

FULLER THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY, 135 NORTH OAKLAND AVE., PASADENA, CALIF., SY. 6-8108, MU 1-9481

July 5, 1966

Dr. Charles Ryrie  
3909 Swiss Avenue  
Dallas, Texas 75204

Dear Charles:

Thank you for the reply to my letter setting forth my difficulties with your view of how people in the Old Testament came to salvation. Adequate discussion of all this is, of course, impossible by correspondence, as you say.

I frankly do not understand the dispensational position. If, as you state, there was nothing in the Old Testament sacrifices that could point a man to Christ and to His finished work, and if these sacrifices had only a theocratic purpose, so that the offerer was still left with a consciousness of sin, I do not see how it is possible for them to have exercised any saving faith in connection with the offering of the sacrifices. Faith comes in response to a revelation from God, but if the essential matter that brings a man to believe that God has saved him is as obscure as you make it, it seems very problematical that there can be any faith in connection with these sacrifices.

I also have difficulties with your disjuncture between the doctrine of assurance and the doctrine of faith. You indicate something of the problem when you point out that Hebrews seems to place assurance and faith in close proximity. Hebrews 3:6,14 make it very clear that a man is partaker of Christ only to the extent that he maintains full assurance. Hebrews 6:11,12 also indicates this. How then could these Old Testament believers (Abraham is an example of full assurance in Hebrews) have had any possibility of assurance if they must have the sacrifices as their basis for faith? It seems to me that the basis for faith must lie in other areas of revelation in the Old Testament, such as the stipulations of the Abrahamic and Davidic covenants. Here there are clear statements that can lead one to faith and full assurance. Then salvation and assurance of faith come to be virtually the same as they are in this dispensation since the cross. The only difference is that we have explicit knowledge concerning the basis upon which God can make such gracious promises as are found in the Abrahamic and Davidic covenants. But the Old Testament saint could believe God without understanding the cross; he could believe simply because God had said that He would save, according to the terms of these covenants.

Dr. Charles Ryrie

Page 2

July 5, 1966

I agree that the covenant theologian goes too far in saying what the Old Testament believer saw and understood of Christ, but I think dispensationalism is going too far in virtually ruling out all bases upon which an ordinary Israelite could have believed and had the assurance of salvation.

I am sorry I will have to wait until January, 1968, to see you. I was delighted to see your name on the A.A.T.S. conference program, and was looking forward to talking with you then, but then was called home because of the death of my mother.

Cordially yours in Christ,



Daniel P. Fuller

DPF:d1

May 26, 1966

Dear Dan,

Thank you for your letter and comments. I apologize for not having replied sooner, but the close of school and a week away prevented that.

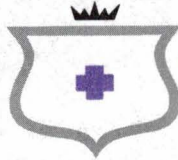
Obviously I do not believe, as you assert, that in the Mosaic economy "no one was saved at this time." The whole chapter points to the opposite conclusion. The book of Hebrews makes me wonder how much assurance they had, but then there are many genuinely saved people today who have little or no assurance. I would be interested to know how you relate the teaching of Hebrews to the problem. David seemed to have assurance, as you cite, and it was grounded in the chesed of God. I discuss this at some length in my book The Grace of God, pp. 15-20, 33-55. How much assurance the ordinary Israelite may have had is difficult, if not impossible, to determine from explicit statements in Scriptures. But lack of assurance does not mean that God did not give eternal salvation in those times. I believe that is the only kind of salvation He has ever given.

I quite agree that there were other revelations during the period of the law beside the law itself and that these were part of that for which man was held responsible by God. What they were and whether or not belief in them brought with it eternal salvation might be a worthy subject of detailed study. You make such a study and send me a copy of the results!

This seems like a very brief reply, but I find it very unsatisfactory to carry on discussion by this means. I think we should hope for an early opportunity to talk face to face. I would certainly welcome a visit with you, though, at the moment, I have no immediate plans to come your way until January 68.

Greet Dave for me. I seem to miss him every time he comes this way.

Cordially yours in Christ,



FULLER THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY, 135 NORTH OAKLAND AVE., PASADENA, CALIF., SY. 6-8108, MU 1-9481

May 3, 1966

Dr. Charles C. Ryrie  
Dallas Theological Seminary  
3909 Swiss Avenue  
Dallas, Texas

Dear Charles:

I have never had the chance to meet you but feel I know you well enough to address you by the first name, because, if I am not mistaken, we have written about each other in our publications! I wish that we might find some way to carry on this dialogue in a more efficient way than the long-delayed replies that come via the printed page. I wish that we might have exchange debates, as President Hubbard suggested. We might not succeed in changing each other's views, but I think we would understand each other better. But apparently Dallas does not feel that even this would sufficiently merit whatever difficulties might be involved.

