

Christ and the Church

Paper 5 of 20 'Plain Papers on Prophetic and Other Subjects'.

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The responsibilities and the doom of Christendom were what last occupied us. But within the sphere to which the name of Christendom attaches, there exists that which is unspeakably precious to God the Father, and to the Lord Jesus Christ. What is that of which we thus speak? It is THE CHURCH OF GOD. The true portion, the highest privileges, of the Church of God, as well as the responsibilities flowing therefrom, we purposely passed by. Our attention was confined to such views of the responsibility of those who bear the name of Christ, as Christians generally would be able to recognize. Alas! that to Christians generally, the Church of God is a subject but little known. I do not mean that they are not true believers — that they are not saved. A man may be a true believer, and know little about the Church of God. A man may be a member of that Church, (as all true believers during the present period are,) and yet be ignorant of its nature and destiny. The Church is the bride of Christ — His body. It is the habitation of the Holy Ghost. Its calling is a heavenly one. Its portion and its hopes are heavenly. Its continuance here is only to represent Christ, and show forth the riches of the grace of God. When its formation and discipline are completed, it will be removed to its own heavenly sphere, and God will then begin to deal in judgment with the earth. How distinguished must be the privileges, and how solemn the responsibilities, of such a body! And seeing that Christendom has assumed this place, and pretends to be nothing less than this Church of God, how seriously are its own responsibilities enhanced thereby! Let us now turn our attention to this subject, and inquire what light is shed upon it in the Word of God. The Lord grant us very simple faith, and the spirit of sobriety and godly fear, in pursuing this inquiry.

It was not till after the death and resurrection of Jesus that the Church began. In the purpose of God, as we shall see, it existed before all worlds. But as to its actual existence on earth, the Church was formed by the descent of the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost. Those who till then had been individual believers, disciples of Christ, were by the descent of the Holy Ghost incorporated into one body; and that body, which has existed ever since, is the Church of God. Christ glorified is the Head of this body. All true believers in Christ are its members. The Holy Ghost unites the members to the Head, and to each other. He dwells in the body, moreover, supplying life, strength, guidance, and blessing from the Head to the whole; His own presence constituting its sole power of growth, unity, testimony, and rule. Such is the Scriptural idea of the Church. But to understand what the New Testament teaches us concerning it, it is necessary that we consider certain previous dealings of God with mankind.

From the time when sin entered the world, and God gave the promise of the serpent's overthrow by the woman's seed, there have always been those who have been "saved by grace through faith." Abel, Seth, Enoch, and Noah, in the antediluvian period; since then, Abraham and others, patriarchs, prophets, priests, and kings; besides multitudes whose names have not been transmitted to us, but who are noticed in Heb. 11 as having lived in faith and died in faith, looking for a better resurrection, are proofs that God never left Himself without a witness, even

in the darkest times. But these believers of other days were never incorporated into one body. They were never formed into an assembly inhabited and ruled by the Holy Ghost. Enoch walked with God. Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord. Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness. Isaac and Jacob followed in the pilgrim steps of their father Abraham. Joseph was enabled through grace to maintain his integrity in circumstances of most terrible temptation. Moses had close converse with God for forty days and forty nights on the summit of the mount. Joshua led the victorious armies of Israel into the promised land. Samson, Jephthah, and others, were used of God as instruments of deliverance to Israel. Samuel was the chosen instrument and channel of renewed blessing after the ark had been carried away, and the House of God at Shiloh had been overthrown. David, the man after God's own heart, served his own generation by the will of God, and fell asleep. Others might be mentioned, Elijah, Elisha, and multitudes besides. But all these are presented to us in God's Word, as individual servants of His — not as members of a body. They were men of faith. Their devotion and obedience shine brightly on the pages of the inspired record. But there is not such a thought suggested by all that is said of them, as that they were members of "the body, the Church." They were beyond all doubt quickened by the Spirit. By virtue of the foreseen sacrifice of Christ, they were forgiven and saved. They will all have part in the first resurrection, and partake of heavenly glory. There can be no question as to any of these things. But no one of these things, no, nor all of them together, constitute the Church. The Church shares these things — life, justification, resurrection, and heavenly glory, with the saints of Old Testament times; but what constitutes the Church is something distinct from, and beyond, all these things. *It is the actual living unity with Christ, and with each other, of those who, since Christ's ascension, are formed into this unity by the presence of the Holy Ghost come down from heaven.* Was there anything like this in Old Testament times?

God had a nation, indeed, in Old Testament times; and the history of this nation, with the prophetic details of the counsels and purposes of God respecting it, form the principal subjects of the Old Testament Scriptures. Israel was not manifested as a nation until its redemption out of Egypt by the hand of Moses. Long before this, God had promised to the patriarchs, that their seed should possess the land of Canaan; but now this promise was to be accomplished.

My object is not to consider the way in which God fulfilled His promise, and brought them into the land. My readers know well that this was done, and that the nation of Israel possessed the land for many hundreds of years. Placed there under God's immediate government, they proved themselves in the land, what they had already shown themselves to be in the wilderness, a stiff-necked and rebellious nation. God had long patience with them; now chastising them for their sins, and then, on their confessing and bewailing their iniquities, raising up for them judges, who first delivered and then governed them. A crisis of national iniquity led to the setting aside of this order of things, and the elevation of David to the throne. With David God made a new covenant, and, from this point in the nation's history, the hopes of Israel were suspended on God's covenant with David and his house. It is in fulfilment of this covenant that Christ, the true Son of David, is yet to reign over the house of Israel, and His kingdom to extend over the whole earth. When the house of David began, in the time of Ahaz, utterly to decline, the prophetic books of Scripture began to be written. In these books, while the nation is called on to repent and return to the paths of obedience, and threatened with the most solemn judgments in case of their refusal, the glory of Christ's kingdom — a kingdom to be established by means of these very

