

Purple

"And they shall make the ephod of gold, blue, purple, scarlet, and fine twined linen" (Ex. 28: 6).

J McBroom

Table of Contents

Part 1.....	1
Men who Prefigure Christ as Son of Man.....	4
The Son of Man in Prophetic Scriptures.....	5
Part 2.....	6
Part 3.....	11
The Mystery. —	13
The Body of Christ. —	14
The Bride of Christ. —	15
Part 4.....	17

Part 1

The person of our Lord Jesus Christ presents such an infinite variety of beauty and glory that we can never reach its end. And nowhere in the Old Testament is the plenitude of that beauty and glory more in evidence typically than in the complex character of these priestly robes. We are in the company of the same wonderful person here when dealing with the "purple" as when speaking of gold, blue, and scarlet, but the attendant circumstances are very different. If gold is used to delineate the glory of the Son of God and blue the same One as man out of heaven, scarlet and purple speak of His kingly beauty and regal splendour both in connection with the covenant people on the earth and with the wider ranges of creation. Of the latter two the scarlet may have in view His connection with the earthly people and the purple His place over all as Son of Man. It was because of this that we ventured to take the scarlet first, so that we might begin with the smaller and then go on to that which is widest of all.

It is interesting to know that purple may be produced in natural things by mixing scarlet and blue, since it seems to show a strong link of connection between the natural and spiritual orders of creation. By bringing together the place of our Lord as Messiah in Israel with that of the Man out of heaven, we reach all that is necessary for the full mediatorial place of the man Christ Jesus; purple is the figure of this latter, and it combines all that the scarlet and blue adumbrate.

The One who created all things is in manhood the appointed heir of all (Heb. 1). This shows the universe to be His inheritance, and we know that the power that created all and holds it all in being will be put forth in swaying it, but have to remember that between the one and the other He became a man. It is this grand fact — which is the centre not only of Scripture but of all creation--which calls forth our wonder and praise, because it creates a situation which was called for both by Creator and creature. There was a double necessity for the Son becoming man, one of which existed on His own side — that of the Godhead, and the other on the side of the fallen creature. Man having sinned, was under death and incapable of extricating himself, so that the Son came forth to bear the judgment and remove the

power of death; but besides this, though necessarily connected with it, there was a scheme of glory and blessing in the heart of God from before the ages of time which had to be unfolded in the creation. While He came to meet man's need the great end in view was to meet the need of the heart of God.

The incarnation of the Son necessarily pledged His death by which both the need of man was met and the purpose of God brought out; this involves the complete solution of the sin question by the consigning of all evil to the lake of fire for ever and the triumph of good in and with the blessed God in a scene of stabilised bliss for evermore. The reign of Christ precedes eternity and is the answer in the present creation on the part of God to the whole sinful history of man, as well as the glory in the present creation of Him who at such cost to Himself brought all that about.

Purple, then, is the pledge that Christ will soon be seen at the centre of the universe, the assembly, His body and bride with Him, as helpmeet, the administrative medium, through which will shine out all that is in Him her glorious Head. If in the truth of the scarlet we just touch the place of the assembly in connection with the divine ways on earth, here we see her place in and with Christ in relation to the counsels of eternity.

It was in view of this that we ventured to speak of the telescope whereby we might gaze into that expanse which is garnished with the magnificence and splendour of the towers, bulwarks, and palaces of this glorious King; that we might, on the principle of faith, visualise something of the far-reaching extent of that domain in its breadth, and length, and depth, and height, and with adoring hearts rejoice in Him whose power will control the whole of it, and whose love must of necessity be both its life and its law.

Our theme, then, is still connected with glory; a glory, blessed be God, secured as all else is by the sufferings of Calvary. We can understand something of the unsullied glory of God in the reciprocation between divine persons of that which belongs to Godhead; we can think, too, of that glory in the creation before sin came in; but how great is the revelation of God's glory which is seen in the removal of our sins and the triumph of His grace in the blessing of the sinner. How blessed to see the One to whom every glory belongs covering Himself and the name and throne of God with fresh glory in His triumph over sin. We can behold Him, too, having part by virtue of deity in that incommunicable glory which all belongs to God at the same time as He shares with us all that glory which He has acquired in carrying out the whole will of God.

But if it be necessary for the understanding of God's ways to view the place of our Lord in connection with the house of Israel as distinct from the rest of mankind, it is also incumbent upon us to distinguish between His relation to man and the earth as distinct from the hosts of other and higher intelligences. Different from these in his constitution, and coming upon the scene probably much later, there is yet much that man shares with these ranges of creation, both as to moral obligation and duration of existence. Spirit beings under moral obligation and capable of being affected both by good and evil may be said of each, both taking intelligent account of the working out of the plans of God in His creation. In rank, however, man is much less than the other class and stands in the moral scale at the bottom.

Little is revealed concerning these wonderful hosts of the heavens, whether as to the magnitude of their numbers or the character and conditions of their life. The will of God being of necessity the law of life, wherever moral beings are found, we know they are kept, for every creature of whatever rank must be dependent. Servants of great and dignified rank they are, as seen both in Gabriel and Michael, and with different degrees both of authority and responsibility, classified and numbered for their respective services, they are spoken of as "mighty," "holy," and "elect." Far beyond man in strength,

equally beyond him in power of transit, because not confined to a material body, and with interest and attention upon events in distant parts of the creation, they may be said to far excel the frail being who is confined to this planet (see Dan. 4: 17; Luke 9: 26; 2 Thess. 1: 7; and 1 Tim. 5: 21).

There are certain features in the constitution of man, however, which go far to make up for this apparent inferiority and serve to bring out the marvellous end for which he was created. Living in a body of clay which binds him to the earth, and of which it forms a part, he is a composite being, both spiritual and physical, which necessitates a range of life in relationships and activities which the higher intelligences could not possibly know. Marvellous workmanship of God in which there is the power to soar in common with other spirit beings right up to God Himself, the great Father of spirits, while in the same personality exists all the emotions of the soul from which springs the natural affections which he has in common with the creature beneath him. Closely connected with this is the wonderful creation of difference of sex and the institution of marriage whereby in the wisdom of God the race is multiplied and continued upon the earth. This is a most blessed feature of human life to which nothing that we know belonging to the higher orders can compare. High and lofty beings though they be, they yet remain units in their individuality and sphere in the great aggregate of creation, while to mankind is given the sweetness of marital and family relationships upon the earth.

Departure from creature subjection had evidently come about before man was upon the scene, which would have the effect of making two great classes. How long it was before Adam we know not, nor what length of time elapsed between their creation and their fall. The number in proportion to the whole which fell is also hidden. This explains, however, the presence of a tempter to whom the first man succumbed, so that he and his posterity are found, like the fallen part of creation, in apostasy from God.

The particular interest of the Deity in man shows itself in a variety of ways; first in the consultation between divine persons about him, before he was made; then in the prohibition laid down, and most wonderful of all in the way that God comes after him immediately after the fall. How blessed it is to hear God speaking that very day of another MAN; One who would deal with the sin question in relation not only to mankind but to the whole creation. Here note the connection between time, space, and all creation on the one hand, and the moral measures which are in the heart of God to be wrought out on the other. It would have been quite easy for God to have brought His man upon the scene at that moment, but other things must come to pass first; things which in their very nature called for a measure of time which must run into thousands of years. The pre-incarnate ages were necessary not only to show to man his hopeless state as a sinner, but to display before the eyes of the creation the wonderful mercy, faithfulness, and loving-kindness of God. These dealings culminated in the incarnation of the Son, which not only verified all the previous interest, but brought out the still greater truth that God had man before Him for blessing long before time began.

Having come among men He is all that man should be. All was perfectly in order; there was nothing to distinguish Him from other men, "Like as the children were partakers of flesh and blood He also took part in the same"; it was the simplicity and beauty of a man with all the sensibilities proper to humanity, in a condition unimpaired by sin. He is the "Son of Man," and as such passed through every stage of human life, from the manger to the cross. In Matthew He is the kingliest of all kings, in Mark the most faithful of all servants, in Luke the most gracious and tender of all men, and in John while these are present He is the only begotten of the Father full of grace and truth.

Since the birth of Christ was an event that all history anticipated and all prophecy foretold, we dwell a moment on what the Scriptures foresaw concerning Him. We may touch the typical

foreshadowings at three different points, namely, what is set forth in certain typical men; a glance at the directions about carrying the golden vessels; and also seek to cull from the rich range of prophetic testimony a few plain statements concerning the Son of Man.

