

Sunday, March 4, 2012—Grace Life School of Theology—*Grace History Project*—Lesson 60
When Was the Mystery No Longer a Mystery? Advancements in Pauline Truth through 1870,
Part 1

Introduction

- So far we have been tracing the development of dispensational theology in general. In this lesson we want to shift our focus towards dispensational thinkers who began to articulate a mid-Acts dispensational view.
- Twice throughout the duration of this class (Lessons 7 and 42), I have presented the following chart from Fredrick Lewis, outlining the order in which Pauline truth was “lost” (my term “abandoned”) and “recovered” (my term “resurgence”). Please note that according to Lewis, “The distinctive message and ministry of the Apostle Paul” was not “recovered” until the middle of the 1900s by men such as O’Hair, Stam, and Baker.

Pauline Truths Lost (Order of Loss)

- *First*—The Distinctive Message and Ministry of the Apostle Paul
- *Second*—The Pre-Tribulational Rapture of the Church, the Body of Christ
- *Third*—The Difference Between Israel and the Church, the Body of Christ
- *Fourth*—Justification by Grace, Through Faith Alone, in Christ Alone

Pauline Truths Recovered (Order of Recovery)

- *First*—Justification by Grace, Through Faith Alone, in Christ Alone. Recovered via the Protestant Revolution in the 16th century via Luther and others.
- *Second*—The Difference Between Israel and the Church, the Body of Christ. Recovered in the 1800s via John Nelson Darby, E.W. Bullinger, Sir Robert Anderson and others.
- *Third*—The Pre-Tribulational Rapture of the Church, the Body of Christ. Recovered in the 19th Century via John Nelson Darby, and included and popularized by C.I. Scofield in his Reference Bible in 1909.
- *Fourth*—The Distinctive Message and Ministry of the Apostle Paul. Recovered from the middle of the 1900s via J.C. O’Hair, Charles F. Baker, Cornelius R. Stam and others. (Lewis, 1)
- Lewis’s chart fits a commonly held historical model amongst mid-Acts dispensationalists which traces the history of the development of Pauline truth in institutional terms. In other words, the historical sources that do exist are published by organized groups within the so-called grace movement, i.e., Grace Gospel Fellowship, Berean Bible Fellowship, Berean Bible Society, etc. Consequently, these works trace the development of the doctrine only as far back as the ministries of their founders, thereby creating the perception that no one understood the distinctive message and ministry of the Apostle Paul until the 1930s.
- One example of this approach can be seen in the July 1974 edition of *Truth Magazine*, the official periodical of the Grace Gospel Fellowship. This special edition of the magazine contained an article by Ray Reich, then the librarian at Grace Bible College, titled, “Our Grace Heritage.” As the title suggests, the main purpose of the article is to give the history of the GGF and its sister ministries and therefore says little about the state of Pauline truth prior to the 1930s.

- While there is nothing wrong with Mr. Reich's article, it offers no insight into the process whereby mid-Acts dispensationalism came to be understood. It is the contention of the *Grace History Project* that significant advancements in the resurgence of Pauline truth were made by the generations immediately following JND. In fact, these advancements were such that it can be proven that the major tenants of the mid-Acts position can be observed in print by 1870 and for sure by 1900.
- This massive resurgence in mid-Acts Pauline dispensationalism is best understood by observing a process of generational refinement. For example, JND articulated many of the fundamental viewpoints utilized by the mid-Acts position. Building on the shoulders of Darby's work, subsequent generations were able to restore major elements of the mid-Acts position. This lesson is the first step in uncovering this exciting, rewarding, edifying, and overlooked history.
- The simplest way to trace the historical development of mid-Acts Pauline dispensationalism is to consider the emerging understanding of "the mystery" doctrine found in Roman 16, Ephesians 3, and Colossians 1. Once "the mystery" was understood as a unique Pauline revelation, it was only a matter of time before the Acts 2 position was no longer sustainable for those striving for doctrinal consistency.

