

Did Paul Know the Mystery When He Wrote Romans? An Investigation of E.W. Bullinger's Postscript Theory

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Recently, as part of the *Grace History Project* we taught a series of five lessons titled "Rightly Dividing E.W. Bullinger: The Emergence of Acts 28ism." The bulk of the fifth lesson in this series (Lesson 80) was a discussion of Dr. Bullinger's teaching regarding the doxology of Romans 16:25-27. In order to avoid acknowledging the revelation of they mystery prior to Acts 28, Bullinger argued in his 1912/1913 book *The Foundations of Dispensational Truth* that the verses in question were a postscript that Paul added to the end of Romans after he arrived in Rome in Acts 28. Bullinger makes this suggestion based upon the textual work of Bishop J.B. Lightfoot, Dr. Fenton John Anthony Hort, and Dean Alford.¹

In response to this lesson, one student present questioned whether I was accurately representing the history concerning J.B Lightfoot's position that Romans 16:25-27 comprised a postscript. For the record, it was never the intention of the *Grace History Project* to suggest that Bishop Lightfoot did not teach that the verses in question were a postscript. This would be foolish, since as we shall see shortly, Lightfoot clearly made that assertion. Rather, my point was that no other proponent of the postscript theory makes the exact argument that Bullinger made in *The Foundations of Dispensational Truth*. Our assertion was that Bullinger was seizing upon a textual argument advanced by Lightfoot in an attempt to bolster his new dispensational position that the mystery was not revealed until after Paul reached Rome in Acts 28. Bullinger did not endorse the postscript view in 1894/1895 when he wrote *The Mystery Secret: Truth Revealed* or in 1898 when he penned *The Church Epistles*.

In the interest of fairness and transparency, the *Grace History Project* has deemed it necessary to write this essay in order to consider what Bishop Lightfoot actually said about Romans 16:25-27. The book *Biblical Essays* by J.B. Lightfoot contains a chapter titled "The Structure and Destination of the Epistle to the Romans." This chapter contains three essays, two by Bishop Lightfoot (1st and 3rd) and one by Dr. Hort (2nd) that originally appeared in the *Journal of Philosophy* between 1869 and 1871. As the title of the chapter suggests, the essays in question comprise a scholarly dialogue between textual critics about the textual structure and readership of the book of Romans.

Lightfoot's Postscript Theory

The first essay by Lightfoot consists of thirty-three pages of very technical textual information. The introduction to the third essay (also written by Lightfoot) provides a short summary of the key textual difficulties covered in the Lightfoot's first essay. The Bishop outlines the key textual discrepancies as follows:

1. "One or more ancient writers used a copy of the Epistle containing only the first fourteen chapters, with or without the doxology which in the common text stands at the close of the whole (16:25-27).

¹ E.W. Bullinger. *The Foundations of Dispensational Truth*, 169.

2. In the existing copies this doxology appears sometimes at the end of the 16th chapter, sometimes at the end of the 14th chapter, sometimes in both places, while in some few instances it is omitted altogether.
3. At least one text omits “Rome” in 1:7, 15.”²

Toward the end of the first essay, Lightfoot makes the following argument about the ending of the book of Romans based upon the textual information cited above.

“In order to account for all these data, I suggest the following hypothesis. At some later period in his life, not improbably during one of his sojourns in Rome, it occurred to the Apostles to give to this letter a wider circulation. To this end he made two changes in it; he obliterated all mention of Rome in the opening paragraphs by slight alterations; and he cut off the last two chapter containing personal matters, adding at the same time a doxology (Rom. 16:25-27) as a termination of the whole. By this ready method it was made available for general circulation, and perhaps was circulated to prepare the way for a personal visit in countries into which he had not yet penetrated. The idea of a circular letter was not new to him; for he had already addressed one to the Churches of Asia . . . Thus I believe that the last, and the last alone, of M. Renan’s four epistles represents a historical fact. It was not however a special copy, as he supposes, addressed to some individual church now unknown, but an adaptation of the original epistles for general circulation. A copy of this fell into the hands of Marcion, but he removed the doxology, as he well might have done with a doctrinal aim. . . All the phenomena relating to the doxology arose from the combination of copies of this abridged recension with copies of the original epistle in different ways. The notice of Origen shows that such combinations took place at a very early date. One point still remains to be settled—relating however not to the abridged recension, but to the original epistle. Where are we to place the benediction which occurs 1) at 16:20, 2) after 16:23, whether before or after the doxology, or 3) in both places, in different copies, as explained of authority allows but one answer. It must stand at 16:20, and must be omitted from the later place. If so, ver. 20 is the true close of the epistle, and the salutations from the amanuensis and other companions of St. Paul epistles were added irregularly as a sort of postscript, as was very likely to have been done, considering the circumstances under which St. Paul’s epistles were written. The desire of later transcribers to get a proper close to the letter would lead them to transplant the end of these salutations the benediction of 16:20, with or without modification, or to supply the defect with the doxology from the abridged recension. Either expedient appears in different MSS., and in some both are combined.”³