judgments — is held out as the encouragement of any who do hearken and repent. All this went on till the time of Nebuchadnezzar, when, the iniquity of the nation having become intolerable, they were given up to the Gentiles and carried into captivity. At the close of seventy years, a small remnant returned to Jerusalem, and their descendants formed the population of the land at the commencement of the Christian era. To them the Lord Jesus Christ was presented. Heir of the promises made both to Abraham and to David, answering in all respects to the prophecies which were read in the synagogues every Sabbath-day, showing, by His works, that He was not only the Messiah of Israel, but Israel's Jehovah, "Immanuel, God with us," He was presented to the nation, the long-looked-for object of their national expectation, and ready, had they been ready to receive Him, to be the fulfiller of their national hopes; but all was in vain. When they saw Him, they discerned no beauty in Him, that they should desire Him. They scorned and rejected Him. A little band of disciples was indeed gathered round Him by the power of divine grace. All who had heard and learned of the Father came to Him. But how few they were! And how many, who at first seemed earnestly to follow Him, fell back, and walked no more with Him. The issue was, that after a patient ministry of love, lasting for more than three years, His hour being come, the hour appointed of the Father, He was delivered into the hands of the Jews, and they all but consummated their iniquity by putting Him to death. With wicked hands they crucified their King! We know, my brethren, how this was. Blessed be God, it was grace, grace to sinners, that gave Him up to bear the wrath due from God to sin, as well as permitted man to wreak upon Him the relentless hatred of his own heart towards God! The blood shed by man was needed — needed by us to wash out our guilty stains! It was needed by Israel itself, as the only basis on which its blessedness can be established. It was needed for God's glory, either in sparing an ungodly world, or in addressing to it, as at present, the ministry of reconciliation, or in bringing out of it to Himself those who are co-heirs with Christ; as well as in blessing Israel and the whole earth by and by, under the reign of Christ, when the judgments shall have purged the earth. But the Jews had no thought of this in putting our Lord to death. It was "by wicked hands" He was crucified and slain; and, except one fearful addition to it afterwards, this act filled up for the time the measure of their iniquity.

The one crime added by the Jews to the crucifixion of Jesus, was their rejection of mercy through His blood, when proclaimed to them by the Holy Ghost come down from heaven. But ere passing on to this, let us reverently inquire, What became of the Blessed Sufferer? Was it possible for the grave to retain Him, or that He should be holden of the bonds of death? Ah, no! Peter had rightly confessed Him to be "the Christ, *the Son of the living God*;" and it was on the occasion of his so confessing Him, that the first mention was made of the Church. "Upon this rock," said our Lord, "I will build my church; and the gates of hades shall not prevail against it." Now it was by the resurrection from the dead, that He was declared to be the Son of God with power. As another has remarked, "The Son of the *living God*, in building His Church, would shelter it from the power of hades, and of him who had the power of death. The death of the Messiah might break the links between Israel after the flesh and the head of their blessing, whatever grace might do afterwards for that nation; but whatever was based on the power of the resurrection (and it is in resurrection that Christ has been declared the Son of God with power,) was secured against him who, at the most, had the power of death." How sweet that the very first mention of the Church in Scripture — the mention of it when it was yet future, yet to be built — should thus show, that by union with Him who is the Son of the living God, it is placed beyond all the power of death!

But not only was Jesus raised from the dead, He was exalted to the right hand of God; and it is as seated there, that He has sent down the Holy Ghost to form and inhabit the Church. The descent of the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, is connected, not with the resurrection, but with the ascension of Jesus. "This spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive; for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified." (John 7: 39.) So in John 16: 7; the going away of which the Saviour there speaks to His disciples, is not His going away by death to return in resurrection, but His going to the Father. "Nevertheless I tell you the truth: it is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you." The coming of the Holy Ghost depended on the exaltation — the glorification — of Christ.

He did, indeed, appear to His poor, fainting, scattered disciples, after His resurrection. He gathered them, as it were, around Himself. Again and again He appeared in their midst, instructing and comforting them, certifying to them in various ways that He was really risen, and, breathing upon them individually, He said, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost." But even all this, precious as it was, did not constitute them the Church, or qualify them fully for the place they were designed to fill. Nothing less than the actual, personal presence of the Holy Ghost on earth could suffice for this. And for His coming they were instructed still to wait. Led out by their Lord as far as to Bethany, they saw Him ascend, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. But just before His departure, He bade them tarry at Jerusalem, and wait for the promise of the Father, "which, saith he, ye have heard of me. For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence." And when, on the day of Pentecost, He did descend, with the sound of a mighty rushing wind, and the appearance of cloven tongues of fire, so that the disciples were all filled with the Holy Ghost, what was the subject of His testimony? Charging upon the Jews by Peter's mouth the murder of their Messiah, He proceeds by the lips of the same apostle to bear this glorious testimony: "This Jesus hath God raised up; whereof we all are witnesses. Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear." The three thousand (fruit of this testimony) who gladly received the word, and were baptized in the name of Jesus, were added to the Church. The Church was now in actual existence. The hundred and twenty disciples, now incorporated in one by the presence of the Holy Ghost, received at once the addition of these three thousand earliest converts: and the chapter closes with the statement, "And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved." The natural place of these Jewish converts was, according to the prophecy of Joel and others, to have part with the delivered Jewish remnant. "And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered: for in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the Lord hath said, and in the remnant whom the Lord shall call." (Joel 2: 32.) But all this was on the supposition of Israel's repentance: (see Joel 2: 17, 18:) and as Israel had no heart to repent, but having crucified its King, was now about to complete its guilt by rejecting this testimony of the Holy Ghost to the ascended Jesus, all this deliverance and blessing in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem had to be put off till Israel shall say, "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." Meanwhile, these converts, who, according to natural order and prophetic hopes, should have been saved with this earthly, Jewish deliverance, are introduced into something far better. The Lord added them to the Church daily. Still God's mercy lingered over Jerusalem and the Jewish people; and no one can read the early chapters of the Acts without perceiving how the testimony in these chapters was especially addressed to the Jews. If even then they would have

repented of their sin in rejecting and crucifying their Messiah, how ready God still was to pardon and blot out all! But, alas! in the martyrdom of Stephen, they as utterly rejected all these gracious overtures by the Holy Ghost come down from heaven, as in the crucifixion of Jesus, they had refused the One who, in incarnate love and tenderness, would fain have gathered their children together. Jerusalem had now to be given up. The disciples are scattered abroad, and carry the Gospel first to Samaria, and then to the Gentiles; while, from among Stephen's murderers, one is chosen by sovereign grace to be the special instrument of making known the full heavenly portion and glory of the Church. Saul of Tarsus is transformed into Paul the apostle; and it is in his Epistles that we find the full revelation of this mystery, till then hid in God from before the foundation of the world.

