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Beloved Friends & CoLaborers in the Gospel,

Greetings as always in the blessed name of Jesus Christ.

Another month has gone by, and we are still pressing on the upward way, gaining new insights everyday, praying, yes, praying "LORD plant my feet on higher ground."

Next week, our dear friends Norman and Carol Gidney will be with us. We have Norman lined up to minister the Word of God. Pray with us for fruitful blessings.

The study this month is one that will no doubt raise eye-brows. It is a problem that most of my dispensational friends seem to ignore. Why? Responses welcome. If written in an edifying spirit, I will print them. It is a short study, but one that needs more than a finger in the dyke.

Please pray for us, for our ministry, and for my 'almost' finished new book: *New Life "in Christ."* Paul used this phrase no less than 164 times. This study has been the source of rich blessing, and I am eager to see it in print.

My personal appreciation for all letters. Thanks also for the gifts. They make our ministry here possible.

Yours because His, Henry T. Hudson Jn. 3:30
February 2011. FOLEY, SOUTHERN ALABAMA.

P.S. Norman Gidney CBE, has a new booklet. With so many pastors leaving the ministry, it has a message that needs to be heard. Order: *Masquerade in the Ministry* from the above address. \$10.00 covers cost & postage. I still have copies of my book: *Hold Fast the Form of Sound Words*. It is a book aiming at reviewing & refining dispensational truth. P/H \$20.00.

A PROBLEMATICAL DISPENSATIONAL TRANSITION

by Henry T. Hudson

In order to zero in on the problem that I am about to address, let me try to make clear what older theologians were wont to call the *status questionus*. In using the word “transitional,” I am thinking, as the word itself would signify, of a “passing from one state or stage to another.” With this in mind, let me focus on what is a common premise among most informed “consistent” dispensationalists. It is that the church of Jesus Christ, particularly as it is found in the Pauline epistles, is totally and substantially different from the church found in the Gospels and early Acts. On the surface who would want to dispute the fact that there are differences. Such is a given. But, what about the transitional historical developments during the Acts of the Apostles? The church, during the early Acts period, is clearly made up of a remnant of believing Jews. Peter and the other circumcision apostles, were all prominent in this period. In fact, as late as Acts 11:19, it is stated that those who were scattered abroad as a result of the persecution of the saints at Jerusalem, went everywhere “*preaching the word to none but unto the Jews only.*”

But then, following Paul's conversion and commission, there are social associations between the early Acts believers and Paul. In fact, men like Silas and Barnabas, who were prominent elders in the church at Jerusalem, became fellow workers with Paul in his ministry to the Gentiles. Thus, supposing that Paul's ministry did introduce a brand “new” church that was entirely separate and completely distinct from the church in the Gospels and early Acts, what would be the consequent relationship? If Paul's church was substantially different and one that eclipsed, or rather superseded the older church, even to the extent of possessing a new hope, what would then be the lot of the circumcision apostles, and men such as Barnabas and Silas? Would they enter into the supposed new hope, or would they still possess whatever their old hope was? Is there not a transitional problem here? What is the relationship between the church of God that Paul persecuted, and the church of God to which he wrote. There was a church (assembly/congregation) in existence before Paul, and there was one after his ministry began. Are they connected in any way? Or are they to be viewed as being separate and distinct having no substantial connection whatsoever? (1 Cor. 1:2; Gal. 1:13, *et. al.*)? Some dispensationalists such as Paul Sadler contend that 'the kingdomS church' (a misnomer if there ever was one), eventually “vanished from the scene.” It was superseded by the Body-Church (See The Berean Searchlight).

Analogies do have their limits, but is it not possible to speak of the administrations of President George Bush and President Barak Obama? They are different, but the country over which they govern is the same. Who would want to argue that the transition in administrations brought about a new country? I must smile for a moment, and let the thoughts of a few friends disturb the analogy. In their minds, they would argue that the new administration has indeed brought into existence a new country. However, what they are saying is that drastic changes have been implemented in the new administration.