Men who Prefigure Christ as Son of Man

The connection with Israel, as already noted, began with Abraham, but the universal place is of necessity linked with the beginning of man's history upon the earth. The words spoken to the serpent is a proof of this, for the woman's seed must in the nature of things embrace the whole race. Adam and Noah are the two outstanding men which in these early ages were made to express something of the wider glories of our Lord: the former is called the figure of Him that was to come and the latter is made ruler over a scene which had been already purged by judgment. Ps. 8 stands, as it were, midway in the working out of things between Adam and Christ; it is a commentary on the headship of Adam and dwells on the weakness of the race in comparison with other parts of the creation, but goes on to give a pledge of the One who would make every part of it resplendent with glory. Both Heb. 2 and 1 Cor. 15 show this by bringing out the latent truth of the Psalm, while Eph. 1 goes on to the assembly's place with Him at the head of a universe of bliss where all will be amply fulfilled.

Noah, who comes before us in the front rank of the great cloud of witnesses, presents a beautiful type of the Son of Man at the head of all things in administrative government. After he came out of the Ark and offered his sacrifice it is said that the Lord smelled a savour of rest. In that offering which spoke of the excellency of Christ in death Jehovah found His pleasure, and Noah, type of the coming One, takes his place as governor of the whole scene. The fear of him comes upon the animal creation, which shows that the fall had made a change for man in the attitude of the creature beneath him. Mankind continued for some little time as one family which beautifies the whole scene before the breakdown which led eventually to the call of Abraham.

Proceeding with the history, two more outstanding men come before us, namely, David and Nebuchadnezzar. The former of these was a wonderful man, and in some respects goes beyond them all; he made Israel's name to be respected among the nations of the earth; prefigured the glory of Christ as King, Priest, and Prophet in Israel, and went on to give a hint of His place as Head of the heathen.

In Nebuchadnezzar we have the first representative of imperialism, type of Him into whose hand is put the kingdom under the whole heaven. It was after the complete failure in the house of David when the glory had departed and Lo-ammi, not my people, had been pronounced, that the Gentile was entrusted with the sword of government. This gives a beautiful inlet to the wonderful wisdom of God in His actings. It was needful that the Gentile should be tried as well as the Jew, and it was necessary before the coming of the Son to give a picture of the kingdom in its cosmopolitan character, so that He who works out His brightest designs by the failure of the creature-takes account of Israel's failure to bring in the Gentile to give the finishing touch to the picture of the kingdom of the Son of Man. Nebuchadnezzar is made a king of kings and put into the place of universal rule. "Thou, O king, art a king of kings: for the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory. And wherever the children of men dwell, the beasts of the field and the fowls of the heaven hath He given into thine hand, and hath made thee ruler over them all. Thou art this head of gold."

Christ in Universal Splendour Portrayed in the Ritual

Ex. 30 shows the material required for making the sanctuary which speaks of the holy universal order. The cloth and the colours, as well as other elements both for the house itself and the priestly robes, indicate that God would dwell in a scene of holy splendour and be the centre of delight for a

redeemed and worshipping people.

These things were useful for the time then present, and though all broke down they served to foreshadow that which in the hand of Christ will be carried through to perfection. The priestly ephod combines in itself a full type of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ, but the priest himself was not in the royal line. Royalty in Israel is bound up with Judah, but Aaron sprang from Levi, so that however expressive his garments the royalty could not be his; another priesthood, however, had come upon the pages of Scripture centuries before that of Aaron, which combines royalty with all that for which Aaron stood. Mark here the profound beauty and perfect harmony of holy Scripture seen in the combination of the two orders of priesthood which is deeply embedded in these holy garments. Though royalty was beyond the reach of Aaron, the very clothes that he wore spoke of both the Davidic and universal royalty of our Lord. Our Priest, then, is a King not only of Israel, but is Ruler over the whole creation and a King that is eternal without beginning or end of days. (Compare Gen. 14, Ps. 110, and Heb. 7)

These things may be further demonstrated by reference to the way the golden vessels were carried through the desert by the sons of Levi. We shall mention three of these only, which fell to the lot of the Kohathites: the Ark which belonged to the holiest of all, the table from the holy place, and the brazen altar from the court. The first of these, which prefigures Christ both divine and human, was taken down and covered with the holy veil, then the badgers skins, and outermost of all was the cloth wholly of blue, signifying that the Son of God in passing through this desert scene was all for God and consequently the repelling power of divine holiness was there, while what the eye could take account of was a heavenly man.

The table had a covering of blue, then the bread of the presence with the dishes, etc., covered with a cloth of scarlet, and lastly the badgers' skins: all this in connection with Israel, both Godward for His pleasure and in divine administration among men. With the brazen altar it was different. The ark speaks of Him whom death could not hold, who ever delighted in the will of God and set forth the pleasure of His will; the table tells of the law of Jehovah going out to the nations when Israel is before Him for His pleasure; but the altar of burnt offering where sin was dealt with is pre-eminently the Cross. It was covered first with a purple cloth, after which came all the attendant vessels covered with a cloth of badgers' skins. Here the universal bearing of the Cross is prefigured, and like the three liftings up in John's Gospel it rises from Israel and the earth to the whole creation. Surely our souls are stirred at the contemplation of such things to worship and adore. And in proportion as we appreciate them entrance is given into the chambers both of His Messianic and mediatorial glory, so that we may behold the King in His beauty and the land of far distances (Isa. 33: 17). While Israel and the Abrahamic promises are not forgotten, every part of the creation is kept in view.

The Son of Man in Prophetic Scriptures

We have travelled this way before in relation to the scarlet and the line of Davidic testimony; here, let us refer to a few of those statements which describe the wider place. Ps. 2 speaks of the king in Zion, but also of His inheritance among the heathen (Ps. 18). He is made Head of the heathen, a people He has not known shall serve Him; and Ps. 22 declares that *all the ends of the world* shall remember and turn to the Lord and all kindreds of the earth shall worship before Him. For the Kingdom is the Lord's: and He is the Governor among the nations. All this links beautifully with the words to Abraham. "In thy seed shall all nations of the earth be blessed. Kings shall bow down before Him and all nations shall serve Him" (Ps. 72). But note the astonishment of both kings and nations in Isa. 52. Jehovah draws attention to His Servant as extolled and made very high; but the way He took to the

glory passes all comprehension and they are dumb. "Kings shall shut their mouths at Him: for that which had not been told them shall they see; and that which they had not heard shall they consider." His dominion is from sea to sea and from the river to the *ends of the earth* (Ps. 72), for there was given Him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages should serve Him (Dan. 7: 14). He shall stand and feed in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord His God; . . . *for now shall He be great unto the ends of the earth.* (Micah 5). He shall not faint or be in haste till He have set justice in the earth and the isles shall wait for His law (Isa. 42). The blessed One who stood before Pilate is not only King in Zion in view of Israel, but is King over all nations (Rev. 15).

But He who is all this is also the King of glory before whom the everlasting gates lift up their heads and the everlasting hills recede, and to survey in faith the vastness of His dominions we must in thought soar from the planet of our existence and endeavour to see Him in relation to the rank upon rank of heavenly intelligences of whom we know so little that delight to own His blessed sway. Is it not the case that He is the appointed Heir of all things? Is it not true that He has already paid the price and has purchased all? Are we not told that things in heaven as well as things on earth are put into His hands and that the blood of His Cross is applied to both? (Heb. 1: 2; Eph. 1: 8-10; and Heb. 9: 23). If so, we may well seek to catch a glimpse in the faith of our souls of the thrones, dominions, lordships, authorities, principalities, and powers which people those glorious realms, not seeking to go beyond that which is revealed, but using with diligence the Holy Word to learn something of the vastness of that empire and the wonderful intelligences which form its subjects.

May we not in this way get an enlarged sense both of the kingdom and the King. We view the planet of our existence as a wonderful place, and well we may, but it need not detract from that for us to endeavour to look out on the vastness of the dominions of the Son of Man, nor will it do so if we remember that by His incarnation and death the King has given proof that the centre of all that vast domain is this same planet. However baffling to our little minds or nebulous our conception of it may be, we can but bow in praise as it engages our thoughts. Nor however much the tendency to be overwhelmed by its magnitude, need we be incredulous, since God the Holy Ghost is the teacher whose office is to glorify the Son.