To gather up a little the points which have been touched upon: Individual saints, or believers, there have always been; but they were not incorporated into one in Old Testament times. God had besides an earthly people, a nation, which He governed by His laws, and in the midst of which many of those individual saints were found, whose names are recorded in the Word. The nation itself, however, that is, the mass of it, always consisted of mere natural unregenerate persons. Favoured of God above all other nations, their very privileges became the means of demonstrating their wickedness; and not theirs only, but also the hopeless evil of man's nature, placed under any possible circumstances of religious culture and privilege. When, last of all, God sent His Son, they took advantage of His condescension and His grace to put Him to death. This, followed up by their rejection of God's grace as proclaimed by the Holy Ghost in the ministry of the apostles, terminated for the present all hopes of their national blessing. They were left to the fearful judgments which soon after overtook them, and under which they still remain. Grace, we know, and divine power, will restore them as a nation in the end. But for the present they are left under judgment. What is it fills up the interval? THE CHURCH. When did it commence? Not with the incarnation — not even with the personal ministry — of our Lord. He came seeking fruit of Israel. Alas, there was none to be found! But during His patient ministry of grace in the midst of Israel, there was gathered around Him, as we have seen, a little band of disciples. These knew, by revelation of the Father to their hearts, that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the living God. They were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. Still they were not the Church. They were the materials of which the Church was afterwards to be in the first instance composed; but they were not as yet the Church. For the formation of the Church two things were needed — the death of Christ, and the descent of the Holy Ghost. Caiaphas, being high priest, in using certain words with quite a different meaning in his own mind, unwittingly prophesied that Jesus should die for the nation of the Jews; "and not for that nation only," adds the Holy Ghost by the evangelist, "but that also he should *gather together in one* the children of God that were scattered abroad." (John 11: 52.) The death of Christ was necessary to this, both in the counsels of God, and in the actual putting away of sin. Then, further, the power by which alone this gathering could be accomplished was the power of the Holy Ghost; and He, the Comforter, could not come till Jesus was glorified — not risen merely, but glorified. Hence, the very first mention we have of the Church historically, i.e., as actually existing, is in Acts 2, when Christ had been glorified, and the Holy Ghost had come down. Then the Church was formed. True that for awhile it consisted entirely of Jews, while a special testimony to the Jews was being carried on at Jerusalem. This being rejected, Peter was sent to the Gentiles; the apostle of the Gentiles was called; believing Gentiles were incorporated with the Jews who had already believed; and the full, heavenly portion and unity and glory of the

Church, as one with Christ by the Holy Ghost, was revealed to Paul, and made known in his ministry and epistles. The Church existed from the day of Pentecost; but the chosen vessel for its full instruction as to the mind of God respecting it was Paul; and his conversion did not take place till after the definite rejection by Jerusalem of the last lingerings of divine mercy, in the testimony of the Holy Ghost come down from heaven.

We may now consider the Epistle to the Ephesians, where we have the subject of the Church perfectly unfolded. How the heart feels, in turning to such a portion, the deep need of what the apostle so touchingly implores, where he asks, "That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him; the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints." The Lord grant that it may be thus, both with writer and readers, in further pursuing the present enquiry!

The first thing to be noticed in what this epistle teaches as to the Church is this — that though, as we have seen, the Church was called last into existence in the developed order of God's ways, it existed in His mind and purpose before the unfolding of His ways commenced. Before God separated Israel to Himself as a peculiar nation on the earth — before the nations existed from amid which Abraham and his seed were called — yea, before the mountains were settled, or the hills brought forth, the Church existed in the purpose of God. "According as he hath chosen us in him (Christ) before the foundation of the world." (Eph. 1: 4.) It is not the covenant with David, or the redemption from Egypt, or the call of Abraham, or even the creation of the world, to which our thoughts are here led back, as the date of God's counsels and purposes respecting the Church. They are without a date. Eternal as the Father, whose counsels and purposes they are, and as the Son, in whom they are all established and accomplished — the Holy Ghost (Himself eternal, the eternal Spirit) here reveals them to us, as before the foundation of the world. Nay, more; the creation of all things was in order to the accomplishment of these counsels of eternal wisdom and love. "God, who created all things by Jesus Christ, to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the Church (that is, by means of the Church) the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Eph. 3: 9-11) What a place this gives to the Church! The subject, in Christ, of divine thoughts and counsels in all past eternity, it is to be the vessel for the display of God's brightest glory in eternal ages yet to come. "Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto him be glory IN THE CHURCH by Christ Jesus, throughout all ages, world without end." (Eph. 3: 20, 21.) May our hearts humbly and reverently adore the grace which has thought of us, and dealt with us, after such a sort as this!

Another thing demanding attention is, that this great thought of God from all eternity was not revealed, or made known, till at least four thousand years of the world's history had run their course. "If ye have heard," says Paul, "of the dispensation of the grace of, God, which is given me to youward: how that by revelation he made known unto me THE MYSTERY; which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, AND OF THE SAME BODY, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel." (Eph. 3: 2-6.) Then again, he speaks of making all see "what is the fellowship of the mystery, which, from the beginning of the

world hath been hid in God." (Ver. 9.) Observe, that we are not told here of a mystery, in the mere sense of its being something, in itself, above the powers of nature or reason to have discovered. All the revealed truths of the Gospel are mysteries in this sense. But this was a mystery "hid in God" — an unrevealed mystery. The apostle not only says that it required revelation to make it known, but that it had not *been*, till in his time, *made known* by revelation. "Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed." This declaration is of great importance: it draws a wide line of distinction between this mystery, now revealed to Paul and the other apostles and prophets, and all that had been the subject of Old Testament instruction or prediction. It was not a mystery *hid in God* from the beginning of the world, that Christ should come—that Christ should suffer — that Christ should reign. It was not an *unrevealed* mystery, even that Christ should rise from the dead, and take His seat at the right hand of God. Psalms 16, Psalm 110 and many other portions of Scripture, had foretold these things. It was no mystery *hid in God*, that Israel should be happy and prosperous under Messiah's reign; or, even, that the Gentiles should, in a subordinate place to that of Israel, be brought into blessing beneath His sceptre of peace. Many passages in the Old Testament plainly foretell all this. But that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, not only with believing Jews, but with Christ Himself; in short, that Christ should have a body, quickened and gathered into unity with Himself by the Holy Ghost — gathered from among the fallen sons of men, both Jews and Gentiles — a body united to Him now by the Spirit, and to share His blessedness and glory for ever — this was a mystery indeed — a mystery hid in God, and never revealed, till it was revealed to the holy apostles and prophets of the New Testament by the Spirit. Yet such a body is the Church of God.

The next thing to be considered is, that the blessing of the Church is complete; and as to all that secures and establishes it, already accomplished. It is not blessing conditional on obedience,* as was that of Israel in the land; but blessing in Christ, to which we are introduced, consequent on His accomplishment of all that the Father gave him to do. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." (Eph. 1: 3.) *Who hath blessed us!* And with ALL spiritual blessings! And in Christ! How complete! How certain! How inalienable!