It is beyond historical doubt that in 1869, Lightfoot argued that the final doxology to the book of Romans (16:25-27) was in fact a postscript added by Paul on “one of his sojourns in Rome.” The addition of the doxology, as well as the removal of any references to the city of Rome (1:7, 15) or personal greetings to the Romans (Chapters. 15 and 16) were made for the purposes of creating a circular letter and thereby expanding the readership of the epistle, according to Lightfoot.

² J.B. Lightfoot. *Biblical Essays*, 352.

³ *Ibid.*, 318-320.

Careful readers will note that Lightfoot is not specific as to when he believes Paul made these alterations to the original Epistle. Was it on his first or second sojourn in Rome? Lightfoot is not specific. Moreover, Lightfoot's reasons for advancing the postscript theory are textual not doctrinal. In other words, Lightfoot is attempting to explain the textual differences found in various copies of the book of Romans: he is not trying to explain what Paul knew doctrinally and when he knew it.

Bullinger's Use of Lightfoot's Theory

It is also equally clear that Bullinger utilized Lightfoot's postscript theory to advance his new dispensational paradigm when he wrote *The Foundations of Dispensational Truth* in 1912/1913. First, the essays in question by Lightfoot date from 1869 and 1871—a full twenty five years before Bullinger penned *The Mystery Secret Truth Revealed* in 1894/1895 and almost thirty years before *The Church Epistles* was written in 1898. In both of these early works, while holding what appears to be an Acts 13 dispensational position,⁴ Bullinger comments on Romans 16:25-27⁵ and says nothing about them being a postscript, nor does he mention any textual difficulties associated with the book of Romans. That a scholar of Bullinger's caliber knew of Lightfoot's thinking on this matter in the 1890s seems beyond question when one considers the frequency with which Bullinger refers to the work of Lightfoot throughout his writings. It is only after his 1908 conversation with Charles Welch about dividing Paul's epistles into two groups with respect to Acts 28 that Bullinger cites the textual work of Lightfoot in his 1912/1913 book in order to bolster his newly adopted dispensational position.

While Bullinger references the work of Lightfoot as justification for arguing that Romans 16:25-27 was a postscript, he does not make the exact same argument. First, Lightfoot is unclear as to exactly when Paul made the alterations suggested above. Was it during his first imprisonment in Rome (Acts 28) or his second? Lightfoot is not clear.

⁴ E.W. Bullinger, *The Mystery: Secret Truth Revealed*, 50. "It seems impossible for us to fix the date of the revelation of the mystery to Paul, or say in what part of the Acts it should be placed. From II Corinthians 12:1-7 it would appear that "the abundance of the revelations" was given "above fourteen years ago." This was written about A.D. 60, and fourteen years before would bring it to A.D. 46, which would synchronize with the important dispensational chapter, Acts 13, where we have the solemn epoch-making words pronounced to the Jews, "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."

⁵ E.W. Bullinger, *The Church Epistles*, 75-77. "The important of thus rightly dividing is seen in the final member (16:25-27) of the Epistle, and in every other. Here we have *the Mystery* in contrast to "God's Gospel" (in 1:1-6). . . . It surely must be clear to the simplest honest mind that "God's Gospel," which is expressly stated to have been "promised afore by His prophets in the Holy Scripture," cannot possibly be the same as "the Mystery which was kept secret since the world began" . . . If they be the same, then language is useless for the purpose of revelation. If this be "doctrine and instruction"—what is the special instruction conveyed by stating that "promised afore" means "kept secret from times eternal" (RV) until now? . . . No: we abide by the teaching here given, that "the Mystery" was a revelation made to Paul (2 Cor. 12:1, 7; Gal. 1:12, etc.), after his Divine calling to be an Apostle. . . . What the Mystery (or Secret) is, is not the purpose of the Epistle to the Romans to teach. The subjective, doctrinal foundation for it is laid; and it is merely mentioned at the close in order to complete the beautiful structure of the Epistle, and to prepare the way for it to be taken up in the Ephesians; where it is fully dealt with as the next great lesson to be taught in Romans must first be experimentally received and learned, before we can pass on to the more advanced lessons of Ephesians. Having learned what it is to have died with Christ, and to have been raised with Christ, we are, in Ephesians, further taught what it is to be now already seated in the Heavens in Christ."

