

Appendix D

GOD'S PRE-EMINENT DEALING WITH ISRAEL IS IT OF GRACE OR LAW?

IT is usual for those writers who declare that God has irrevocably abandoned national Israel, to propose that the basis of this divine disenfranchisement was the disobedience of the Hebrew people concerning the terms of the Mosaic covenant. One such author is Philip Mauro who, at times derisively, in his *The Hope of Israel*, maintains that, “from this national destruction [of Israel] by the Romans [in 70 A.D.] *there was to be no recovery.*”¹

A published response to this ardent upholder of replacement theology was by Samuel Hinds Wilkinson, late director of the Mildmay Mission to the Jews, England, his volume being titled *The Israel Promises and their Fulfilment.*² From this we quote Chapter XV titled “Grace and the Rainbow,” which presents a most moving apologia for the sovereignty of grace toward national Israel, even as the church of Jesus Christ has likewise been the recipient.

¹² The root of the solemn consideration raised by Mr. Philip Mauro’s book, in and by which he challenges the assurance to God’s chosen people Israel of a national restoration, conversion and beneficent mission, will be exposed if we ask the question: Did Law precede Grace or Grace precede Law?

This is indeed a vital question: for indisputably the original promises to Abraham, recorded in Genesis 12, were given *unconditionally*. No one was bound by those promises but the One Who made them. No terms were imposed. No mediator was present (Gal. 3:20). Whatever those promises were, whatever kind of fulfillment they required, those promises and that Covenant which ratified them, in particular the grant of a specific territory as an everlasting possession, were unconditional and undeserved.³ We

are told that Israel was not thus chosen for Divine love and favor because they were more numerous than other peoples: for they were “the fewest of all peoples” (Deut. 7:7-8): nor was the territory granted to them because of their righteousness, for they were “a stiff-necked people” (Deut. 9:4-6). And this unconditional Covenant and all that it included and involved antedated the Covenant of the law by 430 years. And the legal Covenant “which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul it, that it should make the promise of none effect” (Gal. 3:17).

But Mr. Mauro says:

Deuteronomy 4:1. Here is a summary of the Covenant. They were to hearken always to God’s statutes and judgments: and *upon that express condition*, they were to go in and possess the land. Every blessing mentioned in this book is made to depend upon that same condition.

¹ Philip Mauro, *The Hope of Israel*, p. 57.

² Samuel Hinds Wilkinson, *The Israel Promises and their Fulfilment*, 195 pp.

³ This is even more certainly established in Genesis 15:1-21 where the Abrahamic covenant is signified by God’s unilateral “cutting” of animals in half so that He alone might pass between them while

Abraham was deep in sleep. For this reason, God declares that Abraham will “know for certain” that the Covenant is sure, vs. 13-16. B.E.H.

Then in that case, Mr. Mauro, the original Covenant of grace *could* be disannulled by the terms of the legal Covenant, made 430 years after. In that case, temporary deprivation of privilege or delay in its realization connotes absolute and final cancellation of a Divine promise. In that case, the Scriptures you quote (Deut. 4:1, 15-24, 26-30) are of private or individual or isolated (ἴδιος, *idios*) interpretation, and not to be understood as in harmony with the whole body of prophetic Scripture. In that case, the law was *not* “added because of transgressions till (ἄρχι, *archi*) the seed should come to whom the promise was made;” but it was introduced to impose new terms and conditions by means of which promises already freely given and confirmed might be annulled and superceded.

Then did Law precede Grace; or Grace precede Law?

And another question arises. Does Grace survive Law or Law outlast Grace?

Our reading of Scripture in its entirety enables us to reply without hesitation or qualification. Grace was anterior to Law, Grace is superior to Law, Grace will outlast all legal enactments and all covenants based upon them.

Let us ask a few questions.

Was not the Church, was not every member of it, whose standing is on the ground of grace alone, chosen in Christ Jesus before the foundation of the world? Were not the tables of the law shut within the ark and placed in the Holiest apartment of all in the temple of God and made thus to rest *beneath* the mercy seat? Is not judgment God's *strange* work? Does He not *delight* in mercy? Where sin abounds, does not grace *much more* abound? Does He forsake Israel for a small moment, will He not gather Israel with great mercies? If He hides His face in a little wrath for a moment on account of broken law, will He not have mercy with everlasting kindness on the same people who have been the subjects of His wrath? When God saved His people Israel over and over again from oppressive enemies was it not because He “remembered His covenant with Abraham, with Isaac and with Jacob (Exod. 2:24; cf. Ps.