1828 American Study Bible

- During my preparations for these lessons, Mike and Rani Marek of Grand Rapids, MI handed me a copy of a study Bible published in the United States in 1829 by Edmund Cushing out of Lunenburg, Massachusetts. The New Testament, however, has a separate title page with a publication date of 1828. While the volume is not clear as to the identity of its editors, it contains the following marginal heading above Ephesians 3.
 - "The hidden mystery, that the Gentiles should be saved, was made known to Paul by revelation: and to him was that grace given, that he should preach it."
- While this statement is far from being explicitly clear, it does show that its author was aware of the great mystery revealed to Paul in Ephesians 3. This statement is instructive because it highlights a point made by Paul in the first century (Eph. 3:4), which continues to be made by mid-Acts dispensationalists: that if one would just read their Bible, they could not help but understand that Paul is the one through whom previously hidden information was revealed.
- This Bible is unique because it serves as a pre-Darby testimony to the understanding of the mystery. JND was 28 years old when this New Testament was first published, and at the most he had only understood dispensational truth for one year: Dec. 1826/Jan. 1827 through 1828. Given these factors, it is not possible that Darbyite dispensationalism impacted the American editors responsible for the heading quoted above. Therefore, the American editors of this study Bible made the notation without any input from, or being informed in any way, by Darby.
- Lastly, in the back of this Bible its editors divide scripture into seven ages of the world, thereby demonstrating some appreciation for dispensational truth in general.

John Nelson Darby's *The Rapture of the Saints and the Character of the Jewish Remnant*

- We have already studied at length JND's teaching regarding the nature of the current dispensation. For a complete discussion of the matter, interested parties should consult lessons 55 and 56. In this lesson we will limit our discussion to what JND said about when the church began, as well as his comments on "the mystery."
- JND understood that the church was not the subject of prophecy, but a mystery, kept secret since the world began.
 - "I distinguish entirely between the church and prophecy. I do not believe the church is the subject, though it is the recipient and depositary of prophecy, as Abraham was of what should happen to Lot." (*Letters*, 1:131)
 - The church as one body in Christ, composed of Jews and Gentiles, was not spoken of in the O.T. (*Collected Writings*, 10:15, 83, 244)
 - "The Scripture meaning of mystery is that known only by revelation, not by human knowledge." (*Collected Writings* 9:248)
 - The mystery formed no part of the O.T. prophecy or promise. (*Collected Writings*, 10:248)
- In *The Rapture of the Saints and the Character of the Jewish Remnant*, JND stated the following regarding the mystery:
 - "We have the largest and fullest warrant for saying, that it was entirely unrevealed in the Old Testament. Speaking of the mystery, the admission of the Gentiles to be of the one body in the assembly of God, Paul says (JND quotes Roman 16:25; Ephesians 3:4-5, 9; Colossians 1:24) . . . This doctrine, of which Paul, as he states in the Colossians, was a minister, as well as of the gospel, in order to complete the word of God, was thus wholly unknown to the saints of the Old Testament. Much more was utterly obscure; but this was hid in God. Other things they might have were for an age to come, not for themselves, as the promise of the Spirit and the Messiah's glory and redemption; but this they knew not at all." (*Collected Writings*, 11:149-157)
- JND taught that the church was a unique Pauline revelation:
 - "What will, perhaps, surprise the reader, the church is never named in the epistles but by Paul. A particular assembly is named by John; but the assembly or church as a whole, the body of Christ, is spoken of by Paul only;" (*Collected Writings*, 11:149-157)
- JND believed that Acts 2 was the beginning of the church:
 - "And the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, came down according to promise; and the assembly, the church, was formed; and the Lord added daily to the church such as should be saved (the residue); Acts 2: 47." (*Collected Writings*, 11:149-157)