Meanwhile, Bullinger is adamant that the verses in question were added during Paul's first imprisonment in Rome in Acts 28 because they bring closure to the divine structure of the book of Romans and set the table for the revelation of the mystery found in Ephesians and Colossians. In short, Bullinger's primary reasons for advancing his version of the postscript theory are not textual like Lightfoot's but doctrinal. Consider the following statements from Bullinger:

- 1) "It affords additional evidence to the fact that Paul was not commissioned to commit the truths of the Mystery to writing until after he was in Rome, and in prison.
- 2) Does not disturb the fact that the Pentecostal Dispensation, recorded in the Acts, was complete in itself.
- 3) The interpretation of the Epistle falls into line with the other earlier Epistles (Thessalonians, Corinthians, Galatians), which do not go beyond the scope of the Acts, viz., that "gifts" and "ordinances" which are mentioned only in these earlier Epistles and in the Acts pertain to that Dispensation, which was the period of childhood, when all was "in part"; and when all that was "in part" was to be done away as soon as that which was perfect was come. That which is perfect came soon after the apostle's arrival in Rome, and is incorporated for us in the later Pauline or Prison Epistles. All that pertains to this perfection of standing which we find in the earlier Epistles (especially Rom. 1-8) not only reminds us, but is the foundation, of "that which is perfect."⁶

In other words, the postscript theory fits Bullinger's new paradigm. This allows for the explaining away of the revelation of the mystery prior to Acts 28. It appears that Dr. Bullinger is doing exactly what he said he was not, i.e., finding an explanation that will fit his new system of interpretation. Consider Bullinger's final words on the subject.

"It is evident from this, that without this doxology (Rom. 16:25-27), the structure of the Epistle as a whole would be incomplete. **It must either have formed part of the original Epistle, in which case it upsets the whole of its Dispensational teaching; or it must have been added later, on the apostle's arrival to Rome, in order to complete the structure, in which case it upsets nothing.**

From all this it appears that the doxology would have been out of place had it formed part of the original Epistle as sent by the apostle; and finds its true place if added by him while living in Rome among those to whom he had sent it. The Epistle itself was already there before him; and when the time came to put into writing, among the apostle's parchments (2 Tim. 4:13), the revelation of the Mystery, the doxology could be then added as being at once the inspired conclusion of Romans, and the inspired introduction to Ephesians."⁷

⁶ E.W. Bullinger. *The Foundations of Dispensational Truth*, 174.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 174.

Dr. Hort Contradicts Bullinger's Theory

At the beginning of his reply in the second essay, Dr. Hort summarizes the argument made by Bishop Lightfoot as follows, "Dr. Lightfoot supposes that the letter originally addressed to the Romans was our present epistle as it stands in the Received Text and Authorized Version, wanting only the last four verses, i.e., the second Benediction (16:24) and the Doxology (25-27); but that a later time St. Paul himself made it available as a circular letter or general treatise⁷ by cutting off the last two chapters, substituting the Doxology, and omitting the name of Rome in 1:7, 15.⁸ As one might expect, Dr. Hort proceeds to criticize Erasmus and the Received Text as "absurdly small and worthless evidence, three or four obscure cursives and inferior MSS."⁹

Hort's comments on the Doxology (Rom. 16:25-27) are of particular interest to the subject at hand. Written in 1871, the careful reader of Dr. Hort will note the similarities between his explanation of the revelation of the mystery with those presented by Bullinger in *The Mystery Secret Truth Revealed* (1894/1895) and *The Church Epistles* (1898). Hort argues that Paul knew the mystery during his early ministry when he wrote Romans, I Corinthians, and Galatians but could not fully expound it due to the spiritual state of the churches he was addressing. In fact, Hort explicitly states that Paul could not have written Romans 9-11 without having known the mystery.