In such ways we are permitted to trace how that all through the ages God was preparing for the coming of His Son. Such men as we have noted, as well as many others, shine brightly in the moral firmament in the light of a coming Saviour, the whole of the divinely established ritual in Israel proclaims His coming, and the divinely chosen words of prophetic testimony puts it before us in detail. For Christ is the end of the law — God's great end in giving it — for righteousness to every one that believeth (Rom. 10: 3).

Part 2

On opening the New Testament, we find ourselves on very different ground. Here type merges into antitype, shadow into substance, and prophecy is turned into history. Here the Holy of Holies of the sacred Book is before us where the richest treasures of inspiration are laid bare, and here, to the delight of adoring hearts, the glories of the Lord shine forth. We have travelled this way before, as the reader will recall, in our previous meditations, and the little gained quickens surely our desire for deeper acquaintance with Himself. "To whom coming," says Peter, "a living stone." Nor need we fear repetition, since the fulness which is before us in these holy pages will be upon our lips for evermore.

The words "Son of Man" were often on the lips of our Lord when speaking of Himself, and that

even in those incidents of His life which were more definitely connected with the house of Israel. We can feel in proportion as we are taught that this was a necessity, for being a representative people what applied to them applied to all; for this reason we are permitted to see the mediatorial place of the Son in all the great leading landmarks of His history. What has been spoken of as wisdom's seven pillars, viz., His Birth, Baptism, Temptation, Transfiguration, Death, Resurrection, and Ascension, bear witness to this in a remarkable way. The Virgin's Son is the Woman's seed, and though coming in connection with Israel (Rev. 12), is the Man-child brought forth to rule all nations; the baptism in the Jordan, and the Holy Ghost coming upon Him, shows the anointing of the true meat-offering, the anointed Man who was here for the pleasure of God. And so it was with all the others, for who, that is taught of God, cannot see in the temptations and transfiguration of our Lord, as well as in the three later events, that He was standing for God, the representative of Him in the creation?

If we linger a moment over His wondrous pathway we are reminded that He who was the source of all that is morally good and blessed is here covering Himself with fresh glories in the place of man's sin. How utterly incomprehensible all this is to the mind of the man of the world? Here was One whose delight it was to glorify God and enjoy Him for ever. Have we noted sufficiently the moral beauty exhibited in His unfaltering trust and unshaken confidence in God in every circumstance right on to death itself? The best of men become chilled and discouraged through lack of appreciation of their services by their fellows: He was always the same. Surrounded by lack of sympathy and tender sensibilities which produced misunderstanding and even desertion by his friends, malevolent and cruel persecution by enemies, nothing could turn Him aside or diminish the unwearied activities of His goodness in carrying out the will of God. As to demeanour He vaunted not Himself nor was puffed up; so meek and lowly indeed that an Apostle could beseech the saints "by the meekness and gentleness of Christ." He who was rich became poor, down even to a bondsman's form, and by the prophetic Spirit we hear Him say, "I am no prophet, I am a tiller of the ground, for man acquired me as bondman from my youth" (Zech. 13: 5, New Translation). He could say, "I am among you as one that serves"; "My Father worketh hitherto and I work"; "The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto but to minister and to give His life a ransom for many."

But what must have been His feelings in a world where man had departed from God and at his best was living in a show of vanity and appearances? What, we ask, could be the feelings of One whose holy sensibilities could not be blunted by sin as He beheld man religiously, socially, and politically under the power of sin and death. Able to estimate sin in the light of the divine majesty in all its enormity and beholding the indisputable sway of death over the whole race; surely it was not possible for Him to be other than a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And yet there was a joy, a holy joy, there with which nothing could interfere; a joy which sprang from unbroken communion and heavenly intimacy which belonged to the relationship in which He stood with the Father though He was in a scene of sin and death. He was dependent, sorrowful, made to suffer and despised, but never murmured or was embittered. No despairing words fell from Him like what may be heard from a Moses or an Elijah, a Job or a Jeremiah (Num. 11: 11-14; 1 Kings 19: 4; Job 3: 3-14; Jer. 20: 14-18). Paul could say: "I exercise myself to have always a conscience void of offence," not so with our Lord. It never says He was exercised, doubted, believed, or hoped in the way such words are used of His greatest servants. We have said before that He never had anything to withdraw, but may we not go further and assert that there could be no misunderstanding or wit's end as we speak. Our common vocabulary of think, wish, feel, or long for, could in no wise be applied to Him. Imperfection has its ideals, and every bit of knowledge gained proves ignorance; but in these things as in all else the Man Christ Jesus stood alone.

But withal He was a dependent Man and a Man of prayer. In Luke's Gospel He is seen many times praying, and many of the outstanding events of His ministry are connected with His communings with God. At His baptism, at the call of the Apostles, after feeding the 5,000, and before walking on the sea, at His transfiguration, as well as Gethsemane and the Cross. What was the subject of many of these prayers we are not told, and yet there is much we might gather since we read how that His ear was opened morning by morning that He might succour those that were weary. He prayed as none other prayed, using, too, a word all His own, for His prayers like His obedience and service must for ever stand alone.

In this world we have kings and subjects, masters and servants, supreme and subordinate, etc., but in our Lord both thoughts combine, there we see supremacy and service, authority and subjection; cut off in the midst of His days, yet continuing through all generations, all of which hangs upon the mystery of the incarnation which must for ever defy the creature's ability to understand.

With your permission, then, dear reader, we would before leaving this matchless theme, let the heart loose in all affection after the adored object of its delights. If I go through these holy Gospels hanging on the footsteps of divine love, drawn by the attractions of One whom I have learned to know and to love by my deepest needs; One who is everything to me, whose movements entrance my poor heart, so that my soul adores; One who can say, "Before Abraham was I am," who is marked by majesty, splendour, and wonder; controlling creation, yet stooping to the cries of a frail mortal; equal with the Father but stooping to wash the disciples' feet; here, oh here, my soul rests in the tranquillity of bliss, and with His gracious approval I pillow my weary head upon His blessed breast. Here I taste a love that interests itself in such as me and that will take its own, though poor and ignorant, into confidence with itself in all the holy intimacy which it delights to bestow, keeping nothing back from the inquiring heart of all the interests, plans, and movements of the Godhead, in the working out of the counsels of eternal love. Here there is intimacy but no familiarity; matchless mystery of grace that frail and feeble mortals can be at home with Him who in His own mysterious greatness must be beyond them for evermore.

But like Moses, I would still draw near. He beckons me to Himself to dwell in the home of love begetting fullest confidence because of a nature and relationship which permits of no distrust. But there is more, for He makes known His interest in me not merely by meeting my needs but by communicating His own and the Father's interests, so that I might know the things of the Father and the Son and with an enlarged capacity be able to appreciate the wondrous heavenly favour heaped upon my soul. But still I linger and gaze with adoration upon Himself noting His power over all things, physically in the grandeur of creation, morally in the ranks of created intelligences, and above all His relation to the Father and the Holy Spirit in the carrying out of all the divine plans for time and eternity, knowing that while He is and does all this He has time to think of such as me. He calleth His own sheep by name, notes the town, street, and house where they live; wonder of wonders He creates, upholds, governs, and supplies, but beyond all this He loves. It is because He loves and is love that He does everything else, and it is because of this He interests Himself in me.

We make no apology for this since there is a distinct call for living affections for Christ. Orthodoxy, however good it may be, is not enough; there must be vitality. The well-known saying that one may be as clear as a sunbeam and as cold as an iceberg describes that which is sadly possible because of a mental acquisition of holy things. Surely there is abundant scriptural warrant in the way saints are seen all through the ages giving expression to the joy that filled their souls through occupation with the Lord and what He has revealed of Himself; if in the twilight of God's ways saints are found voicing their appreciation of heaven we who live in the full light of divine revelation may

well let ourselves go. "Let the heavens rejoice and let the earth be glad; let the sea roar and the fulness thereof." Are we not reminded here of the words of the Lord when asked by the Pharisees to rebuke His disciples for this very thing: "I tell you that if these should hold their peace the stones would immediately cry out." It was a saying of an eminent servant of Christ about Samuel Rutherford: "For an hour at glory's gate commend me to heavenly Master Rutherford."