*It is not meant by this to call in question, that our enjoyment of the present manifestations of the Father and of Christ by the Spirit are conditional on our obedience *as saints*, whether individually or collectively; and indeed, in some sense, our future rewards as well. But we must *be saints*, in order to obey.

Further: the blessings of the Church are *spiritual* blessings in *heavenly* places — not *temporal* blessings, as Israel's were. It was promised that they, if obedient, should be blessed in their basket and in their store, in the fruit of their body, the fruit of their cattle, and the fruit of the ground. It was with temporal blessings that they were to be blessed. And even in millennial times, when they will enjoy spiritual blessings also, the possession of every temporal comfort is a prominent feature in their predicted condition. "And the tree of the field shall yield her fruit, and the earth shall yield her increase, and they shall be safe in their land, and shall know that I am the Lord." (Ezek. 34: 27.) There are no such promises as these to the Church. Existing, as it does, by virtue of union with a risen and exalted Saviour, its blessings are spiritual. Redemption, forgiveness, acceptance, adoption, knowledge of God's mind and will, co-heirship with Christ,

the earnest of the Spirit; these, and such as these, are the blessings with which the Church is blessed. And it is *in heavenly places* too. Many read this passage as though it spake of heavenly frames or feelings, or dispositions, or states of mind; but this would make it the same thing as spiritual blessings: instead of which it is, "Who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places." But if we refer to the latter part of the chapter, where the expression, "heavenly places" again occurs, the meaning of these words will become self-evident: it speaks of Christ being set at God's right hand in heavenly places. Are not *places* intended there? Is there not *a place* where the glorified body of Christ resides? It is in that place, then, or in those places that the Church is blessed with all spiritual blessings in Christ. In Christ! Ah, that is the key to the whole mystery! But we may well pause here, and meditate a little further. The Lord grant us with unshod feet, as treading on holy ground, to turn aside and see this great sight!

Man and the world had been on trial for more than four thousand years. Man in innocence had been set amid the fulness of earthly blessing in Eden, and had failed. Men were left between the fall and the flood to take their own course, and they filled the earth with violence, till God had to sweep away the human race. Again was man tried, the sword of government being now entrusted to the patriarch Noah, and any who succeeded him in the place of authority or rule. What did Noah, but degrade himself in the eyes of his children? and what did mankind at large, but forsake the true God, and corrupt themselves with idols? Abraham was called out, and Israel appeared on the scene. There, within narrow limits, man and the world were still more strictly tried. With what result? Need it be rehearsed? Who that reads his Bible does not know how Israel failed throughout? They failed in the wilderness, and failed in the land. They failed under the judges, they failed under the priests, failed under the prophets, failed under the kings. Last of all Christ came. He had rights and titles connected with every position in which man had been placed, and in which man had failed. The true Son of David, He was heir to David's throne, and as such He was the hope of Israel. Seed of Abraham, all the families of the earth were to be blessed in Him. The sword of government, first confided to Noah, really belonged to Him. Second Adam, He was heir to the universal dominion confided to the first, who had proved himself, alas! so unworthy of the trust. Such are some of Christ's earthly dignities and titles; and how evident that when He makes them good, universal blessing to the earth will be the result. But He was first to be presented to man for his reception, and man and the world were thus to have a still further trial. How was he received? *He was put to death!* Calvary's cross, and the rich man's sepulchre, were all that the earth could afford her King! Seed of the woman, the serpent bruised his heel. Satan was proved the Prince of this world, in his being able to hurry it on to the rejection and crucifixion of its rightful Lord. Was God to send Christ into it to be rejected and to suffer a second time? Impossible! No, the world is left under judgment. "Now is the judgment of this world." Satan and the world are convicted of being guilty of the death of Christ, and He under sentence on this account. Where then is Jesus? *Ascended into heaven.* Rejected of the earth, heaven's worship is presented at His feet, while heaven's highest glories surround His brow. How is it He has not long since executed judgment on the earth? Ah, the mystery which we have been considering was to be both accomplished and revealed. There were deeper glories in the person of Jesus than those we have been enumerating. He was more than the Son of David — more than the seed of Abraham — more than the Second Adam. He was higher than the angels. He was God manifest in the flesh. He was the Son of the Father; the Son of the living God. Hence His death — His blood — is of infinite efficacy. What is the first great proof of its power? Why this — that He who so really was "made sin" as to have to say, "My God, my God,

why hast thou forsaken me?" has so really by His blood put it away, that He Himself is now at the right hand of God! What is the second great proof of its efficacy? This, that the Church is united to Him there! But let us hear the apostle in the latter part of Eph. 1. He prays that the saints may know "what is the exceeding greatness of his (God's) power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come; and hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things (mark now, dear reader, what follows next — gave him to be head over all things) TO THE CHURCH, WHICH IS HIS BODY, the fulness of him that filleth all in all." Notice in this passage — 1. That Christ having, in order to vindicate God's holy majesty, and accomplish His purposes of holy love, gone down into death, He, the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, has raised Him from the dead, exalted Him to His own right hand in the heavenly places, and made Him head over all things, all things being put under Him. — 2. The Church is the body of Him to whom all things in heaven and in earth are thus subjected. — 3. The power which now works in the believer, is the power which wrought in Christ, when He was thus exalted from the grave to the right hand of God. — 4. The working of this power in the Church is according to its working in Christ when He was raised from the dead, and received up to glory. In a word, earth having rejected, and heaven having received, Jesus, the Church is the body of Him, who has been thus rejected by the one and received by the other. And where can the Church have its blessings? On the earth which has *rejected*, or in heaven which has *received*, Christ? There can be but one answer to this question. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath. blessed us with all spiritual blessings in *heavenly places* in Christ." May the heart of each Christian who reads these pages join to say so!

But the apostle proceeds. Having shown the exaltation of Christ, and that the Church is His body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all, he turns to the Ephesian saints, and writes as though he would remind both them and himself of the rock from which they were hewn, the hole of the pit from whence they were digged. All alike, whether Jew or Gentile, were dead in sins, and children of wrath. "But God," says the apostle, "who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved,) and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus; that in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus." So completely is the Church identified with Christ, that what is affirmed of the one is affirmed of the other also. Did Christ die *for* sin, while we were dead in sin, and was He quickened from that death He stooped to undergo? God hath quickened us together with Him!* Was Christ raised as well as quickened? God hath raised us up together. Has Christ sat down in heavenly places? God hath made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. The Church is in Christ. It is His body, His fulness. In the language used by another, "As the body is the complement of the head to make up a man, so it is with Christ and the Church: He, as Head directing, exercising all authority over the Church — His body; but the Church, as the body, rendering complete the mystical man, according to the eternal counsels of God. It is evident this is no question about the divine person of Christ. But in the counsels of God, the (mystic) Christ would not have been complete without the Church." How evident that it is thus we sit together in heavenly places in Him.