"Then comes the idea in which the Doxology culminates, the counsel of the far-seeing God, the Ruler of ages or periods, by which the mystery kept secret from ancient times is laid open in the Gospel for the knowledge and faith of all nations. This idea no doubt pervades the Epistle to the Ephesians, though with considerable enrichments. But is it foreign to St. Paul's earlier thought? The second chapter of I Corinthians at once shews that it was not and explains why the face is not obvious. St. Paul is dealing there with converts who were in danger from pride of eloquence and wisdom (from 1:5 onward). For fear of this danger, he says (2:1), he himself kept back all excellency of speech or of wisdom when he came among them, and confined himself to the bare preaching of the Cross as alone fitted to their imperfect state. But for all that he desired them to know that he too have in reserve a wisdom which he spoke among the perfect. Its nature he briefly hints in words that closely resemble our Doxology ("We speak a wisdom of God in a mystery, that hidden wisdom which God fore-ordained before the ages unto the glory of us" 2:7), and then hastens to explain that, even after being laid open, it demands a spiritual power to discern. The Churches to which he wrote about this time, at Corinth, in Galatia, at Rome, were not in a state to profit by an extended exposition of a belief which yet was strong in the Apostles own mind, and so traces of it in the early period are few. Later it filled a large space in his thoughts, it acquired new extensions and associations, and he had occasion to write to Churches which by that time were capable of receiving it. But it is not really absent even from the Epistle to the Romans. Kindred thoughts find broken and obscure utterance in 8:18-30. The belief itself is the hidden foundation of the three chapters (9-11) in which God's dealings with Jews and Gentile are expounded, and comes perceptibly to light in their conclusion (11:33-36). Now it is precisely in thee chapters, as F.C. Baur saw long ago, that the main drift of the epistles is most distinctly disclosed: all its

⁸ Lightfoot, 321.

⁹ Ibid., 321.

various antithesis are so many subordinate aspects of the relation to Jew and Gentile which in this seeming episode is contemplated in its utmost generality as reaching from the one end of history to the other. The whole epistle could hardly have a fitter close than a Doxology embodying the faith from which its central chapters proceed. Here at last that faith might well be articulately expressed, though a wise economy compelled it to be latent as long as the Apostle was simply instructing the Romans. This Doxology is in fact a connection link between the epistle at large and the earlier concentrated doxology of 11:36. In both alike human sin and hindrance are triumphantly put out of sight: but here the eternal operation of Him “from Whom, through Whom, and unto Whom are all things” is translated into the language of history. . . A minute examination of the passages briefly indicated in this table will shew that the dominate thoughts of the Epistle,—the thoughts which inspired its beginning (1:1-17), its primary close (15:6-33), and its three characteristic chapters (9-11) in which the old faith and revelation are invoked on behalf of the new,—are precisely those expressed in the final doxology; and that the separate words and phrases of the Doxology are for the most part what have already occurred in the Epistle, while there are hardly any not to be found in epistles of the same or an earlier period. If this be so, the obvious resemblances to part of the later epistles lose all force as evidence of date. The Doxology and I Cor. 2:6-10, a passage absolutely inseparable from its context, support each other in shewing that St. Paul’s late teaching was his early belief;”¹⁰

Why Bullinger would refer his readers to the textual work of Hort in *The Foundations of Dispensational Truth* (1912/1913) to buttress his postscript theory is beyond our ability to comprehend! Hort’s explanation quoted above directly contradicts the doctrinal argument Bullinger is advancing with respect to the revelation of the mystery. While Hort does state that the revelation of the mystery pervades the later epistle of Ephesians he is equally clear that it is not foreign from Paul’s early thought. Hort’s exposition connects the doxology of Romans 16:25-27 with similar statements about the mystery in I Corinthians 2:6-10. During the early portion of his ministry, knowledge of the mystery factored strongly into Paul’s thinking; however, according to Hort, Paul was not able to fully expound it in Corinth because of the spiritual immaturity of this audience. Incidentally, this is the exact same argument that Bullinger made in 1894/1895 when he penned *The Mystery: Secret Truth Revealed*¹¹ and in 1898’s *The*

¹⁰ Ibid., 325-326.