All that we can ever know of God must come to us by redemption, the person of the Son, His work upon the Cross, and both of these for us, the latter being the means by which we can be brought in to appreciate and take delight in the former so that our hearts may be captivated by and for Himself, even now is a thing worthy of God Himself. Such a life as His must remain for ever blooming in the garden of God in all its holy fragrance; no books, even the world itself could not contain it; thank God the heavens will, for there it will be enshrined upon an ornament carved out as fruit of God's eternal counsels, to be read throughout eternal days. The assembly now being formed is that in which all that Jesus is and has done will be treasured up forever for God's eternal praise.

If the glory of that life is so far beyond us what shall be said of His death where all the accumulated forces of evil are seen at work spending themselves upon the sinless One. Before the Council the charge was, He called Himself the Son of God; before Pilate it was that He claimed to be a King; but with the people it was, "Behold the Man." Ecclesiastically, politically, and socially the world would not have Him. At that very time, however, something infinitely more solemn came to pass, for having taken the place of the sinner's surety there could be no help for Him in God. The Righteous One is abandoned and treated as guilty by His God. In these closing hours we read of the mock robe which is said to be scarlet, purple, and gorgeous; there need be no contradiction, for as we have seen, the first two are closely connected and may well be called gorgeous, but all foreshadows the time when every glory shall be set forth in Him.

But think for a moment on the connection between His birth and death. Both were a necessity and each lay outside the common course of mankind. He chose to be born of a virgin; no one else ever had any choice about his birth; He lived outside the common course of that life which "must needs die," yet gave Himself up to the shameful death of the Cross. The period of His life here must eternally abide before God, ever producing fresh praise in all its imperishable and incomprehensible grandeur but it had to come to an end. His people's state called for relief and God's glory called for a sacrifice, hence the necessity of the sacrifice at Calvary. The presence of Moses and Elijah with Him on the holy mount proved the necessity of the Cross for the securing of their right to be there, but the glory in which He Himself shone on that occasion necessitated death, for on the Mount of Transfiguration He stood anticipatively in the glory of redemption. On His side, too, there was a necessity for death that He might take up the place appointed for man in the counsels of God. He comes upon the scene to walk in the path of responsibility by way of the virgin's womb, but enters the place and condition marked out in the purpose of God by resurrection from the dead. "This is He that came by water and blood." As He said to the two on the way to Emmaus: "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, *and to enter into His glory?*" (Luke 24: 26).

In resurrection we see the new state, and what it involved, for, though not yet ascended to heaven, the links are cut with flesh and blood; not only does the world see Him no more, but His friends cannot have Him in the same associations as before. But if He could not be with them in the same order of life as before His love had made a way for them to be with Him in the new conditions in which He now stood beyond death. The forty days are evidently peculiar, since they tell of One who has left this world but not yet gone to heaven; in the wisdom of God they set forth the position of His own for which they would need the presence and power of the Holy Ghost after He had gone on high.

This exaltation to the right hand of God is still more wonderful. Who can estimate the changes involved in the ranks of creation by His going there? We should mark well the bearing of this new thing upon man and the earth, for His going there had in view the sending of the Holy Ghost, an event which puts this planet and the beings upon it in a place of immeasurable favour before God. The events of the moment are of such enormous import that heavenly intelligences must stand by; they desire to look into these things, but a divine person is here to Whom is committed the whole range of the interests of Christ.

So many important principles are seen at the point we have reached that it is needful to take account of the position. On the side of purpose Christ had appeared in the end of the ages to put away sin, while in the bearing of the divine ways and man's responsibility He had been offered to the world and refused. Before going to the Cross He had pronounced judgment on the world, but before that judgment is carried out and the full public result is seen in the glorious reign of the Son of Man there comes a sudden break in the outward dealings of God with the world. In divine wisdom all public transactions with man and the world cease, and the intervening gap during which the assembly is brought upon the scene begins to run its course.

It is this gap of time when Israel is set aside and under judgment, and the Church, the heavenly company, is being called out, which demands our deepest attention, because in it we have not what is of earth and time but what is heavenly and eternal. The Son of Man, while waiting for the full public answer to all that He has done, is glorified in God. His atoning work had met the sin question in its bearing on the whole creation and paid the price for the redemption of the whole in which way He stamped His claim upon it with a view to putting the whole under His beneficent sway.

This will be the full answer to what He has done, and in that way the thoughts of inherited and acquired glory are brought together: what He inherits, as the appointed heir of all, He acquires by His death; all to be taken up in the double claim of personal and redemption rights, but between the Cross and the glory there comes in the gap of which we speak — the present Church-age during which time He is in a more wonderful place still — glorified in God.

Had the public ways of God gone on, judgment must have come upon the guilty world immediately after Christ went on high, but instead, the Holy Ghost comes down, and the Gospel, with the full blessing of God, begins to go out far and wide. The atoning work of His Son had so met the claims of God, and the majesty of His throne, that for the moment judgment would have been out of place, and instead a holy banquet to which all mankind are called, takes its place. This is the Gospel. Heaven rings with joy, and to the world guilty of the Saviour's death the Spirit is sent to bring men into the feast. What a triumph for God, and what a marvellous display of His grace and patience: He meets the creature's worst by His very best at the time of that creature's greatest extremity. At the moment when the world — both Jew and Gentile — had left itself open to unsparing judgment and had incurred the greatest debt, He frankly forgave them both. Nor did it stop at forgiveness merely, for the feast is spread and the dress for the guests provided (see the best robe, Luke 15); that the fruits of Christ's victory may be seen by the saints being before God vested in the beauty of His Son. This is where the proclamation of the Gospel links with the counsels of eternity, bringing to light the secret that men should be brought into sonship and that the Church should be presented to Christ as His complement, the fulness of Him who filleth all in all, so that when the heir comes into His inheritance the bride is seen associated with Him in all that pertains to His glory in that vast domain. Note, then, the perfect beauty of God's ways combined with all that He ever proposed in counsel as brought out in this divine parenthesis; had His judgment fallen when Christ ascended there could have been no heavenly city and no suitable helpmeet for the Man of His counsels. It had been written long before, "It is not good that

the man should be alone. I will make him a helpmeet for him"; we can see surely that not merely Adam but Christ was then before Him. All these things converge, so to speak, at one point. Christ's rejection, the end of man's testing, and of his moral history and the judgment of the world in the Cross. In this way room is made for bringing into effect the counsels of eternity, the revelation of heavenly things, and the call of the new heavenly company.

Before passing on to the nature and calling of the Church, a few words are necessary on the truth of deliverance on account of its being the process of experience the soul must pass through before entering properly into these things. Who that is acquainted with the movements of God's testimony during the last century does not know that the conflict of truth raged round the fact of the accomplishment of divine righteousness in the Cross, and the consequent inauguration of a new creation by resurrection. The battle-ground lay chiefly in the Epistle to the Romans. In the most elaborate argument perhaps ever put upon paper the Apostle brings out there the way that divine righteousness had been established in the judicial removal of man in the flesh from the platform of God's dealings and a new order of man seen in a risen Christ now before the face of God forever. Much was made to revolve around the phrase, "Union in Incarnation." The assertion of this in one way or another by many was a denial of man's lost state in Adam and amounted to the averment that in becoming Man the Son had connected Himself morally with a fallen race. We may be thankful that there were those raised up of God who were enabled to put before the saints that which had been before given through the Apostle. It was amply demonstrated from the scriptures by one well-known servant that not only could there be no moral link with man in Adam but there could be no union between Christ and the believer till after redemption was accomplished, by which the sinful state was set aside in judgment.

Conditions have changed since then, but alas, not for the better. The same truth is opposed today though in a different way among those who stood so valiantly for it then. Union with Christ is admitted, but the subjective work of the Spirit is denied or beclouded with the result that the richest blessings are accepted and spoken of as possessed without the necessary state for their enjoyment. It is not uncommon to meet with those who assume to be seated in heavenly places in Christ, and very zealous for the truth in orthodox statements, who show a great deal of activity in the Gospel but yet ignore the Spirit's work and practically deny the new creation. This lack of deliverance from the flesh, and ability to take account of oneself under the Headship of Christ as belonging to a new race, produces a class of Christians that can be outwardly devoted but know nothing of the offence of the Cross. God's richest blessings are slighted, the path of separation unknown, the very birthright of souls is lost and God dishonoured.