*It is not simply the quickening of dead souls of which this passage treats. All saved souls were quickened, from the time when Satan triumphed and man became dead in sins. And, while the Spirit was always the *agent* in communicating spiritual life, ("That which is born of the Spirit is spirit,") the power to quicken is equally the attribute of the Father and of the Son. (See John 5: 21.) Such quickening of souls was always, no doubt, the conjoint act of all the Persons in the Godhead. The power thus to quicken, was claimed and exercised by the Son, when in humiliation on earth, as really as when exalted to the right hand of power. The power and the act are both essentially divine. "The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live." (John 5: 25.) But the subject in Ephesians 2, is that of our being quickened *together with* Christ, raised up *together*, and made to sit *together* in the heavenly places in Him. It is not Christ's act, as the Son, quickening us, but our participation, by God's mighty power, in the quickening, raising up, and setting in the heavenlies, of *the Man Christ Jesus Himself*, when His life had been laid down in sacrifice for sin. Such participation there could not be, till Christ Himself had passed through death, and had come forth, being raised up, and set on high, by the One whom Paul addresses as "The God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory." Old Testament saints had divine life, and looked forward in faith and hope to the promised Redeemer. Millennial saints will also have divine life, and be happy under Christ's glorious reign. But we read of none save the Church, Christ's body and fulness, participating by divine power in the quickening, raising up, and setting in the heavenlies of the Son of man Himself, when, for the glory of His God and Father, He had gone down into the dust of death.

I cannot forbear adding here some more words from the same pen. "It is this thought which was completely hid (hid in God) under the old covenant, and which is not found in the whole of the Old Testament. The idea of a Christ not perfect simply in His own person, as an individual, would have been unintelligible to the most advanced saint of the Old Testament. There was to be blessing under His government — but the being a part of the Christ, as a member of His body, would have been incomprehensible." Surely this is true. And do we not need very simple faith, my brethren, we who are the happy subjects of this now revealed mystery, to receive the revelation of it into our hearts? Would that we might receive it in greater simplicity and power!

One thing follows immediately in the chapter we are considering. That is, that in the presence of this unity with Christ, and with each other, all earthly distinctions disappear. No earthly difference could be so great as that between Jews and Gentiles. It was a distinction established of God Himself, who had separated Israel to Himself as His own peculiar nation. It was a distinction inseparable from the law, which, being the instrument of God's government of the Jews, while the Gentiles were not so governed, made manifest that God was the God of the Jews, while the Gentiles were "without God in the world." But, now that the earth is no longer thus in view as the scene of God's discriminating government, men are regarded according to what they really are; and viewed thus, Jews and Gentiles are all alike "dead in sins." There is no difference. A Jew might be outwardly nigh, and a Gentile outwardly far off; "But now" says the apostle, "in Christ Jesus, ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ; for he is our peace who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; having abolished in his flesh the enmity the law of commandments in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; and that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby." All that separated Jew from Gentile, as well as all that separated both from God, Christ has set aside by the cross, making

peace by His blood, and reconciling both to God in one body. What was the design of this? It was "to make in himself of twain one new man:" this new mystic man of which He Himself, Christ, glorified, is the Head; and of which Jews and Gentiles, who truly believe, are alike members. The Jew taken out of his natural position, and the Gentile taken out of his, are both brought into this new wondrous position — of being members of this new mystic man — "members of Christ." Marvellous grace! May the sense of it unite us practically to each other. What are the distinctions between Churchman and Dissenter, Methodist and Presbyterian, compared with the distinction, divinely established too, between Jew and Gentile? Did unity in Christ absorb and obliterate the one? Why should it not the others also? One body with each other and with Christ, — would that we might realize and manifest this unity in fuller measure than we do!

As to the close of Ephesians 2, where the Church is spoken of as the habitation of God through the Spirit, I quote again from the pen which has supplied more than one extract already. "The Christian was built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, (of the New Testament, compare Eph. 3: 5,) Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner-stone. The Gentiles were builded together with the Jews to be the habitation of God through the Spirit. As Israel was separated from the nations, so was the Church from the world. It was no longer of it. Its formation on earth began after the breaking down, by the cross, of the middle wall of partition. It was as a new man, Jews and Gentiles being reconciled to God in one body. Besides, we find that instead of a temple made with hands, where Jehovah dwelt, this union of Jewish and Gentile believers in one body, formed the habitation of God upon earth, and that this habitation was by the Spirit. This latter truth gives us the true character of the Church upon earth; a character, it is evident, of the most important bearing. It is a character which involves the deepest responsibility, and, let me say it, the most precious: for the responsibilities of Christians all flow from the grace which has been shown them. This character of being the habitation of God is one, in fine, which the Church cannot lose, because it is made to depend on the grace and promise of God, that this other Comforter, the Spirit of Truth, would not go away as Christ did, but abide for ever with those that were his."

Eph. 3 which shows how all this was a mystery hid in God from all previous ages, has been already considered; and it is only noticed here to call the attention of my reader to the tenth verse. How important must be the place in divine counsels filled by the Church, when we see, that it is by means of the Church the manifold wisdom of God is made known to the principalities and powers in heavenly places. We naturally think of the world, and the Christian feels the importance of a true and faithful testimony for God in the world; and so he ought to feel. But here is disclosed to us, that God is making Himself known in heaven as well as on earth; and that in the Church — fruit as it is of his own workmanship — (see Eph. 2: 10) He is making known to the principalities and powers in heavenly places His own manifold wisdom. What an unspeakably honoured place for the Church is this; to be thus the vessel for the display of God's glory, not only, not chiefly, to those on earth, but to those in heaven!

The fourth of Ephesians begins with the practical use of this doctrine of the Church — inculcating the lowliness and meekness, the long-suffering and loving forbearance, suited to the walk of those who are brought into such intimate relationship to Christ. He, as the Son of God, could say, "No man knoweth the Son, but the Father;" and, "All things are delivered unto me of

my Father ;" yet could He add, yea, as the perfect moral expression of all this divine and ineffable glory, "Take my yoke upon you and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart!" This blessed One is now no longer on earth, amid the circumstances in which His lowliness and meekness were so wonderfully displayed: but He has brought us, poor saved sinners, into unity with Himself on high, that as members of His body, and actuated and inhabited by His Spirit, His meekness and lowliness may still be manifested — manifested in us, who are yet in the scene, and amid the circumstances, which afford the opportunity for their exercise. And where shall such opportunity be found, so fully as within the Church itself? "Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." Would that all our consciences, the consciences of all saints, were made deeply sensible of our sweet, sacred, solemn obligations with regard to this!