¹¹ E. W. Bullinger, *The Mystery: Secret Truth Revealed*, 43-45. “I Cor. 2:1-2) Instead of declaring the Mystery, he (Paul) had to confine himself to the simplest truths of the Gospel. He preached only a crucified Savior. He could not declare all the great truths involved in a risen and glorified Savior. . . (quotes I Cor. 2:4-10) . . . These words have a special reference to the “hidden wisdom,” i.e., the mystery, and what is stated here is that no human being ever dreamed of it. It never entered into the head or heart of mortal man, “but God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit.” Then he goes on to explain what is the essence of a secret, in verses 10-11, and argues that a no one can tell what a man’s secret is, so no one could possibly have known what God’s secret was unless He had been pleased to reveal it. . . (quotes I Cor. 3:1-4) . . . The great central truth of the whole argument is that these Corinthian Christians were taken up with “Bodies” of men, as we now call them, they were therefore totally unfitted to receive the truth of the “one Body” of Christ. While they were putting the members in the place of the Head, they were carnal and not spiritual, and therefore not in a position to have the truth concerning “the mystery” declared to them.. Hence when the apostle went to Corinth he determined not to go beyond the simplest elementary gospel teaching, to feed them with milk, to proclaim a crucified Savior; for they were not in a condition to hear about the glorified Savior. . .”

Church Epistles.¹² In the end, Hort maintains that the doxology of Romans 16:25-27 and I Corinthians 2:6-10 form an inseparable link proving that Paul's later teaching (Ephesians and Colossians) was his early belief. In other words, Hort thinks that Paul knew the mystery when he wrote Romans and I Corinthians before he reached Rome in Acts 28.

Hort's comments are perhaps the best explanation in print regarding Paul's knowledge of the mystery and how it affected the content and timing of his early epistles. Paul not only knew the mystery when he wrote Romans, but it would have been impossible for him to have written chapters 9-11, i.e., the dispensational section, without a working knowledge of the mystery, according to Hort. Consequently, Hort asserts that the doxology is the only true and proper ending to the book of Romans because the separate thoughts contained in the doxology were already expressed throughout the epistle. An evaluation of Hort's essay leads to the following conclusions: 1) Hort does not agree with the textual arguments set forth by Lightfoot in the first essay, and 2) doctrinally, Hort's comments directly contradict the doctrinal arguments of Bullinger in *The Foundations of Dispensational Truth*.

Doctrinally Lightfoot Agrees with Hort not Bullinger

The third essay is the response of Bishop Lightfoot to Dr. Hort's critique. At the end of the first paragraph, Lightfoot admits that Hort found his theory to be untenable. (Lightfoot, 352) Lightfoot summarizes Hort's textual argument as follows:

“As regards the varying position of this doxology, Mr. Hort's explanations suppose the following stages. 1) The original place was at the end of the Epistle. 2) It was afterwards attached to 14:23 for reading in Church. 3) Scribes accustomed to hear it in that connection in the public lessons half mechanically introduce it into the text of St. Paul at this place. 4) It would then be struck off from the end of the Epistle, that the same doxology might not occur twice. Thus we arrive at the vulgar Greek text, which has it at the end of the 14th chapter only. . . In Mr. Hort's criticism of the theory itself, as distinct from the fact which evoked it . . . I have assigned to the doxology (16:25-27) to the shorted recension of the Epistle, which I supposed to have been issued by St. Paul himself at a later date, and had produced to show that its style very closely resembles that of the Apostle's later Epistles. Mr. Hort himself considers it to have been the termination of the original Epistle. His argument is threefold: a) that it is

¹² E. W. Bullinger. *The Church Epistles*, 81-83. “We have seen how, in Rom. 16:25-26 “the Mystery” is referred to and stated as a fact. The time was come for it to be made known, that the saints might be established as the Church of God, apart from the earthly hope of Israel as a nation, now, that as a nation Israel was cast-off. The saints were to know a higher and a heavenly calling. But in I Cor. 2 the reasons are given why, when the apostle was at Corinth, he could not preach “the Mystery” to the saints there. . . Instead of recognizing that they were “one body in Christ” and “members one of another” (Rom. 12:5) they were forming separate “Bodies” of their own, and classing themselves under different teachers, and everyone said, “I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas” (I Cor. 1:12). Instead of reckoning themselves as having died with Christ to sin, since he had died for their sins (Cp. 6:4) they were living in sin. . . This is why he could not preach “the Mystery: to them. . . That is to say, owing to there divisions, and their being taken up with their own “Bodies,” they were not in a fit condition, spiritually, to receive the revelation of the Mystery, which is the one body of Christ, of which He is the glorious Head in heaven, and His people the members of on earth.”