- Despite arguing that the church began on the day of Pentecost, JND admits that the opening chapters of Acts are thoroughly Jewish. Consider what JND wrote immediately following the previous quote:
 - “That was the way He now disposed of them, though His promises to Israel remained sure. The doctrine of the church, however, was not taught as far as Scripture informs us. The Christians remained strictly attached to Judaism, zealous of the law; priests were obedient to the faith, nor seem to have ceased to be priests. Peter never even teaches that Jesus is the Son of God; his doctrine is, ‘Him whom ye have crucified, God hath exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and remission of sins’: God had made Him both Lord and Christ.” (*Collected Writings*, 11:149-157)
- JND demonstrates knowledge that Paul’s Apostleship was separate from that of the twelve, as well as the dispensational significance of the stoning of Stephen in Acts 7, despite arguing that the church began in Acts 2.
 - “What will, perhaps, surprise the reader, the church is never named in the epistles but by Paul. A particular assembly is named by John; but the assembly or church as a whole, the body of Christ, is spoken of by Paul only; nor, consequently, I may add, the rapture of the saints before the appearing of Christ. God raised up, we learn in the Acts, a free ministry outside the college of the apostles. This brought out the fullest hatred of the Jews; and Stephen, an eminent instrument of God in this ministry, is put to death. Heaven receives its first-fruits of the power of the Holy Ghost, of the church; heaven itself is opened, and a heavenly Christ is seen - a man in glory is seen. Conformed to Christ, the spirit of Stephen joins Him on high, and the final tale of Judaism was told in blood: they always resisted the Holy Ghost. God did not dwell in a house made by hands. This changed everything; a heavenly gathering before Christ's return was actually begun.” (*Collected Writings*, 11:149-157)
- JND’s teaching regarding the beginning of the current dispensation could be classified as muddled at best. While Darby clearly states multiple times that the church was a mystery nowhere revealed in the prophetic scriptures, he fails to see that the events of Acts 2 are the fulfillment of prophecy made in Joel 2. Despite clearly stating that the church was formed on the day of Pentecost, JND rightly recognizes that Israel is still first in the plan and program of God from Acts 2 through 7, calling the stoning of Stephen “the final tale of Judaism.” Moreover, JND clearly understood that Paul’s apostleship was unique or “outside of the college of apostles,” because “the church is never named in the epistles but by Paul,” and “the body of Christ is spoken of by Paul only.” JND’s thinking on these matters was light years ahead of his spiritual forebears but it still possessed certain blind spots and they were in need of refinement.

William Trotter’s “Christ and Church” (1850-1853?)

- William Trotter’s “Christ and the Church” is the fifth paper of twenty found in *Plain Papers on Prophetic and Other Subjects*. “The second edition of William Trotter’s *Plain Papers on Prophetic and Other Subjects*, which became popular in the United States, was written sometime during the American Civil War. The first edition was published anonymously in England some ten years earlier. In the 1886 edition of Blackstone’s

Jesus Is Coming, Revell advertises thus: ‘Trotter’s *Plain Papers* have long been considered among the very best, if not the best, popular presentation of Prophetic Truth in print either in England or America.’” (Kraus, 51)

- The 2002 reprint of Trotter’s *Plain Papers* contains a reproduction of the Preface to the second edition as well as an informative footnote in the second paper, “Approaching Judgments.”
 - Preface—“Upward of ten years have elapsed since the first edition began. That now, in closely perusing the sheets for the present edition, he should find, save for clearness of expression here and there, so little to change, is with the writer matter of since thankfulness to God.” (Trotter, iii)
 - Footnote—“The above was written in January, 1853, and is left exactly as it appeared in the first edition.” (Trotter, 9)
- Therefore, we are safe in concluding that the first edition was written sometime between 1850 and 1853. (Trotter,
- Trotter, like JND, clearly states that the church was formed by the descent of the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost.
 - “It was not till after the death and resurrection of Jesus that the Church began. In the purpose of God, as we shall see, it existed before all worlds. But as to its actual existence on earth, the Church was formed by the descent of the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost.”
 - “The three thousand (fruit of this testimony) who gladly received the word, and were baptized in the name of Jesus, were added to the Church. The Church was now in actual existence.”
 - “For the formation of the Church two things were needed — the death of Christ and the descent of the Holy Ghost. . . Hence, the very first mention we have of the Church historically, i.e., as actually existing, is in Acts 2, when Christ had been glorified, and the Holy Ghost had come down. Then the Church was formed.”
- Trotter, like JND, views the first seven chapters of Acts as being uniquely Jewish, despite beginning the church in Acts 2 on the day of Pentecost.
 - “The Lord added them to the Church daily. Still God’s mercy lingered over Jerusalem and the Jewish people; and no one can read the early chapters of the Acts without perceiving how the testimony in these chapters was especially addressed to the Jews. If even then they would have repented of their sin in rejecting and crucifying their Messiah, how ready God still was to pardon and blot out all! But, alas! in the martyrdom of Stephen, they as utterly rejected all these gracious overtures by the Holy Ghost come down from heaven, as in the crucifixion of Jesus, they had refused the One who, in incarnate love and tenderness, would fain have gathered their children together. Jerusalem had now to be given up.”