This allusion practically to the unity of the Spirit, seems to bring up afresh before the soul of the Apostle, the whole doctrine of the unity of the Church, and he proceeds to re-state it, in the most simple, striking, and forcible way. "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling." He speaks of Christ's ascension on high, noticing that He first descended into the lower parts of the earth, and that He who descended is the same also who ascended up far above all heavens, that He might fill all things. From this place of highest glory, to which He has ascended, He is represented as bestowing gifts for the growth and edification of His body, the Church. "And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers: for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." Observe, it is not till *each* comes to be a perfect man, or till we all come to be perfect *men*: that is, it is not individual attainment here, though, of course, the growth of individuals is included in the growth of the body. But that is not the point presented here. It is, till we *all* come to a *perfect man*. It is the completion of the new mystic man, of which Christ personally, Christ glorified, is Head, the Church being His fulness, thus considered. The measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ is that to which the whole has to attain. And observe, it is the whole Church that is in view — it is not a local church. Hence, a little further on the apostle speaks of "the head, even Christ, from whom THE WHOLE BODY, fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love." What a picture of Christ, and His body, the Church, according to the mind and thoughts of God! As far as it respects the Head, blessed be God, all remains in full perfectness of blessing and glory. And as far as respects our inalienable standing and portion in Him, this remains also. But as to what has been confided to us in responsibility, for the manifestation, the display, of this divine idea, what shall we say? Where, my brethren, is there anything answering to this picture of the Church's unity in Eph. 4? Alas! we need to hide our heads. May we have grace to do so in unfeigned humiliation before God! And may we not shrink from seeing in His light, the light of His word, all that perfectness with which we have to compare the present actual condition of the Church, if we would estimate it rightly before Him!

In Ephesians 5 the apostle is inculcating on Christians a walk suited to their high calling, and extends his exhortation to all the relationships of life. In thus exhorting husbands and wives, he is led to present a new view of the relation between Christ and the Church. He speaks of the husband as the head of the wife, "even as Christ is the Head of the Church." "Husbands," he

says, "love your wives, even as Christ also loved the Church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish." Then further: "He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh, but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the Church; for we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones." Yes, the Church is the Eve of the Second Adam, the Lord from heaven. But Adam received his Eve at the hands of the Lord God, before his own probation was completed; and they were, in fact, both put on probation together. All things in this lower creation were put under Adam, and Eve was associated with him in this headship over the whole earth; but both were to be tried; and every one knows that, in result, it was the woman who was deceived. The Second Adam receives not His Eve, the Church, until Satan has been permitted to test Him to the uttermost; nor until He has accomplished the redemption of the Church, by the stupendous sacrifice of Himself. *The Church becomes the Bride of Christ by virtue of His having loved her and given Himself for her.* How blessed and how secure must be her position!

The passage before us presents three things as to Christ and the Church. First, it is the object of His affection — an affection He has demonstrated by giving Himself for it. So inestimable was the Church in Christ's eyes, that He would purchase it at the cost, not only of His life, His blood, but of "HIMSELF." *He gave Himself for it.* Secondly, when He has thus purchased the Church, He fashions it by the word — cleansing, washing, sanctifying it, according to His own heart's desire. Thirdly, He does this in order that He may, in the end, present the Church to Himself, without one spot or blemish to offend His eye or grieve His heart; arrayed, too, in a glory suited to the place she is to fill with Himself, and answering to the depths of His own infinite, ineffable love.

Further on, the apostle quotes, almost verbally, the joyous exclamation of Adam on receiving his bride at the Creator's hands. Adam said, "This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of man. Therefore shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh." What says the apostle? "For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church: for we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery; BUT I SPEAK CONCERNING CHRIST AND THE CHURCH." A wondrous mystery indeed!

As to the actual identification of the Church with Christ, and the way in which it comes to be so identified with Him, we have a remarkable testimony in 1 Corinthians 12. The baptism of the Holy Ghost had been witnessed of by John the Baptist, as that which was specially to distinguish Christ from all who had preceded Him as prophets or messengers from God. Of these John himself was confessedly the greatest: but observe how he speaks of the contrast between himself and Jesus — "I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire." (Matt. 3: 11. See also Mark 1: 8; Luke 3: 16; John 1: 33.) Our Lord's own words to His disciples after His resurrection, show that He had not yet baptized them with the Holy Ghost. Just before He ascended to heaven, we are told, that "being assembled together with

them, he commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me; for John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence." (Acts 1: 4, 5.) It was on the day of Pentecost that this promise of the Father was fulfilled. Peter's words leave no room for question as to this: "This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear." (Acts 2: 32, 33.)

Turn now to 1 Cor. 12: 12, 13, "For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so *also is Christ*." So absolutely identified are Christ and His members, that the whole body (Head and members) is called Christ — "*so also is Christ*." How is this unity, this absolute identity, of the members and the Head in one body produced? *By the baptism of the Holy Ghost*. "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free: and have been all made to drink into one Spirit." The baptism with the Holy Ghost never took place till the day of Pentecost. On that day it did take place; and its effect was, this unity of the saints with Christ in one body, so that the whole body, formed of Head and members, is called Christ.

The Epistle to the Colossians treats of the same precious mystery, in a somewhat different aspect. Christ's headship of this body is mentioned as one of the many titles and glories which belong to Him. He is spoken of as "the image of the invisible God, the first-born of (that is, the chief over) every creature." "By him," we are told, "were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him and for him: and he is before all things, and by him all things consist." These are titles essentially divine. Creation of all things in heaven and earth — proprietorship of all things thus created for as well as *by Him* — priority to all things — and the actual upholding of every thing, so that by Him all things consist — such are the titles in which Christ is here presented. To these are added — "And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the first-born from the dead: that in all things he might have the pre-eminence." What are the truths here presented to us? First, that the Person with whom the Church is, by marvellous grace, identified as its Head, is the One to whom, in Himself, all these divine rights and titles belong. Secondly, that ineffably near as is the relationship between the blessed One, the Head, and His body the Church, yet the headship even here belongs to Him. If grace has brought us so near to Christ as to be one body with Him, we are still to remember that we are but the body, and that He is the Head — that in all things He might have the pre-eminence. Thirdly, it is as risen that He takes this place of headship to His body, the Church — "who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead." The importance of the truth last named — that it is as risen He has become the Head of the Church, is further apparent from what follows. "For it pleased the Father* that in him should all fulness dwell: and having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself: by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven. And you, that were sometime alienated, and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblamable, and unreprovable in his sight." All things (not persons, observe) in heaven and in earth are to be reconciled by Christ, in virtue of His having made peace through the blood of His cross; but as to the Church, its reconciliation is already accomplished — *you hath He reconciled*. The Church, already "reconciled in the body of Christ's