appropriate; b) that St. Paul at the time entertained the ideas contained in it; c) that it presents numberless close parallels of expression to the earlier Epistles.”¹³

A deeper evaluation of the third essay is truly damaging to Bullinger’s reliance upon Lightfoot because it reveals that the Bishop agreed doctrinally with much of what Dr. Hort asserted regarding Paul’s knowledge of the mystery before Acts 28. In fact, it is ironic that Bullinger would use Lightfoot’s postscript theory to advance his new dispensational position given that Lightfoot’s doctrinal view is completely at odds with the reason that Bullinger finds the postscript theory attractive. Lightfoot agrees with Hort on point A listed in the preceding quotation, i.e., that the doctrine contained in the doxology is an appropriate close to the book of Romans. Lightfoot states:

“As regards its appropriateness, I entirely agree with him. . . The central idea as I conceive it, is the comprehensive offer a righteousness to Jews and Gentiles impartially, following on the comprehensive failure of both alike before Christ’s coming. After this idea has been developed, the objection arises that, however comprehensive may be the offer, the acceptance at all events is partial and one-sided; that while the Gentiles seem gladly to accept it, the Jews stand aloof; and thus the promise of the Old Testament appear to be nullified, and indeed reversed . . . To the whole body of the Epistle however, in which the comprehensive failure, the comprehensive grace, the comprehensive acceptance, have been set forth in succession, the doxology forms an eminently appropriate close. An outburst of thanksgiving for the revelation of this ‘mystery’ of the impartial Fatherhood of God in Christ is the proper sequel to the contents of the Epistle. The adaptation would not indeed be easily reconcilable with any other authorship than St. Paul’s; but if written by him, whether early or late, we should except it to be appropriate.”¹⁴

Consequently, we see that Lightfoot acknowledged that the basic purpose of the Epistle was to inform the Romans that a dispensational change was already underway. Please recall that the reason why Bullinger embraced Lightfoot’s postscript theory was to avoid the very doctrinal point that Lightfoot embraces.

While Lightfoot does not agree with Hort about the close parallels of expression found in Romans and Paul’s other earlier writings (Corinthians and Galatians), he does acknowledge that “the impartiality and universality of God’s grace as a truth revealed in Christ” was not foreign to Paul’s thoughts during his early period “though it assumed a much greater prominence afterwards.” Lightfoot even understand Paul’s focus on God’s grace through Christ as an idea that flowed “from his commission as the Apostle of the Gentiles.”¹⁵

Conclusion

Why would Bullinger refer his readers to the textual work of Lightfoot and Hort if it so severely undermined the doctrinal position that he was advancing? Why would a scholar and thinker of Bullinger’s caliber make such a seemingly obvious mistake? It is hard to believe that Bullinger was unfamiliar with the content of these essays from the

¹³ Lightfoot, 363, 366.

¹⁴ Ibid., 366.

¹⁵ Ibid., 367.

Journal of Philosophy given the number of times that he refers to the authors in his various writings and given his evident familiarity with the textual arguments contained in the essays. Put another way, it seems highly unlikely that Bullinger, who was familiar with the postscript theory in general, and the textual arguments of its proponents, was completely ignorant of their views on the doctrinal aspects of the postscript theory. The *Grace History Project* believes that in his attempt to bolster his new dispensational position that the mystery was not revealed until after Paul reached Rome in Acts 28, Bullinger seized upon the textual work of Lightfoot that he had been previously exposed to through Lightfoot's writings and altered it to suit his new paradigm. It does not seem to have mattered to Bullinger what else Lightfoot and Hort said about the doxology in Romans 16:25-27 as long as it fit with his new interpretation. In short, Bullinger found in the postscript theory a mechanism to make his newly adopted model work.