- According to Trotter, the mystery of the Church was revealed to Paul after the stoning of Stephen in Acts 7.
 - “. . . from among Stephen's murderers, one is chosen by sovereign grace to be the special instrument of making known the full heavenly portion and glory of the Church. Saul of Tarsus is transformed into Paul the apostle; and it is in his Epistles that we find the full revelation of this mystery, till then hid in God from before the foundation of the world. . . True that for awhile it (the church) consisted entirely of Jews, while a special testimony to the Jews was being carried on at Jerusalem. This being rejected, Peter was sent to the Gentiles; the apostle of the Gentiles was called; believing Gentiles were incorporated with the Jews who had already believed; and the full, heavenly portion and unity and glory of the Church, as one with Christ by the Holy Ghost, was revealed to Paul, and made known in his ministry and epistles. The Church existed from the day of Pentecost; but the chosen vessel for its full instruction as to the mind of God respecting it was Paul; and his conversion did not take place till after the definite rejection by Jerusalem of the last lingerings of divine mercy, in the testimony of the Holy Ghost come down from heaven.”
- Trotter understood that the church was in the mind of God before the foundation of the world, and while it was last to be revealed, it existed in God’s mind in eternity past.
 - “The first thing to be noticed in what this epistle teaches as to the Church is this — that though, as we have seen, the Church was called last into existence in the developed order of God's ways, it existed in His mind and purpose before the unfolding of His ways commenced. Before God separated Israel to Himself as a peculiar nation on the earth — before the nations existed from amid which Abraham and his seed were called — yea, before the mountains were settled, or the hills brought forth, the Church existed in the purpose of God. . . What a place this gives to the Church! The subject, in Christ, of divine thoughts and counsels in all past eternity, it is to be the vessel for the display of God's brightest glory in eternal ages yet to come.”
- Trotter taught that the dispensation of grace, with its main characteristic being equality between Israel and Gentiles, is the subject of the great mystery that had been hid in God.
 - “Another thing demanding attention is, that this great thought of God from all eternity was not revealed, or made known, till at least four thousand years of the world's history had run their course. ‘If ye have heard,’ says Paul, ‘of the dispensation of the grace of God, which is given me to you-ward: how that by revelation he 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.’ (Eph. 3: 2-6.) Then again, he speaks of making all see ‘what is the fellowship of the mystery, which, from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God.’ (Ver. 9.) Observe, that we are not told here of a mystery, in the mere sense of its being something, in itself, above the powers of nature or reason to have discovered. All the revealed truths of the Gospel are mysteries in this sense. But this was a mystery ‘hid in God’ — an unrevealed mystery. The apostle not

only says that it required revelation to make it known, but that it had not *been*, till in his time, *made known* by revelation. ‘Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed.’ This declaration is of great importance: it draws a wide line of distinction between this mystery, now revealed to Paul and the other apostles and prophets, and all that had been the subject of Old Testament instruction or prediction. It was not a mystery *hid in God* from the beginning of the world, that Christ should come — that Christ should suffer — that Christ should reign. It was not an *unrevealed* mystery, even that Christ should rise from the dead, and take His seat at the right hand of God. Psalms 16, Psalm 110 and many other portions of Scripture, had foretold these things. It was no mystery *hid in God*, that Israel should be happy and prosperous under Messiah's reign; or, even, that the Gentiles should, in a subordinate place to that of Israel, be brought into blessing beneath His sceptre of peace. Many passages in the Old Testament plainly foretell all this. But that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, not only with believing Jews, but with Christ Himself; in short, that Christ should have a body, quickened and gathered into unity with Himself by the Holy Ghost — gathered from among the fallen sons of men, both Jews and Gentiles — a body united to Him now by the Spirit, and to share His blessedness and glory for ever — this was a mystery indeed — a mystery *hid in God*, and never revealed, till it was revealed to the holy apostles and prophets of the New Testament by the Spirit. Yet such a body is the Church of God.”