We insist, then, that deliverance by the death of Christ is the key to the whole situation: it opens up to the soul another order of things beyond death, while at the same time it enables us to see everything in this world at its true moral value. Where it is refused, no matter how conscientious the person is, there is bound to be confusion, because the person is surrounded with disorder and can see no way out.

But now we turn for a few moments to the place of the assembly and those things which are so blessedly reached by the journey of the soul from Adam to Christ.

Part 3

The distinctive place of the Church is set before us in the writings of Paul, and it may help considerably if we point out certain lines of truth which, though not arbitrary, may be of use to make

clear the view. First, the place of our Lord in connection with Israel, but refused by them and the blessing made good in a remnant which forms, so to speak, the link between the present position of that nation and the full blessing of a coming day. Matthew, Hebrews, and 1 Peter give these things with the book of the Acts in between as showing the transition of the Israel of God from the place of the guilty nation to a new heavenly calling by companionship with Christ where all the spiritual fulness which was hidden in the types is known and enjoyed. Second, the more general place of the Lord where He is seen in relation to the whole earth. This the Gospels of Luke and John clearly bring out and go on with Paul to His rightful place in the creation. The close connection between Paul and Luke is beautifully seen in the way the latter introduces the new heavenly company in his Gospel and the former the extent of the heavenly calling. John connects with both the above, but is more occupied with the circle of love proper to the Father and the Son and the range of family relationships which are ours in that connection, things which scarcely come within the scope of our present meditation.

Apart, then, from the third line of things which is given chiefly in John, we have the circle of divine interests in regard to the Davidic kingdom which began properly with Abraham, then Christ the Centre of the ways of God in regard to all things. All that is seen in the first is the promise of the second, for just as each of the colours of the rainbow may be seen in one drop of rain so all the variety of glory seen in Israel in the past will ultimately expand and fill the whole creation. Not only does the kingdom and temple with their gorgeous array of grandeur and beauty furnish typical proof of the magnificence of the larger system, but what is seen in the divine ways with men like Abraham, Moses, David, and Solomon speaks of the system dimly foreshadowed in the head of gold and reaches out to the holy universal order as described in Ps. 8, 1 Cor. 15, Eph. 1, and Heb. 2.

Having glanced in "Scarlet" at the Church as the vessel of God's ways, in time, we may now look at that same vessel in relation to the counsels of eternity. Here let it be said that one's feeble apprehension of this great theme is most humbling; it must be confessed with shame the want of ability to value and dwell upon that which is the richest and innermost part of divine counsel and the very masterpiece of God. Not to make much of the assembly (viewed in its proper place in Christ) is to slight that which is nearest His heart and for which He not only parted with all that He had but freely gave Himself. We are creatures of extremes, and constantly need to be balanced; may we suggest, that if a little of the time given to dispensational and prophetic truth was devoted to the grand solution of moral questions and the revelation of heavenly and eternal verities which are now brought out in connection with the assembly, in this the Spirit's day, it would be most wholesome both for saints and servants. The ways of God in relation to the dispensations are most blessed to know; the truth, indeed, so hangs together that one cannot be known without the other, and in this way many Bible students are able to correctly place the dispensations and give the assembly her true place in relation to all the rest; but surely there is much more to be gained than this. If we could see that the assembly as united to Christ gathers up in herself all the deep moral principles of the past, combining with it what will be seen in the future, besides her own unique place in relation to Christ as the vessel of counsel, surely we would give ourselves more to the contemplation of such things. Does anyone ask proof of what is here advanced? Nothing is more simple since all that is in the head is for the body and all that the bridegroom takes up is shared by the bride. Israel will know Him as the glorious Messiah and the nations of the world rejoice before Him as the Son of Man; but, as being His royal consort, the assembly is to know Him in every way in which He is to be known. All, therefore, that the gold, blue, purple, scarlet, and fine-twined linen adumbrate, speaks of that which those who form the bride of Christ are being educated in today. It will not be doubted by anyone taught of God that heavenly as well as earthly things are laid out before us in the present economy of grace in a way they never were before. Let us therefore take courage and seek through grace to apprehend the favour of the moment.

Though surrounded with all the evil of apostate Christendom, it is a time when the secrets of eternity are out, the motives of the Godhead are laid bare, and not only are the counsels of God disclosed, but all that He is in nature, character, and being is brought within the reach of faith with the express purpose of forming a company to be heavenly in character and conduct, though still in a bodily condition which cannot go beyond the earth. Surely there is a moral fitness in all this and a moral necessity for it which lies deeply in the nature of things, and which stamps itself upon the heart as of God, and which is right because He it is that does it.

Here, beloved reader, there is a point that must not be passed over. How often when servants of the Lord have been endeavouring to open out these things have we heard the complaint: "It is far too deep"; or, "It is beyond us; it is over our heads." Surely if such things are given to us of God it is meet that we should seek through grace to understand and appreciate them. But apart altogether from the danger of slighting such things, or they who seek to speak of them, is there not a mistake in the reasoning? We believe there is, and that it lies in the failure to distinguish between the intelligence and the moral consciousness in man. In acquiring knowledge we have to labour and go step by step from that which is elementary to what is advanced, but this is merely a means to an end, for to be effectual that which is taken in by the mind must reach the heart by the conscience (we speak of the children of faith) setting God before the soul in the fulness of revelation and glory. It becomes us, then, to encourage each other; God is training His people for a great and glorious position, and what He has put before us in His Word He can teach us by His Spirit so that even now we may climb the delectable mountains and behold the celestial expanse which lies spread out before the soul's gaze, producing praise and worship to such a great and wonderful God.

From this digression we turn to speak of the assembly, and would remark that there are three expressions in the writings of Paul which serve to bring out the calling and relationship of those who form that company in a very blessed way. There is first "The mystery" from which comes the place of the Church as the body of Christ, and following upon that the truth of the bride wherein she is fitted in nature and affection for Himself. All three thoughts hang together, each in turn serving to bring the other into view.

The Mystery. —

"The truth of the mystery," it has been said, "includes four things: 1st, the revelation of God's counsels concerning Christ as the second Man; 2nd, the relation of the Church to Him as His body and bride; 3rd, the nature of this union; 4th, what the Head is to the body and to each individual member. In other words, it is the unfolding of the glory of the Head, the grace which has set the Church in relation to Him in that glory, and what the Head is to the body for its present maintenance while on earth" (*Christian Friend*, 1892, p. 68).

The mystery, then, is not the person of Christ — there we have a mystery which can never be known — nor is it the Church however richly blest in the sovereignty of God. No; it is the grand secret of eternity in which the *Church is seen in Christ and Christ in the Church*. It is the outcome of divine counsels that the Son should become Man, taking up the whole creation as his inheritance in virtue of the Cross and form through redemption a company which should stand in relationship with Himself as helpmeet and be associated with Him in his royal sway.

We are told that this mystery was kept secret since the world began, and that it was not made known to the sons of men; it was hid in God, and before time began it was nearest His heart, for it was according to His eternal purpose in Christ Jesus our Lord. Between Christ Himself and those who form

it there is complete identity of life and nature, and it is that which gives perfect finish to all the dealings of God with mankind. To the Apostle was given the revelation of it with a view to complete the Word of God. All this is seen to fit in with the protracted dealings of God with the world, and shows how that judgment could not immediately follow the crime which put the Son of God on the cross: time must be given for the call of the bride, for the MAN is not to be alone.

Having stepped into the creation by becoming Man, the Son accomplishes redemption and takes up a company which is spoken of as His fulness — the complement of the Man Christ Jesus. No words could duly emphasise this, for indeed it is spoken of as the impelling motive that governed the Creator in bringing the creation into being (Eph. 3: 9, 10). "The mystery was the secret of the Creator, hence the whole creation had some reference to it, when the assembly has its place in glory it will be a blessing to the whole creation." Those brought into it had partaken of sinful human nature by virtue of their relation to Adam; that that condition might be put away Christ went to the Cross and in resurrection the Holy Ghost came to form them after Himself, whereby there might be evolved from Him that which should in this special way be eternally suitable to His own heart. The relative importance of this may be seen in Ephesians, where the saints are viewed as the House of God; there, the variety of divine blessing is marked out but the mystery is singled out for special treatment and enlarged upon by the Spirit in the parenthesis of Chapter 3. In the latter half of Chapter 2 we get the new man, Reconciliation, the Kingdom, the City and Temple, all the necessity of the House in verse 22; but the mystery is taken up alone and developed by the Spirit in the following chapter.