This is perhaps indicative of a much greater flaw in Bullinger's later thinking, i.e. that his foundational premise was wrong from the start. On the first page of the introduction to *The Foundation of Dispensational Truth*, the reader is confronted with the following statement:

“There is one great foundation principle in the science of LOGIC which will meet all the difficulties, if we are careful to observe it. It is this: *we cannot reason from the particular to the general*. That is to say, we cannot expect to find the *general* principles, which we may regard “the truth,” by arguing from certain *particular parts* of the truth. On the contrary we must reason from the *general to the particular*, if we would reason accurately.”¹⁶

In essence what Bullinger is doing is arguing for the use of deductive reasoning over inductive reasoning in order to establish the proper foundations of dispensational truth. In other words, Dr. Bullinger is suggesting proper reasoning starts with a generalization and then reasons from the general to the particular. The general premise from which Bullinger launches his investigation is “the important and dominant principle of Acts 28 and the Pauline Epistles.”¹⁷ That is to say, Bullinger assumes that the mystery was not revealed until Acts 28, and this assumption then cascades throughout the rest of his thinking. Therefore, all of the particular information he discusses, including the postscript theory, will be judged in light of his initial generalization.

Charles F. Baker author of *A Dispensational Theology* takes Bullinger to task over his use of deductive reasoning. Mr. Baker states that Bullinger begins with the premise that “the Body of Christ and the revelation of the Mystery did not begin until after Acts 28.”¹⁸ Pastor Baker points out how convenient this methodology is for Bullinger when he states, “if we encounter difficulties in Paul's earlier epistles which seem to contradict this premise, we are simply to remember that we cannot find the truth by arguing about particulars.”¹⁹ Our point here is not to haggle over the utility of deductive versus inductive reasoning. Rather, it is simply to point out that deductive reasoning is only as sound as the validity of its initial generalization. Pastor Baker goes on to offer the following elaboration:

“As we saw earlier, all scientific investigation is done upon the basis of Inductive reasoning. We cannot establish a major premise for Deductive reasoning without

¹⁶ E.W. Bullinger. *The Foundations of Dispensational Truth*, vii.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, viii.

¹⁸ Charles F. Baker. *A Dispensational Theology*, 470.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 470.

first making a complete induction of the facts. How do we know that Dr. Bullinger's premise is true? People once believed that putrefying meat spontaneously generated maggots, but finally Pasteur applied the scientific method and discovered that if the meat were kept in a covered container so that flies could not lay eggs on the meat, no maggots were formed. He disproved the major premise of the public by a particular. Would Dr. Bullinger ask us to go on believing in spontaneous generation of maggots, in spite of particulars to the contrary?

But even Dr. Bullinger is forced to see the inconsistency of his stand on this point. Notice his words: "If Paul knew anything personally about the Mystery before Acts xxviii, he could hardly have made it known even to individuals without entirely upsetting their Dispensational standing. Though it was not committed to writing, yet we can in no wise assert that he did not mention it one to another, who were prepared to receive it, or be initiated into it. This is the meaning of the word 'perfect' in 1 Cor. ii. 6." He practically admits that there were a few mature saints to whom Paul made known the mystery during the Acts period on the basis that Paul mentioned the mystery in 1 Cor. 2:6, but then he assumes on his own authority that the mystery could not have begun until Paul wrote the Ephesian Epistle explaining the mystery. Where do we find proof for the idea that a dispensational program cannot begin until it is committed to writing? If this be the case when did our Lord's earthly ministry begin? When the Gospels were reduced to writing? And when did the Pentecostal ministry begin? Was it at Pentecost or when Luke wrote the Acts, which was after the Acts period closed? Are we to suppose that the truth of the gift of God's righteousness of faith apart from the law first became operative when Paul penned the words of Romans 3:21? Paul surely first preached as truth for people of his day everything that he later put down in his epistles. The content of his epistles was dictated largely by errors of doctrine that the Christians had fallen into. Paul's oral teaching came first. Afterward he wrote to correct and to instruct further in what he had taught while present with them."²⁰

What Pastor Baker's comments point out is that Bullinger was willing to either augment or interpret the particulars however he needed to in order for his general premise to work. This practice applies not only to Bullinger's exegeses of Scriptural texts as pointed out by Baker above, but also to his usage of Lightfoot's postscript theory. In short, Bullinger was not allowing the particulars to correct any errors present in his original premise. Instead, he altered the particulars as needed to make them fit his premise.

²⁰ Ibid., 470-471.

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