- Trotter understood that the blessings apportioned to the church were not the physical blessings appointed to Israel, but were spiritual blessings in heavenly places.
 - “Further: the blessings of the Church are *spiritual* blessings in *heavenly* places — not *temporal* blessings, as Israel's were. It was promised that they, if obedient, should be blessed in their basket and in their store, in the fruit of their body, the fruit of their cattle, and the fruit of the ground. It was with temporal blessings that they were to be blessed. And even in millennial times, when they will enjoy spiritual blessings also, the possession of every temporal comfort is a prominent feature in their predicted condition. ‘And the tree of the field shall yield her fruit, and the earth shall yield her increase, and they shall be safe in their land, and shall know that I am the Lord.’ (Ezek. 34: 27.) There are no such promises as these to the Church. Existing, as it does, by virtue of union with a risen and exalted Saviour, its blessings are spiritual. Redemption, forgiveness, acceptance, adoption, knowledge of God's mind and will, co-heirship with Christ, the earnest of the Spirit; these, and such as these, are the blessings with which the Church is blessed. And it is *in heavenly places* too. . . Notice in this passage — 1. That Christ having, in order to vindicate God's holy majesty, and accomplish His purposes of holy love, gone down into death, He, the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, has raised Him from the dead, exalted Him to His own right hand in the heavenly places, and made Him head over all things, all things being put under Him. — 2. The Church is the body of Him to whom all things in heaven and in earth are thus subjected. — 3. The power which now works in the believer, is the power which wrought in Christ, when He was thus exalted from the grave to the right hand of God. — 4. The working of this power in the Church is according to its working in Christ when He was raised from the dead, and received up to glory. In a word, earth having rejected, and heaven having received Jesus, the Church is the body of Him, who has been thus rejected

by the one and received by the other. And where can the Church have its blessings? On the earth which has *rejected*, or in heaven which has *received* Christ? There can be but one answer to this question. ‘Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in *heavenly places* in Christ.’ May the heart of each Christian who reads these pages join to say so! . . . So completely is the Church identified with Christ, that what is affirmed of the one is affirmed of the other also. Did Christ die *for* sin, while we were dead in sin, and was He quickened from that death He stooped to undergo? God hath quickened us together with Him! Was Christ raised as well as quickened? God hath raised us up together. Has Christ sat down in heavenly places? God hath made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. The Church is in Christ. It is His body, His fulness.”

- While he does not explicitly use the terms “time past” and “but now” in the way we do, Trotter understood the basic concept of this foundational distinction.
 - “One thing follows immediately in the chapter we are considering. That is, that in the presence of this unity with Christ, and with each other, all earthly distinctions disappear. No earthly difference could be so great as that between Jews and Gentiles. It was a distinction established of God Himself, who had separated Israel to Himself as His own peculiar nation. It was a distinction inseparable from the law, which, being the instrument of God's government of the Jews, while the Gentiles were not so governed, made manifest that God was the God of the Jews, while the Gentiles were ‘without God in the world.’ **But, now** that the earth is no longer thus in view as the scene of God's discriminating government, men are regarded according to what they really are; and viewed thus, Jews and Gentiles are all alike ‘dead in sins.’ There is no difference. A Jew might be outwardly nigh, and a Gentile outwardly far off; ‘**But now**’ says the apostle, ‘in Christ Jesus, ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ; for he is our peace who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; having abolished in his flesh the enmity, the law of commandments in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; and that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby.’ All that separated Jew from Gentile, as well as all that separated both from God, Christ has set aside by the cross, making peace by His blood, and reconciling both to God in one body. What was the design of this? It was ‘to make in himself of twain one new man:’ this new mystic man of which He Himself, Christ, glorified, is the Head; and of which Jews and Gentiles, who truly believe, are alike members. The Jew taken out of his natural position, and the Gentile taken out of his, are both brought into this new wondrous position — of being members of this new mystic man — ‘members of Christ.’ Marvelous grace! . . . The Gentiles were built together with the Jews to be the habitation of God through the Spirit. As Israel was separated from the nations, so was the Church from the world. It was no longer of it. Its formation on earth began after the breaking down, by the cross, of the middle wall of partition. It was as a new man, Jews and Gentiles being reconciled to God in one body. Besides, we find that instead of a temple made with hands, where Jehovah dwelt, this union of Jewish and Gentile believers in one body, formed the habitation of God upon earth, and that this habitation was by the Spirit.”