***The Body of Christ.* —**

This is part of "the mystery," and indicates the Church here in the life of Christ her Head. In 1 Cor. 12 the body is seen as the *Vessel of the Holy Ghost*, in Colossians it is seen as the medium *through which Christ is set forth*, and in Ephesians it is the display of *the all-various wisdom of God*. In the first of these the saints at Corinth are viewed as a microcosm of the whole, so that what came out in Christ is continued by the Holy Ghost, that through them God might be known in the blessing of men. A sphere of life is opened up which is properly the domain of the Spirit in which the whole Trinity is seen at work; the diversity of gifts are from the same Spirit, the diversity of administrations are from the same Lord, and the diversity of operations from the same God. The chapter goes on to show the working of these things in the assembly, and all in view of the district in which the saints are located in the providence of God. There was, it is well known, the manifestation of other spirits at Corinth, but in Christ's assembly there was the manifestation of God's presence by the Holy Spirit.

At Colosse the view is further enlarged. The greatness of Christ is shown in a full and blessed way, and then carried over into the redemption sphere to show that He, in whom dwells all the fulness of the Godhead, is the Head of the Body. If at Corinth the saints are seen as the vehicle of the Spirit, here it is all the saints on earth for the expression of the sensibilities that are in the head. Like the colours of the sun reflected in the myriads of water drops which compose the rainbow, the moral features of Christ are to be seen in His members, which has in view the triumph of God in the continuation of His Son here, in spite of His refusal by the world.

Coming to Ephesians there are certain peculiarities which call for careful consideration. Here the ground is enlarged so as to take in all creation. It is the prerogative of the Book of God to speak as no other book could, and in this Epistle what is not yet accomplished is spoken of as having come to pass. This is not uncommon in Scripture, as every student of the Word knows (see Rom. 8: 30 and many other passages). Here the assembly is seen as complete, taking in all the saints between Pentecost (Acts

2) and the coming of the Lord for His own (1 Thess. 4). This should be noted, for it leaves room for a freedom of language about the assembly both regarding time and space which otherwise we could not understand. Mark well, then, that in this Epistle the assembly is seen in her own place all through the present age, then in her place of glory in millennial scenes, and lastly as the vessel of God's glory in God's eternal day.

In the combined view we recall that in Corinthians the Body is seen locally as the vessel of the Spirit, in Colossians it is the whole company in relation to the greatness of Christ; but in Ephesians it is even now the expression to heavenly intelligences of the all-various wisdom of God. In the first we see the supernatural, in the second what is cosmopolitan, and in the third the supramundane. At Corinth it is supernatural because of the manifestations of the Holy Ghost to be seen in them in relation to their life here; at Colosse it is cosmopolitan because the whole Church on earth is in view looked at as risen together with Christ but still on earth; at Ephesus it is supramundane because it is not only risen together with Christ but seated in the heavenlies in Him. Out of this latter, which refers to space, arises the threefold view in regard to time and eternity, viz., the place of the Church to-day, then the position in the age to come, and lastly, the dwelling-place of God in eternity. In Chapter 3: 9, the celestial intelligences read in her now the all-various wisdom of God; in 2: 7, the exceeding riches of His grace will be seen there *in coming ages*; but, in 3: 20 and 21, *she will be the resting-place of the divine glory by Christ Jesus for evermore.*

The Bride of Christ. —

If the truth of the mystery has shown us the Head and the Body, we now come to the Bridegroom and the Bride. The first thing we ask the reader to note is that in the truth of the body it is the singular but here it is the plural. In the former it is ONE; a whole Christ, the body seen in its completeness in the head, but in this we have two, the man and the woman. But if on different ground with the ascended man and His bride before us the truth of the bride depends upon that of the body, and we would make clear the connection. It was said the other day that "possibly the Holy Ghost had waited for these last days before the Lord returns to give greater prominence to this the bride-aspect of the Church." We heartily endorse this, believing that at this moment the Holy Spirit is producing in many bridal affections that nothing can satisfy but the Bridegroom Himself.

We have, it is well known, a number of women in the Old Testament which foreshadow the assembly as the bride of Christ. If we turn to these a moment we shall see that none completes the picture like her who was taken out of Adam to be presented to him. Asenath, the daughter of Potipherah, and Zipporah the daughter of Jethro, the wives of Joseph and Moses, were lifted by their marriage to the rank of their husbands, a thing which could not be possible in the case of Eve. With her there was equality before the presentation simply because she was part of himself. These other women supply an important part in the type as showing how sinful creatures have been lifted from the dunghill and exalted to such a wonderful position; but with Eve it is the type of the assembly as in the purpose of God taken out of Christ to be presented to Him. Rebekah would not even fit here, for though she was kindred with Isaac and supplies a most important point as to our being one with Christ (Heb. 2: 11), she could not supply that part which the first woman does. As Eve came from Adam when he was in a deep sleep, the assembly is taken from Christ in death to be made a suitable companion for Him. Our Lord stood alone in the Gospels, but by going into death it became possible for the assembly to be taken from Him, so that she owes her existence to Him, but by way of death, and having gone on high He is made "Head over all things to the assembly which is His body" (Eph. 1: 22).

The transition is made from the thought of the body to that of the bride in the verse just cited (Eph. 1: 22), and we can clearly see that the figure used goes back to the divine operation upon the man in the garden. We pass in thought from the body to the bride in the verse in Ephesians in much the same order as we reach the man and his wife by the operations of the Lord God in Gen. 2: 21-23. The explanatory clause, "The fulness of Him who filleth all in all," transfers us in thought from the assembly as His body to the assembly as His bride. This should be attended to, for it is impossible to connect the idea of union with a single personality. All our members are part of our bodies as one whole, and cannot be rightly spoken of as united to our bodies, but when we come to the assembly as the bride, we are immediately prepared for the truth of Eph. 5, where the institution of marriage is shown to have had from the beginning Christ and the assembly in view. Such thoughts would not fit in with what we have seen in Corinthians or Colossians, simply because there is no bride equal in rank with the bridegroom, but grasping the thought of the duality of persons in Eph. 1: 22, in relation to Gen. 2: 21 and 22, we immediately see the suitability of Eph. 5: 32 with Gen. 2: 24. It is in the latter that union can be rightly spoken of, and we are led with deep delight to see in the light of a glorified Christ that God had before Him from the beginning the procuring of a bride for His Son.

All this is connected with the before-time purposes of God, and is undoubtedly before the mind of the Lord in the parable of the goodly pearl, which we may further connect with His words to the Father in John 17: "Thine they were and Thou gavest them Me." In the great parable chapter (Matt. 13), the Lord sets before us the beauty of the assembly in His eyes — the one pearl of *real price*. For this He would part with all that He possessed. In doing so He obtained the whole world (a point which bears on His place as Son of Man), but it was that He might have the pearl for Himself. She is here viewed in the purpose of God in her inherent beauty as fitted for Himself and in the incorruptible blessedness of His life and nature before God.

Both the passage in Matt. 13 and Eph. 5 take account of the state which called for the Cross and the work of His grace in us by the Spirit forming each individual in a new order, so that in the aggregate He might have an helpmeet suited for Himself. During the time He is on high there is the calling out, the sanctifying and cleansing by the washing of water by the word, and the nourishing and cherishing, which produces that unfading youth and beauty in His sight where there is neither spot nor wrinkle. We have the Cross and the motive for it in regard to that company which is taken out of the "all things" to be the consort of Him into whose hands all things are put.

What a marvellous unfolding of heavenly light and blessing is brought to us in these last days, and to know too that the issue of it all will be the marriage of the Lamb when the glorious nuptials shall be celebrated in a scene of heavenly festivity which passes beyond all words to describe. Here again let us note another threefold description, recalling what we have said about the body; she stands today in the scene of the bridegroom's rejection, espoused as a chaste virgin to Christ; tomorrow she shall be seen in the plenitude of glory identified as the city of gold, the vessel of divine administration, in the sunny days of creation's glory, when all shall adore the King her glorious bridegroom; and, beyond all that, she is seen at the entrance to eternity as a bride adorned for her husband, going on into the calm of an unruffled eternity of bliss, "Where God shall shine in light divine and glory never fading." Shall we ask again the question, Is it possible to make too much of this wonderful masterpiece of God? One said in our hearing lately, "This picture of the Church as the bride of Christ comes into view before the fall brought sin and death into the world. That is to say, the instant creation was completed. God says, as it were, I will tell you the great secret of my heart, I will tell you why I have brought this creation into being. I am going to secure out of it an object to satisfy the heart of Christ."