Therefore, I would like to do the next best thing and talk to just one issue raised by your most recent book, Dispensationalism Today. I have read and re-read your chapter on "Salvation in Dispensationalism," and am still unable to fathom your position on salvation under the Mosaic Dispensation. I agree with you heartily that in that dispensation, the basis of eternal salvation was the death of Christ, not the Levitical sacrifices, and yet I agree that men under that dispensation did not have Christ as the object of their faith (at this point I would surely depart from any Covenant Theologian who taught salvation in the Old Testament by means of faith in the person of Christ). You declare, however, on page 126.5, "the means of eternal salvation was by grace and means of temporal life was by law." I am interested in your understanding of the means of eternal salvation that came by grace. At the bottom of the page you say that while "the keeping of [the Levitical sacrifices] did not save. . . yet a man could respond to what they taught so as to effect eternal salvation." Thus, as I understand you, the means of eternal salvation under law was through the revelation contained primarily in the sacrifices, not because of their immediate efficacy (which extended no further than restoring one in the theocratic relationship), but because of their "ulterior efficacy" (129.5) in which they prefigured "a final dealing with sin" (129.5). Thus you say (130.2): "Christ was not the conscious object of their faith, though they were saved by faith in God as He had revealed Himself principally through the sacrifices which He instituted as a part of the Mosaic Law."

You deny (131.8) that Dispensationalism teaches two bases or means of salvation, for both now during this Church Age and then in the Mosaic economy, the basis of salvation was the death of Christ and the means was faith in God's

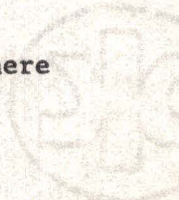
revelation. But there is, nevertheless, a great difference, so great that you can say, "By comparison with the grace of Christ, all previous revelations of grace were as nothing" (125.4). And then you proceed to make certain statements which I would term totally pessimistic regarding the ability of revelation to get through the laws regarding the sacrifices so that a man might exercise faith in God's "final dealing with sin." You say, "It cannot be implied that the Israelites understood what that final dealing was" (129.5). In fact, you cite the data of Hebrews to assert that the Israelites still had a consciousness of sin. If this is the only way that a man could be eternally saved by grace in the Mosaic economy, then I assume from your own words that really no one was saved at this time. Then, to be sure, according to the Dallas Seminary State of Faith, ". . . salvation in the divine reckoning is always 'by grace, through faith,' and rests upon the shed blood of Christ." Then, too, surely "man has not at all times [e.g., Mosaic dispensation] been under an administration of grace as is true in the present dispensation." Having read your exposition, I sense how you must emphasize the "antithetical" (130.7, .8) relation between this economy and the present one. From man's point of view (though on your terms I can concede it was not from God's) there was no revelation clear enough to save him. Therefore I feel I can assert that, on your terms, God was not being gracious during the Mosaic dispensation in any effectual sense, and that grace which is not effectual is not grace. Therefore, Dispensationalism now makes it evident that while there are not two ways of salvation, there is no eternal salvation before and after the Church Age. \*

Might I ask then how you understand Psalms 32:1 which Paul picks up and cites in Romans 4:6-8 as a proof that David, during the Mosaic economy enjoyed the blessedness of Abraham--a blessedness which, would you not say, would have to fall under your category of eternal salvation, rather than temporal life, since it involved the forgiveness of sins and justification? I believe it is evident from this Psalm that David's basis for confidence that God will forgive him rests in the covenant-keeping love (chesedh) of God; see Psalm 32:10. Back in Psalm 25:7, David makes it explicit that his confidence that God will not remember the sins of his youth rests upon chesedh. Also, in David's great penitential Psalm (51:1), he appeals to the lovingkindness of God to blot out his great transgression. Does not David's knowledge of the chesedh stem from the covenant God made with him (II Sam. 7:15) and even from the covenant God made with Abraham (see Gen. 24:27), which surely included forgiveness (Gen. 15:6). Why could not the Israelite look to these bases for chesedh and be confident of forgiveness. Surely these facets of revelation set it forth more clearly than the Levitical sacrificial system. Furthermore, how do you account for all the "by faith"'s from Moses onward in Hebrews 11 (prefaced by the statement that these Israelites received a good report)?

My own point of view is that while no one then could look to Christ to be saved, men like Caleb and Joshua (and all the remnant) were saved by a believing response to the revelation of God. Caleb and Joshua believed the revelation that God had given Israel the land, and consequently they distinguish themselves from the "most of them" (I Cor. 10:5) with whom God was not well pleased. I agree with you that precious little if anything could be learned from the sacrifices about God's "final dealing with sin" in Christ, but I feel that there

*For*  
 \* Would you not say that there is <sup>again</sup> also grace in the Millennium?

*Now  
 argument*



May 3, 1966

were many other revelations which were perfectly plain, and when accepted by faith a man became a member of the remnant who had eternal salvation. Therefore I can say, and meaningfully, that God was just as gracious then as now. Like a good Covenant Theologian I can also say that the law then as now drove a man to despair of himself and to trust what God would do which involved following what God had promised, e.g., as in the example of Caleb and Joshua believing the promise about the land.

I look forward to your response to these things and to further dialogue with you, if not face to face then by letter, before I actually publish my "Hermeneutics of Dispensationalism," which I hope to revise to include all the literature since 1957. I believe we share in common the desire to understand each other and, by dialogue, to come to a more accurate understanding of the Scriptures.

Yours in Christ,



Daniel P. Fuller

DPF:d1