115:8, 42; 116:45; &c.)”? Was He in such cases remembering the broken and unrenowable Covenant of Sinai or the everlasting covenant of grace made with Abraham 430 years earlier? If the law, even to the believer, was a schoolmaster, having done his work, to be for ever intruding? When faith is come are we longer under a schoolmaster? Is Israel as a nation *always* to be unbelieving? Is the New Covenant not to be made with the same people as were under the Old Covenant (Jer. 31:31-34)? And if so, does it not guarantee individual and national repentance, faith and regeneration to the same people?⁴ And if the legal Covenant of Sinai could not disannul the promises and Covenant made to and with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, can it do so *now* or *ever*? Can grace be tied by conditions? Can out-and-out gifts be withdrawn? Can God repent of gifts or calling or grants or promises, unconditionally made? Is not God able to graft Israel again into its own olive tree? Shall they not be grafted in, if they abide not in unbelief? Will the time-limit of Israel's blindness never be reached and passed?

But Mr. Philip Mauro, quoting Dr. Charles W. Rankin, maintains that:

This dispensation of promise ended when Israel rashly accepted the law (Exod. 19:8).⁵

And quoting Deuteronomy 28:63-64 (which passage runs):

And it shall come to pass that as the *Lord* rejoiced over you to do good and to multiply you: so the *Lord* will rejoice over you to destroy you and to bring you to nought; and ye shall be plucked from off the land whither thou

⁴ It is simply astonishing, indeed it tends toward incredulity, that those who so fervently proclaim the sovereignty of God in this realm with regard to New Covenant conversion that results in entrance into the Church, should so adamantly deny this sovereignty of grace to the nation of God's Old Covenant people. In other words, there is sovereignty in Calvinism reserved for the Church, but only conditionalism in Arminianism for Israel! B.E.H.

⁵ Mauro, *Hope of Israel*, p. 52.

goest to possess it. And the *Lord* shall scatter thee among all people from the one end of the earth even unto the other.

Mr. Mauro says:

This, according to this prophecy was to be the end of their history as a nation.⁶

Frankly, is not this a defamation of the Divine Character? Unintentional defamation no doubt, for it is Mr. Mauro's interpretation of Scripture (which he is personally entitled to) which causes him to divert the clear promises of God from the parties to whom they were given and to confine them to a new constitution. But defamation none the less, for it leaves no scope for grace, no credit for inviolability of oath, nor for continuity of purpose, nor for overcoming of set-backs and resistances and failures, no place for pardon, no delight in store for the Father's heart when the repentant prodigal returns (Jer. 31:18-20).

Then if Mr. Mauro be right, *what* is grace and *where* is it?

Better, far better, is the great vision of John the Divine while in the Isle that is called Patmos:

And immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold a throne was set in heaven, and One sat on a throne. And He that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone: and there was a rainbow about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald (Rev. 4:2-3).

Are the colors significant? Is the crystal-line purple indicative of enthroned holiness, the red sardine or carnelian of fiery wrath? Surely then the encircling rainbow, enclosing all with its endless line of radiant green, speaks of grace and abiding. For was not the first exhibition of a rainbow the token of God's first Covenant with all flesh, "between Me and you and every living creature that is with you for perpetual generations (Gen. 9:12)." Was not that Covenant made independently of all future human resistance and apostasy and guilt—was not the rainbow the token, "of a covenant between Me and

the earth (Gen. 9:13)?" Surely the rainbow symbolizes and represents grace—the grace of benevolent purpose, the grace of changeless attitude, the grace of persistent long-suffering and patience, the grace which is endless, all-inclusive, all conquering.⁷ "And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace (Rom. 11:6)." "I am the Lord, I change not, therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed (Mal. 3:6)." No other reason but that of changeless grace could have spared Israel the complete annihilation they deserved. And shall the original purpose fail, the original declaration be falsified or even modified, shall works be substituted for grace or any kind of transference of specific promise take place? Shall not the whole purpose come to final achievement as with Zerubbabel, who after gazing on the desolations of Jerusalem, desertion, rubbish, silence, defilement and ashes, after confronting opposition and apathy, yet saw in vision and by promise the work of the new temple completed and the headstone thereof brought forth with shoutings of "Grace, grace unto it" (Zech. 4:7).

⁷ John Gill comments that, "the rainbow is of various colors and fitly expresses the various promises and blessings, in the covenant of grace, and the various providences, both prosperous and adverse, with respect to soul and body; and as the rainbow was an emblem of mercy, peace, and reconciliation in God to man, after he had destroyed the world by a flood, so the covenant is a covenant of grace and mercy; it springs from it, and is full of it, and provides for the peace and reconciliation of the people of God, by the blood of Christ; whence it is called a covenant of peace: and as the rainbow is a security to the world, and the inhabitants of it, from a destruction by a flood any more, so the covenant is a security to those who are interested in it, from eternal destruction, and wrath to come; herein lies all their salvation, and this is the security of it: to which may be added, that God calls it my bow, as he often calls the covenant of grace my covenant, in distinction from man's." John Gill, *Collected Writings*, Ages Software CD.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 57.