flesh through death," peace being made by His blood, is in resurrection become His body. Of this body, He Himself, the beginning, the first-born from the dead, is the ever-living and glorious Head. He is also by divine rights of creatorship, sustentation, and proprietorship, Head over all creation; and He is actually to take this place, when, by virtue of the same peace-making blood by which the Church is already reconciled, He reconciles all things both in heaven and in earth. He has already reconciled the Church, that when He does take this place, the Church may be with Him, presented "holy, unblamable, and unreprouvable in his sight." This is the hope of the gospel, whereof Paul tells us he had been made a minister. He also speaks of rejoicing "to fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in his flesh, FOR HIS BODY'S SAKE, WHICH IS THE CHURCH." He still further testifies here, as in Ephesians, of this being a mystery, or to give his own words, "THE MYSTERY which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints; to whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory." It was indeed a mystery, of which no one in previous ages could have had an idea. It was clearly enough revealed in the Old Testament, how Messiah should reign in glory over Israel and the whole earth, and how He should thus be the glory of His people Israel. But that any, and most of all, that Gentiles should form the body of Christ, so that what an apostle preached should be, "*Christ in you;*" and yet that this should be before the manifestation of His glory as Head and Reconciler of all things; so that it is "*Christ in you, the hope of glory;*" — this was indeed a mystery previously unrevealed! Alas! to how many Christians might it as well have remained still unrevealed; I mean as to any knowledge or enjoyment of it possessed by their souls. The Lord awaken His beloved people to a perception, by faith, of what their real place, and portion, and privileges, and prospects are!

*More literally, "For in him it pleased all the fulness to dwell."

It may be well here to look back a little to the Epistle to the Ephesians, to a passage purposely passed over in our last number, when the Epistle was under review. We read in Eph. 1: 7-12, of "the riches of his (God the Father's) grace, wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: that in the dispensation of the fulness of times, he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him: in whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will, that we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted* in Christ." Several things in this comprehensive passage demand our prayerful consideration.

*More strictly, "who pretrusted," or, "who are pretrusters in Christ."

First, the Church stands in such a relation to Christ — it is so intimately united to Him, and in Him brought so nigh to God — that God our Father in the riches of His grace "hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence, *having made known unto us the mystery of his will.*" As Joseph, prior to his exaltation, was an interpreter of dreams, and a revealer of the mind of God, so the Church is even now, before the dispensation of the fulness of times is ushered in, entrusted with the knowledge of the mystery of God's will respecting it. The whole intelligent universe will know this mystery when the time for its manifestation has come; but to the Church is

confided the knowledge of it *while it is yet unmanifested*, and as to fact, unaccomplished. "We have the mind of Christ." (1 Cor. 2: 16.)

Secondly — The mystery of God's will, the knowledge of which is thus entrusted "to the Church, has reference to a period here termed "the dispensation of the fulness of times." Many have supposed that this denotes the present dispensation, confounding it with another expression used in Gal. 4: 4, "But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son." But the fulness of *time*, and the dispensation of the fulness of *times*, are two very different expressions. "When the time appointed in divine counsels was fully come, God sent forth his Son," would seem to be the plain, obvious meaning of the one. The other designates a period, "the dispensation of the fulness of times," in which all things in heaven and in earth are to be gathered together in one, that is, in Christ. This is evidently something future. The reconciliation of all things in heaven and in earth, we have already seen in Col. 1, is future, though peace has been already made by the blood of the cross. The Church is now reconciled; but things in heaven and on earth are yet to be reconciled. So here in Eph. 1 — the Church is blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ, and has confided to it the knowledge of the mystery of God's will: but things in heaven and things on earth are not yet being gathered, much less actually *gathered* together in one in Christ. The Church itself is being gathered for the heavens; but it is of *things* in heaven and *things* on earth that it is said they are all to be gathered together in Christ.

Thirdly, as to the meaning of the expression, "fulness of times," it is important to observe that there are certain times or periods, each bearing its characteristic feature, which all run on till they meet, as it were, and terminate in the dispensation yet to come. As another has written, "The dispensation of the fulness of times is that in which *all these several times* will have run out, and into which they all are now running. When the Lord Jesus leaves the right hand of God, *then* will God visibly interfere with all that is measured by these times. The time of *misrule* ends by Christ taking his power and reigning. The time of *testimony* ends by judgment. The time of the *Church's suffering* ends by her being glorified with her Lord. The time of *Israel's blindness* ends by the veil being taken away. The time of *Gentile domination* ends by the Stone cut out without hands smiting the image. The time of *creation's thralldom* ends by the manifestation of the sons of God; and this, we know, is when Jesus shall be manifested. And Satan, who had in the ministry of our Lord asked not to be tormented before the time, will then know that the time of his restraint is come, though his judgment will even then be in prospect. Surely a dispensation so marked is of the deepest importance — a dispensation in which all the apparent failures of God will be proved to have been but the means of displaying His power and wisdom."*

*"The Prospect," vol. ii., page 111.

Fourthly, in the dispensation of the fulness of times, when Christ is the centre of unity and blessing to all in heaven and all on earth, all being under His Headship, and gathered together in one, even in Him, the Church is to share with Him this inheritance of all things — "in whom also we have obtained an inheritance." Not only is Christ the second Adam, to whom universal dominion *on earth* belongs; God has "set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: and hath put all things under his feet, and

gave him to be the head over all things to the Church, WHICH IS HIS BODY, the fulness of him that filleth all in all." It is in the dispensation of the fulness of times that He is to be manifested as Head over all things in heaven and on earth. And the Church is to be manifested as His Body, His Bride. Wondrous destiny! Already is He seated at God's right hand on high; but He waits for this inheritance of all things both in heaven and on earth. We now are seated in heavenly places in Him, and are waiting for the moment when we shall share this inheritance of all things, with our now rejected Saviour, Head, and Lord.