Thus we can trace her portion in relation to God — Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; in regard to

time, the present age and the age to come; then pass on to God's eternal day, and placing ourselves there, in thought, look back over the bridge of time in all its wonders and see her place in the heart of the Deity in the eternal past; all now perfectly effectuated to God's eternal delight. Being the bride of the Lamb she takes her place at the centre of the creation with her glorious bridegroom; today, the display of God's grace and wisdom; tomorrow, of His grace and glory; but in eternity the vessel of His glory alone. "Unto Him be glory in the assembly in Christ Jesus unto all the generations of the age of the ages. Amen."

Part 4

From viewing the centre of "the vast universe of bliss," let us turn for a moment to the circumference. From Christ the king and His royal bride, we are privileged to behold something of the unity and variety of that vast empire, and take some little account of the many families which, it is the purpose of the Father, should fill the heavens and the earth.

For using the expression that "We have to remember that the Church is not everything," in a Scripture reading a brother was sharply pulled up and even demanded to withdraw. This, of course, he would not do, and to relieve the tension another came to the rescue with the illustration that a half-sovereign may be much smaller than a crown piece, but is of more value. As to the fittingness of the illustration we offer no opinion, but express unqualified agreement with the statement that the Church is not everything. It must be admitted that our little minds often get so warped with the importance of one thing, so as to lose all sense of due proportion in the whole. So far is the statement, that the Church is everything, from the truth, that it destroys the view of the whole. To belittle any one of the circles of the vast accumulation of the redeemed families and the rank upon rank of heavenly intelligences not only detracts from the place of the assembly, but is positively derogatory to the glory of the King. When we view Israel in Canaan set up in the midst of the nations of the earth, does it not ennoble rather than weaken their position to take full account of every nation that then was there? If we view the sun as centre of the solar system, the planets that revolve around it at the furthest distance are as necessary as those at the nearest place; the same law that governs one governs all, and indeed, the whole is balanced with such nicety that the removal of one would be detrimental to the whole; so it is in the moral system, where the law of love is that which controls all. It does not detract from the relative place of each company in that vast scene of glory to say that the Lord Jesus Christ is the necessity and guarantee of the life of the whole, nor can it possibly lessen His glory to say that every part of it is necessary for the display of what is in Himself.

How all is to be brought about may engage us for a moment, for although Christ is at the right hand of God and all things put in purpose under His feet, it still remains true that we see not yet all things under Him. Such is the certainty of the accomplishment that prophecy may be said to be the face of the historian turned the opposite way. Let us endeavour to see in the space at our disposal how all will be brought to pass.

The divine government proceeds from the throne of God, but it is exercised in a different way, from the time that the sword was given to the Gentile than what it had been before, when the throne of David was established and Jehovah sat between the cherubim. At that solemn crisis in the world's history the state of Israel was so bad that they were carried away to Babylon; the glory, symbol of Jehovah's presence departed to heaven, Israel ceased to be owned as the people of God, and the times of the Gentiles began. From that moment till the present, God's holy government, which is certain, has been exercised in an indirect and less public way. Instead of ruling from His place between the

cherubim, He controls all from His throne in heaven; an order which must continue, till Christ takes His own throne and the public government is made good in His hands. In all this we trace the divine order in creation where providential government is constantly in exercise and where the higher intelligences come in as intermediary servants to carry out the mandates of their Creator for the well-being of man upon the earth; an order which vividly displays the goodness, wisdom, and beneficence of the Creator. Now God has put *all things* into the hands of His Son, the man Christ Jesus, and the world to come is not put under angels so that a change in the divine government of great importance is necessitated. The way this change is brought about by the transfer of the executive of the throne of the majesty of God to the hands of the glorified man, is put before us in the Word and calls both for earnest consideration and our deepest praise.

All this, it need scarcely be said, hangs upon the mystery of the person of Christ. The sending of the Holy Ghost by Him at Pentecost was the beginning of a new thing, which it is essential that we should understand in connection with this change of the divine government of the world. This new thing was, in a spiritual way, and on the principle of faith, the commencement of that world over which Christ is set which is destined to expand till it covers the universe, and which had been constantly spoken of both by promise and prophecy. It exists ever since, but for the moment it is spoken of as "God's administration which is in faith." Here all is set up under the Son of Man. The present world with its nations and kings, senates and armies, etc., is the scene of God's holy government where holy angels are His ministering spirits for carrying out His will. In the glory system all is different. The Lord Jesus Christ who is supreme in administration concerning all the bounty of God, has sent the Spirit in relation not to this world, but in relation to the revelation which He Himself had brought. Angels, high and holy beings, must here stand aside; into these things they desire to look; and, in those who are the called of God, they are to learn something which no creature in past ages could possibly get to know. All this surely accentuates the importance of the present moment and calls for faithful men who, in a time of appalling disorder, stake their all upon the maintenance of the claims of God.

The reader will remark that we are not looking merely at the outer framework of the dispensations, nor at the important gap in these which is still running its course, but at the inner lining or moral fulness of the thoughts, plans, and procedure of God which is laid before us in relation to other ages both past and future. Stephen beheld the man in the centre of the glory of God, and from that point right on through the New Testament there is opened up for us the richest unfoldings of God; that we may see Him, our glorious Saviour in the exercise of His lordship, headship, and priesthood, which is the blessed proof to our souls of the place of the anointed man whose administration is not in relation to this world, but to all that which concerns the glory of our God in the creation as purposed by Him before time began.

From what has been said it will be seen that certain things are the result of a moral necessity, and Christ's present piece, at the right hand of God being provisional, is one of these (Ps. 110). While He refused His rights He engages Himself there, with other and deeper things, till the moment when He shall rise to take over the full and universal control of all things. Then the world of blessing, now known in faith, shall come into full view, and the whole scene of the divine government which is now the sphere of angelic service shall pass under His control, they delighting to own His sway and adore His holy name. A moment's consideration of such things gives us to see how all is measured, planned, and timed to fit together for the grand coronation day, when the appointed heir shall come into the inheritance in all the dignity that is His, in full view of a wondering creation. Let us look for a moment at the circumstances connected with the change of the divine government as presented in Rev. 5.

It is a scene in heaven, the abode of God and the universe in its varied races is represented. The

activities of heaven are often mentioned in Scripture, as again and again the veil is drawn aside that we may learn the wondrous doings of God with the earth in connection with the great conflict between good and evil (see Job 1, 2 Chr. 18, and Zech. 3). We read of Moses, with Aaron, and his sons, and seventy of the elders, called up "and they saw the God of Israel: and there was under His feet as it were a paved work of a sapphire stone, and as it were the body of heaven in his clearness" (Ex. 24: 9). Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel had each been called to witness the movements of the throne in its varied actions, and at different epochs, in the exercise of the divine government, all of which combined to exhibit the majesty and supremacy of God. This scene surpasses them all for sublimity of grandeur and splendour of majesty. It is a meeting which has in view the assumption of universal government by Him who was slain, and all the attendant circumstances are so ordered that nothing may be wanting that could impart dignity to the scene.

The scene on the holy mount had displayed His majesty before the chosen three in the days of His flesh, and after He had ascended, other three, viz., Stephen, Saul, and John, had beheld something of that same majesty. Here He is seen at home, the centre not only of myriads of celestial intelligences, but in the midst of that host for whom He bled and died. There is first the throne and Him that sat upon it, the Holy Lord God Almighty; the seven lamps of fire which are the seven Spirits of God; the four living creatures, full of eyes before and behind, expressive of the character of the divine government; and then the twenty-four elders, the whole redeemed company then brought home to heaven. Justice and judgment are the habitation of the throne, and the rainbow round about speaks of His covenanted faithfulness in the creation: all the great elements we may say of creation, providence, government, and redemption are there. Lightning and thunder speak of judgment, for at that very moment there is gathering together the greatest combination of evil that ever was on earth.