In a similar manner, it would be possible to argue that under Paul, there were also drastic changes, but did the changes bring into existence a different church of God, so that there were now two entirely different churches existing at the same time? No one would really dispute the fact that some drastic dispensational changes took place in the wake of Paul's ministry, but did these changes produce such a disruption that there entered into history an entirely new church with a new hope which had no connection with that which had preceded?

By now, my reader should have some idea of why I have written about a problematical dispensational transition. Personally, I think that it is a problem created by the *a priori* premises of the more extreme disintegrative/disjunctive dispensational approach. Such an approach can be traced to a great extent by a faulty interpretation of Ephesians 3:6. This approach understands the mystery to be a

sort of parenthetical period of time, having nothing to do with Old Testament prophecy, whereas, it is, as the verse declares, simply that Gentile believers have now become joint-heirs, a joint-body, and joint-partakers of God's promise in Christ through the gospel. The result of this co-equality is a "new man," because it centers on a truth that had been hidden in God, hidden from past ages and generations, but one that has been now revealed to all men, that is, if they have eyes to see. Paul, in 1 Corinthians 10:32 made a threefold distinction: Jews, Gentiles, and the church of God. He did not speak of two different churches of God. He also spoke of only one, even as he spoke of only one kingdom of God (Acts 14:22; 20:24, 25; 28:23, 30, 31).

Speaking of only one kingdom of God, I remind my reader that the Greek word *ekklesia* is not a technical word. It means simply an assembly of people. In biblical terms, when it is modified by "of God," it has reference to the people of God who have an inheritance in the coming kingdom of God. What is more, in spite of what any excessive dispensational distinction-maker might say, when I read Holy Scripture, I do not find two kingdoms of God, two Christs, two hopes, two future comings of Christ, two first resurrections, two last trumpets, two gospels, and two peoples of God. Yes, there is progressive revelational development that allows differences between the past and the present, but it is the progressive development that helps me appreciate the underlying unity that ties the differences together rather than think that they are permanently separated.

As far as the phrase "one new man" is concerned, I think the context where it is found (Eph. 2:15) deals with its significance. The reader might want to begin in chapter 1:11-13 noting the pronouns "we" and "ye." (The reference being to Jews and Gentiles). Then, moving over to chapter 2, note should be made of verses 11-22. The repetition of the word "both" is clearly referring also to Jews and Gentiles. Then the pointed summary in chapter 3:6, defines in straightforward terms the nature of the mystery.

The notion that this one new man has brought into existence an entirely separate and distinct church of God reads too much into the phrase. But, what about the fact that Paul speaks of the church as being the body of Christ? Clearly he used a metaphor to describe a relationship, not to underscore the entrance of a brand new church. Not all scholars think that this expression was a metaphor. One scholar that I esteem highly, holds that it represents the extended body of the resurrected Christ. I am not sure what he means by this conclusion. I see the phrase, as does Gosnell L. O. R. Yorke, as being a useful metaphorical back-drop to project the image of the relationship that exists between Christians and also with their Lord (*The Church as the Body of Christ in the Pauline Corpus*, p. 121). Certainly it was not introduced to highlight the supposed differences between an earlier church and a new one.

Then am I claiming that there is only one people of God throughout the ages? Why not? If we can be the children of Abraham, we can be part of the enduring family of God (Rom. 4:16; Gal. 3:27-29). This does not make us Jews, but if we sincerely acknowledge Jesus to be the Christ, and the Savior of the world, then we can look forward to the full realization of the spiritual blessings that were promised to Israel through the gospel (Rom. 15:27-32)

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P.S. Along the lines of the preceding thoughts, I might recommend my book, *Ahead Lies Yesterday and Tomorrow*. This book is free to Pastors and Christian Workers. Help with postage is greatly appreciated.

I marvel at my first Pastor, Geoffrey King, of East London Tabernacle, who way back in 1949, warned his members and readers that his studies in Holy Scripture were such that the real danger to the Christian Church would come not from communism, but from ever-expanding Islamic forces.