

Chafer's positive declaration is again difficult to understand in the light of the statements of William Kelly, writing in 1915 in his Lectures on the New Testament Doctrine of the Holy Spirit. Kelly states (p. 295) that "the saints had a new nature all through the Old Testament times (though not revealed then) . . ." He also says: "there is such a thing as spiritual life; and there always was such a thing; for it is the necessary condition of having to do with God. There always was, as there is, a positive new nature given to the believer; that is, it is not merely a question of faith, but of a new life." (pp. 3-4). Even more explicitly, he asserts: "Of course, He, the Son, is the quickener of all saints, and therefore it is to me no question whether the Old Testament saints have not been quickened as really as ourselves; assuredly they must be and were. I hold, that there never was but one Saviour, and consequently that the new birth, which all need for God's kingdom, is ever the impartation, by the Spirit, of the life which is in the Son of God." (p. 21). And so that Kelly will not be misunderstood, he states: "In point of fact, no intelligent believer doubts it was true from the fall onwards, and that the Old Testament saints were born of water and the Spirit no less than those of the New Testament" (p. 52).

Notice! Neither Scofield nor Kelly subscribe to the principle that lack of explicit teaching concerning an operation of the Spirit in a particular time period indicates absence of that operation during that time period!

Simply because the concept of the church as a spiritual body in which Christ and all believers are united was not revealed in the Old Testament, does this mean that the church in this sense could not have existed during the Old Testament? Only if one adopts the assumption: "not revealed, therefore nonexistent."

Almost all dispensationalists in the early period of the movement rejected this assumption; a number in the middle period adopted it; and quite a few in the contemporary period have once again rejected it.

However, if one rejects this assumption--NOT REVEALED, THEREFORE NONEXISTENT--how can one continue to stress the idea that the church was nonexistent in the Old Testament period, simply on the ground that the concept of the church (and the New Testament church, at that!) was not revealed in the Old Testament?

(4) The Problem of the Hermeneutics of Prophecy

The problem here is one arising out of the fear that any recognition of a unity between the Old Testament covenant community and the New Testament community could result in the obscuring or even the destruction of the clear distinction between the place of Israel and the place of the church in God's prophetic program, thus opening the way either for a figurative-spiritualization interpretation of Old Testament predictions related to Israel, or for a post-tribulationist rapturist view.

Although I am sympathetic to these fears, I believe that they are groundless, and for two reasons.

First, it simply does not follow that "a consistent application of Covenant Theology to eschatology leads inevitably to Amillennialism." In point of fact, there is nothing in the concepts of the Covenant of Works and the Covenant of Grace in their outworking that even hints at a particular stance on the millennial issue! That issue must be settled by the hermeneutics of predictive prophecy one adopts and employs! Consistent Covenant Theologians have numbered among them Premillennialists, Postmillennialists, and Amillennialists. The difference is not consistency; it is hermeneutics!

The second reason I believe these fears are groundless is that it is possible to be a non-dispensationalist and be a pre-tribulationist, and an imminent pre-tribulationist at that! It does not follow that giving up an absolute distinction between Israel and the church leads inevitably to post-tribulationism (although many former dispensationalists have become post-tribulationists), unless, of course, the only basis for holding to pre-tribulationism lies in dispensational arguments and assumptions. It is possible to be an imminent pre-tribulationist