisely the same sort, and from the same source, as those of other apostles and servants of Christ. In other words, the former despised Gentiles were to be no whit behind the Jews in having a duly authorized Apostle of Christ sent to them, even as had the Jews. Paul, as the “Apostle of the Gentiles,” magnified his office. His apostleship, on behalf of the Gentile aliens, was just as genuine and as Divinely accredited as was the apostleship of those sent to the favored Jews. He was appointed by Christ Himself, as they were, and received his instructions and his message from Christ Himself, exactly as they. (See 1 Corinthians 15:3, 8; Galatians 1:11–17; 2:2, etc.).

Now we ask, WHAT IS THIS “MYSTERY”? As to this, we have the clearest possible statement in the next words of Ephesians 3, following those quoted above, namely:

“That THE GENTILES should be fellow–heirs, and of the same body; and partakers of His promise in Christ by (means of) the Gospel, whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of His power. Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints in this grace given, that I should preach AMONG THE GENTILES the unsearchable riches of Christ; and to make all men (i.e. Gentiles as well as Jews) see what is THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE MYSTERY, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God.” Thus the great “mystery,” or Divine secret is this: that God, although He had promised to the Jews only, the marvelous blessings of the New Covenant, had always purposed that believing Gentiles should be sharers thereof on a precise equality with believing Israelites. That was “the eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord” (verse 11). But He had not made it known unto the sons of men in past ages. “From the beginning of the world” it had been “hid in God.” Hence it was, until God “revealed it unto His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit,” a Divine secret, or “mystery.” Paul reminds the (Gentile) saints at Rome that to the Israelites pertained “the adoption” (or place of sons, of Ephesians 1:5), which now is given also to believing Gentiles, “and the glory” (now also preached to Gentiles — see Romans 9:23,24, Colossians 1:27) “and the covenants” (now shared by Gentiles—see Matthew 26:28; 2 Corinthians 3:6; ... “and the service of God, and the promises” (Romans 9:4, 5).

On the other hand, Paul reminded the Ephesian saints that they, being Gentiles, had had no part nor prospect in those unsearchable riches of Christ, but had been “without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope” (compare Israel’s hope, Acts 26:7, 8), “and without God in the world” (Ephesians 2:12). Thus, before the coming of Christ into the world there was a sharp line of separation between Jews and Gentiles. “BUT NOW ” a great and wonderful change in God’s dealings with men has been proclaimed. For God has now made known what had not been revealed in past ages, namely, that Gentiles who once were “far off” have been “made nigh by the blood of Christ.” (verse 13).

It is one of the blessed effects of the blood of Christ that the separating wall which God Himself had placed between Jew and Gentile “the middle wall of partition” — has been forever taken away, and the Gospel of Christ, with all its blessings for time and for eternity, is sent into all the world; or (as stated in Colossians 1:23) is “preached to every creature which is under heaven” (cf. Mark 16:15).

Verse 6 of Ephesians 3, quoted above, contains a complete and exceedingly clear explanation of what “the mystery” is. The prominent word in that verse, fellowship, is one that is well rendered by the English word “joint” — signifying the equal participation by Jews and Gentiles in “the promise of Christ.” In other words the Gentiles are joint-heirs” (i.e. joint with Jews) “and a joint-body, and joint-partakers of His (God’s) promise

in Christ by the Gospel.” Indeed the full equality of Gentiles with Jews in all the promises of God, fulfilled in Christ, is the main subject of the Epistle to the Ephesians. It is specially unfolded in Chapter 2. Glorious news was this to the Gentiles, but hard for the Jews to accept (Acts 13:45; 17:5,13; 22:21, 22).

Inasmuch as Paul was Christ’s chosen vessel to bear His Name before the Gentiles (Acts 9:15), the “mystery” meant more to him than to the other Apostles; but, so far from Paul having been the first to receive knowledge thereof, it is quite clear from the Scriptures that others learned it long before it was revealed to him. This will be shown later on.

Paul’s words in Colossians 1:20–27 are so nearly like the passages in Ephesians, to which we have referred, that it is needless to quote, them in full. Again he speaks of the dispensation (or administration) of the grace of God given to him on behalf of Gentiles, **“to fulfill the Word of God; even THE MYSTERY, which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest” — not to Paul specially, but —** **“to His saints; to whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which (mystery) is CHRIST IN YOU (Gentiles) the HOPE OF GLORY, Whom we preach” etc.** That is to say the mystery, once hidden from ages and from generations, but now made known to God’s saints, is that Christ has become the Hope of Glory among Gentiles, as well as among Jews. And we see that the Apostle regarded it as a high privilege that he should be permitted to preach Christ to the Gentiles, according to the revelation of that eternal purpose of God which, until the coming of Christ, had been kept a Divine secret.