But if there is thunder in Rev. 4 there is singing in Rev. 5. A sealed book is seen in the hand of Him that sat upon the throne, but no man in heaven or earth could open it; it is the title-deeds of the Lamb, and the time is come for Him to assert His rights. When He took the book this was the signal to begin the new song which should travel out to the boundary of creation. What an answer to Calvary is here! Who can ever think of what all this means for Him, seated in the court of heaven, the centre of God's delight, surrounded by hosts of heavenly intelligences and at the same time the object of the delight of redeemed myriads whose presence there made the Cross for Him a necessity?

We would gladly linger over this scene, but our point is the transfer of the action of the throne to Him upon whose shoulder rests the government of creation. From this point on in the book of Revelation the angels are seen carrying out the behests of Him who had prevailed and alone could open the book. "The Son of Man," it has been well said, "is the connecting link between the purpose of God and the wheels of divine providence, as they move on in the accomplishment of all that concerns the glory of God for ever and ever," and the providential judgments which follow whether the seals, trumpets, or vials are all introductory to the coming forth of the King who, having taken the book, controls such judgments.

The song in Rev. 5 which celebrates the Lamb's praise, takes in suffering saints on earth and turns the mind to a class which may be viewed as the last and perhaps most noble of all that grand army of heaven's worthies. Their suffering and death necessitate resurrection and translation which will complete the circles of blessing in the heavens, but the presence of the king Himself is a necessity for the putting things right upon the earth. The fearful state of things there is seen at its height in the combined resistance of the kings and their armies against the coming One. Judgment, which had hitherto been providential, is now to be direct from the hands of the Lord who appears with eyes as a flame of fire and a sharp sword, for, "The Lord shall go forth as a mighty man, he shall stir up jealousy

like a man of war; he shall cry, yea, roar; he shall prevail against his enemies" (Isa. 42: 13).

This judgment, which is Davidic in character, may be said to be the vintage of the earth, but there is still the harvest when the Son of Man shall sit upon the throne of His glory and all the holy angels with Him. There can be no doubt that the vintage and harvest include all the judgments which are preparatory to the scene of ordered blessing when the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea; the judgment of the great white throne, being a thousand years later, is introductory to eternity. Order being effected, the king takes His place in the royal city, which is the centre of His vast empire, and the place from which His administration emanates.

As we have shown in "Scarlet," Israel will not be forgotten in that day. All Scripture shows her to be the centre of blessing and glory upon the earth, and the direct link of connection with the city of glory above. Jerusalem, set up as a strong city far beyond anything ever known before, shall have put on her beautiful garments, and the righteous nation shall have become the centre of prosperity and blessing in a scene where all the problems which are disturbing society to-day shall find their complete solution (Ps. 72).

It is just here that the difference of the Church's place is seen. If Jerusalem is made the centre of the whole earth, the heavenly city is the metropolis of the whole creation. It is an aggregate of intelligent people, a vast corporation which is seen as the crown of all the work of God in His dealings with mankind, a city whose founder and builder is God. The city speaks of centralisation, and has been defined to be "the most perfect realisation and the most convenient representation of society in its maturity." What thinking person can fail to see right from the building of the Cain city, the tendency on the part of man for centralisation. The closing book of the Bible sets before us two cities: one the climax of civilisation, fruit of the industry, ingenuity, and device of man, as having departed from God; the other, the blessed expression of the wisdom, skill, and resource of God.

In the vast system around us, where civilisation has risen to such a height, all the revenues of the centuries have come down to us. Nature, science, and history have been explored to supply us with their varied stores, so that a range of knowledge is brought to us far beyond what was considered possible by those gone before. Facilities for pleasure, pride, and idleness, fruit of many inventions; and, legislation for the masses, so that " Rich and increased with goods " is much in evidence. Here is found the accumulated results of the industry of ages, and all the refined capabilities of man's complex being is expanded to their utmost to make the earth a place of rest and satisfaction without God. Respectability, refinement, and "prohibition" are all found in this city; schemes, too, for destroying slums and building garden cities, etc., etc.; but with it all infidelity, godlessness, and opposition to Christ on every hand.

In the midst of all this God is working. His eye is on every one and on every element of the situation, and if His blinding judgment seems to be resting on many who lead the van in apostasy, there is, on the other hand, many tens of thousands who love Him and delight to own that they owe their all to Him whose precious blood was shed for their salvation. Note, too, how He makes even the evil to serve Him, for "All things serve His might." Those who are to be in the king's service, in the city of glory, in the glorious administration of divine justice, are being trained for office in the circumstances they are made to pass through today. While all the capabilities of man in the flexibilities of his soul are being stretched to the utmost in the race for life in science, commerce, and politics, there are those who are being fitted, while passing through the same things, for filling an office in the administration of the city and its glorious king. In that scene the officers of the king will take up positions which call for resource, and the ability to deal with men and circumstances. This resource is developed by a course of

training which shows the importance, for the Christian, of the interval between His first confession of Christ, and the moment when he enters his heavenly home.

But now look at God's city. There is no brick and slime here. The whole structure is composed of living stones. Its construction has been going on in the hands of a divine architect since the day of Pentecost, and it is prepared against that day when chaos, thank God, shall give place to cosmos, in a creation which will be filled with the light and excellency of Christ to the everlasting delight of God. There is gold, silver, and precious stones in Babylon, but no living stones; these belong to the heavenly system where the city is pure gold, like unto clear glass, and garnished with all manner of precious stones. It is the central part of that mystery in which is hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. Faith by producing divine instinct, as well as by scriptural intelligence, ever looked forward to it, and every principle brought out in the course of divine dealings down through the ages finds a place there. Sacrifice in regard to righteousness as in Abel, prophecy and translation in Enoch, salvation and government in Noah, all is found there. Again we get headship as represented in Adam, blessing as in Abraham, dwelling as in Moses, and ruling as represented in David.

But besides this blessed accumulation of heavenly principles which have been displayed in the ways of God, there is also the witness to His counsels which existed before the world began. Christ Himself the centre of these counsels and the assembly His body and His bride. Here both the counsels of God and His time ways meet, finding in both their consummation and rest, and solving to our adoring hearts the great enigma of the past; explaining, too, the secret of why the creation came about, and the wonderful mystery of His forbearance with all that which so long called in question His honour; all, all is there, because He is there in whom it all centres, and from whom it all sprang, and by whom it shall all be upheld throughout everlasting days to the glory and praise of God.

There is the throne of God and the Lamb, while in the river all is seen as under the influence and power of the Holy Ghost. The rays of the glory will rest upon those brought into the place of nearness, and will pass from them to the varied circles meeting each in perfect suitability with their moral constitution, and the relationship in which they stand. The tree with its twelve manner of fruits for the glorified, and the leaves for the healing of the nations.

We have noted her ministry earthward (see "Gold"), but as the helpmeet of the king her service shall extend to the utmost bound of the creation. The same chapter which speaks of her activity towards the world tells also of the same towards the higher intelligences (see 1 Cor. 6), which in the nature of things is a moral necessity. While forming the link between the creation and Him who created it, she is distinct in some sense from it. As sharing with Him for whom it was all created and as the bride of Him who is the centre of God's counsels, she has her place with Him in giving effect to these counsels.

Here, beloved reader, ponder with us a moment this expression of the Purple. See the Son of Man of the Gospels, the Son of Man who is now glorified in God, the Son of Man with a golden crown coming forth to judge, and then behold Him as the man of Ephesians 1: 20-23, with His glorious bride at the centre of a universe made glad with His glorious sway. See Him, the God who stooped to this earth and manhood to settle the question of sin, the centre of the Father's counsels, who hurls from their place every fallen dignity and prostrates every foe, cleansing both the heavens and the earth and bringing in everlasting righteousness, for He must reign till He shall have put down all rule and all authority and power and all enemies under His feet. Should we not then, my reader, delight in the grace which has enabled us to bow and own Him Lord and God now, and seek to apprehend more of the wonderful things of our God who has connected us with His Son as members of His body, soon to be with Him on high to serve and praise Him for evermore.

Having become man He remains that for ever, and at the end of the kingdom age, when all that is connected with time has been brought to a finish and the former things shall have passed away, the assembly is seen as a bride adorned for her husband going on into an eternity of bliss. There in the beauty of the divine nature, for stones and pearls are not required, she shall be the suited dwelling-place of God for His eternal delight and in His eternal day.

Blessed be Jehovah, God of Israel, from eternity to eternity! And let all the people say, Amen!
Hallelujah!