- Trotter understood that the church has an active teaching ministry that extends into the heavenly places. According to Trotter, the principalities and powers in heavenly places learn the manifold wisdom of God through the church the body of Christ.
 - “Eph. 3, which shows how all this was a mystery hid in God from all previous ages, has been already considered; and it is only noticed here to call the attention of my reader to the tenth verse. How important must be the place in divine counsels filled by the Church, when we see, that it is by means of the Church the manifold wisdom of God is made known to the principalities and powers in heavenly places. We naturally think of the world, and the Christian feels the importance of a true and faithful testimony for God in the world; and so he ought to feel. But here is disclosed to us, that God is making Himself known in heaven as well as on earth; and that in the Church — fruit as it is of his own workmanship — (see Eph. 2: 10) He is making known to the principalities and powers in heavenly places His own manifold wisdom. What an unspeakably honoured place for the Church is this; to be thus the vessel for the display of God's glory, not only, not chiefly, to those on earth, but to those in heaven!”
- Trotter taught that the mystery of God’s will, with which the church had been entrusted, included the dispensation of the fullness of times. He stated the following regarding the nature of this previously unrevealed yet future time period.
 - “The mystery of God's will, the knowledge of which is thus entrusted ‘to the Church,’ has reference to a period here termed ‘the dispensation of the fulness of times.’ . . . ‘the dispensation of the fulness of times,’ in which all things in heaven and in earth are to be gathered together in one, that is, in Christ. This is evidently something future. The reconciliation of all things in heaven and in earth, we have already seen in Col. 1, is future, though peace has been already made by the blood of the cross. The Church is now reconciled; but things in heaven and on earth are yet to be reconciled. So here in Eph. 1 — the Church is blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ, and has confided to it the knowledge of the mystery of God's will: but things in heaven and things on earth are not yet being gathered, much less actually *gathered* together in one in Christ. The Church itself is being gathered for the heavens; but it is of *things* in heaven and *things* on earth that it is said they are all to be gathered together in Christ. . . Surely a dispensation so marked is of the deepest importance — a dispensation in which all the apparent failures of God will be proved to have been but the means of displaying His power and wisdom. . . Fourthly, in the dispensation of the fulness of times, when Christ is the centre of unity and blessing to all in heaven and all on earth, all being under His Headship, and gathered together in one, even in Him, the Church is to share with Him this inheritance of all things. . . It is in the dispensation of the fulness of times that He is to be manifested as Head over all things in heaven and on earth. And the Church is to be manifested as His Body, His Bride. Wondrous destiny! Already is He seated at God's right hand on high; but He waits for this inheritance of all things both in heaven and on earth. We now are seated in heavenly places in Him, and are waiting for the moment when we shall share this inheritance of all things, with our now rejected Saviour, Head, and Lord.”
- Trotter, like Darby before him, identified the body of Christ as the Bride of Christ and spends a lengthy section of “Christ and the Church” explaining his views on this subject.

Despite his official Acts 2 stance, Trotter's work shows the same confusion as JND's over the clearly Jewish nature of the first seven chapters of Acts. All told, it is not difficult to see clear refinement and advancement in Trotter's work beyond the understanding articulated by Darby. Trotter is more thorough and precise in his definition of the mystery. Trotter clearly teaches that the mystery was in the mind of God before the world and was not revealed until the ministry of the Apostle Paul. Moreover, Trotter sees the church's blessings as being totally spiritual in comparison with Israel's earthly blessings. In addition, Trotter utilized the biblical phrase "but now" when contrasting the nature of Jew/Gentile relationship of the current dispensation with the previous one. Furthermore, Trotter clearly sees the church as playing an active role in teaching principalities and powers in heavenly places about the manifold wisdom of God. Lastly, Trotter's work shows clear advancement regarding his understanding of the dispensation of the fullness of times as a future dispensation during which all things in heaven and earth are centered in Jesus Christ.

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