To the same effect he says in closing his Epistle to the Romans: **“Now to Him that is of power to stablish you, according to my Gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to THE REVELATION OF THE MYSTERY, which was kept secret since the world began, but now is made manifest, and by the Scriptures of the prophets” according to the commandment of the everlasting God made known to ALL NATIONS for the obedience of faith”** (Romans 16:25, 26). Here again the Apostle of the Gentiles speaks of the preaching of Jesus Christ according to the revelation of the mystery, now made known to all nations; and he states that this mystery had been made manifest by the scriptures of the Prophets and by the Spirit to all the New Testament apostles and prophets and not exclusively by his own writings.

As to the time when it was first made known that the Gospel, with all its blessings, was to be preached in all the world, and not to Jews only, we would refer to the Lord’s parable of the Tares of the field, in explaining which He informed His disciples that “the

field,” in which the good seed was to be sown, “is the world,” And this fact our Lord made known as one of the “MYSTERIES” of the Kingdom of heaven.

And when about to leave His disciples he gave them the clearest instructions that they were to go “into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature” (Mark 16:15); “that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. (Luke 24:47); and that they were to be witnesses to Him “unto the uttermost part of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

This was long before the conversion of Saul of Tarsus; so it is certain that the Mystery, with which he afterwards had so much to do, had been revealed by the Lord “to His holy apostles and prophets,” long before Paul’s own ministry began.

In this connection the words of Peter, recorded in Acts 15:7–9, are in point. Speaking at Jerusalem to the apostles and elders, who were assembled there to discuss matters pertaining to “the conversion of the Gentiles,” Peter said:

“Men and brethren, ye know how that a good while ago God made choice among us that THE GENTILES BY MY MOUTH should hear THE WORD OF THE GOSPEL AND BELIEVE. And God, Which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as He did unto us; and PUT NO DIFFERENCE BETWEEN US AND THEM, purifying their hearts by faith.”

Here Peter brings to the minds of his hearers a fact which he says was known to them all (Paul being also present), namely, that God had chosen him, Peter, to preach Christ to the Gentiles. The reference, of course, was to Peter’s mission to the house of Cornelius (Acts 10). God had prepared him for that mission in a very remarkable manner, in order to impress strongly upon him the great fact that the middle wall of partition had been taken away, and that God now puts “no difference” between Jews and Gentiles.

There are other Scriptures bearing upon the subject of this leaflet; but enough has been cited to show that the “mystery” to which Paul referred in Romans, Ephesians and Colossians, is not the Church, but the fact that God’s new covenant blessings are equally for Gentiles as for Jews; and farther that the mystery in question had been revealed to the other apostles and prophets before Paul’s conversion.



Philip Mauro age 64

Philip Mauro loved the Lord Jesus Christ above all else and he loved the Scriptures just as much. ([Read his biography by Gordon P. Gardiner, Champion of the Kingdom, online here!](#))

For me the most striking fact about him is that from the moment he was saved in 1903 at age 45, he never again consulted a doctor until his death at age 93 on April 7, 1952. He trusted only God for his health and physical well-being. That is an incredible testimony.

As he grew in stature as a believer, his views on certain subjects changed as he received more light and revelation from God. He chose to acknowledge his mistakes and to retract his opinions rather than to seek the approval of man by clinging to his previous position. He became a prolific writer, sharing the new light he had received. As a result, many friends turned against him, labeling his views “revolutionary” yet he remained undeterred.

With his motto, “Scripture interprets Scripture”, and a subsequent significant library of writings as his greatest legacy, Philip Mauro is the ideal Christian role model – a “simple soul” who took God at his Word and lived the Word.

Since discovering Philip Mauro probably around 2002/2003, I have been more and more fascinated by his love and understanding of the Word of God and the God of the Word. However, since I reside in Pretoria, South Africa, I naturally encountered several obstacles sourcing his writings. Fortunately, the internet wipes out distance and boundaries. Compiling the Library and putting up this website is however the culmination of several years of labor. When you download this CD containing the largest part of the The Philip Mauro Library you receive almost 60 manuscripts bundled together. *The Collected Shorter Writings* consists of 30 works, some very rare. –*Friedel Hansen*

I discovered this rare photograph of Philip Mauro at age 64 pasted opposite the title page of a tattered leather-bound copy of *Ruth The Satisfied Stranger*. It is dated **2 July 1923** and was signed in **Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada**.