A few Scriptures may now be considered which set forth this joint heirship of the Church with Christ. The general truth that when Messiah takes His kingdom, there are saints who will reign with Him, had been revealed in the Old Testament. In the Gospels, we find our Lord applying this truth in a very definite way to the twelve apostles. He tells them that "in the regeneration, when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory," they who had followed him "shall sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel." This, as is evident, only applies to the apostles. The Saviour speaks of a wider distribution of power and dignity among His followers in Luke 19. There they are regarded as servants to whom their Master's goods had been entrusted in his absence; and according to the measure of their faithfulness in the use of these, is the degree of authority conferred upon them at His return. One is made ruler over ten cities, another over five. In the parable of the talents in Matt. 25, each faithful servant, on being approved, is called to enter into the joy of his Lord. It is not simply a donation of delegated authority, but it is participation with his Lord in the joy of the kingdom.

All these, however, are but hints and preparatory notices — suggestive indeed of the wondrous truth, that saved sinners from among Adam's ruined race are to share the glories of the great Captain of their salvation, but not declaring this truth in all its length and breadth and fulness. It is at the close of John's Gospel that the light of this amazing prospect begins to beam fully upon us. "The glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me." (John 17: 22, 23.) In this passage, Jesus distinctly declares that the glory given to Him He has conferred on His disciples; and that, in consequence thereof, the world is yet to know that the Father has loved them even as He has loved Jesus. When Christ's people are seen by the world in the same glory as Christ Himself, it will be known that they are the objects of the same love.

In the epistles we have numerous assurances to the same effect. We are told of the Spirit itself bearing witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God. "And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ: if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together." (Rom. 8: 17.) "God is faithful," it is said, "by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ;" that is, to participation or partnership with Him. (1 Cor. 1: 9.) Even our vile body is to be "fashioned like unto his glorious body." (Phil. 3: 21.) When He appears, we are to appear with Him in glory. (Col. 3: 4.) We are said to be "called to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ." (2 Thess. 2: 14.) "If we suffer, we shall also reign with him." (2 Tim. 2: 12.) Such are some of the divine testimonies to this glorious truth. But there is one, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, which demands more lengthened consideration. True that it is not the Church, as now united to Christ in heavenly places, that is there presented; — that is, it is not the Church in this character. The saints who compose the Church are regarded,

in Hebrews 2, rather as Christ's brethren than as His body. The unity treated of is that of the family rather than that of the body. Still it is unity with Christ. "For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified, are all of one; for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren." But let us consider the passage as a whole.

It was God's revealed intention from the first, that this whole lower creation should be under the dominion of man. "Have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth." (Gen. 1: 28.) Such were God's words to Adam. It was in responsibility to his Creator, that Adam was placed thus at the head of this lower creation. He quickly failed. Deceived by the enemy, he betrayed himself, and the creation over which he was set, into the enemy's hands. But was God's purpose of subjecting the earth to man's dominion frustrated or set aside? No; the eighth Psalm testifies of a "Son of man," who is to inherit all the dominion confided at the first to Adam. "What is man that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him? For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour. Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands: thou hast put all things under his feet: all sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field, the fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas." Here we have evident reference to the original gift of authority to Adam; but it is the Son of man, made a little lower than the angels, to whom the language is here applied; with the significant addition, moreover, of the words — "Thou hast put all things under his feet." Now, these words are quoted again and again in the New Testament — quoted in such a way as leaves no room for doubt as to the One who is here in view. One of these quotations is in Ephesians 1: 22, and has been already considered; another is in Hebrews 2. The apostle is instructing us, that unto the angels God hath not put in subjection the world to come,* but to man. Then he quotes from Psalm 8 the very language we are considering, and proceeds to apply it to Christ: "Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet." "But now," says the apostle, "we see not yet all things put under him, (that is, they are so in God's purpose, and as to Christ's title, only we see not yet the actual accomplishment,) BUT WE SEE JESUS, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour." Jesus is the One made a little lower than the angels, under whose feet all things (in title and divine purpose, though not yet in fact) are put. He is the heir of all the dignity and dominion entrusted to Adam, and of which Adam proved himself so unworthy. Christ is the Second Adam, THE MAN, to whom the world to come is to be put in subjection.

*By this phrase we are not to understand an indefinable state of existence after death, as it is commonly supposed to mean. The expression is one that literally means "The habitable earth to come."

But how was this title to universal supremacy over the earth to be made good? Through Adam's sin this supremacy had really (however covertly it might be) passed into the hands of the usurper; and in the righteous displeasure of God against man's sin, Satan was permitted to hold and to wield the power of death against creation and its fallen occupants. How was he to be dispossessed? The mere exercise of power, however unlimited, would not meet the exigencies of the case; for the glory of God's holiness and majesty had to be vindicated, in the scene where they had been so deeply dishonoured. *Redemption is the only key to unlock this mystery.* The Seed of the woman was eventually to bruise the serpent's head; but first, by the serpent, must His

own heel be bruised. The Second Adam is, as we have seen, to have universal dominion; but first we see Him, Jesus, for the suffering of death made a little lower than the angels. What gives to His sufferings and death their infinite efficacy, is, that while really man, and the Son of man, He is also the Son of God. He is the One whom God has appointed heir of all things, by whom also He made the worlds. He is the brightness of God's glory, the express image of His person, and He upholds all things by the word of His power. When by Himself He had purged our sins, He sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high. Here we find what glorious titles are His, by virtue both of what He is essentially, and of the atoning work He has accomplished. Surpassing mystery! The Son of God becomes the Son of man. He whom angels worship is made a little lower than the angels. The Maker of all worlds takes part of flesh and blood. He who upholds all things by the word of His power, "tastes death for every man."* How was this? What need could there be for so amazing a transaction? Hear the answer — "For it became him for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings." The glory of God required it. "It became him." Not only is Christ THE MAN to whom the world to come is in divine purpose subjected; — there were many sons to be brought to glory — and it was only through the sufferings of the Captain of their salvation that this could be effected. The second Adam was to resume all that the first had forfeited. But all had to be bought back *by blood*, ere it could be taken back *by power*. Could the blood of a mere man, or of any mere creature, avail for this? Impossible! But the Second Adam is God manifested in the flesh. Hence the efficacy of His blood. Hence the wonders it has achieved. Sins purged; the devil, who had the power of death, subdued and overthrown; the victims of the ceaseless fear of death delivered; the many sons brought to glory; Christ manifested as the first-born among many brethren; and the habitable earth to come, the millennial earth, put in subjection not to angels, but to man, yea, to this glorified Son of man, and the many sons which He shall have brought to glory, — such are some of the results flowing from the humiliation and sufferings and death of Him who is both Son of God and Son of man. May our hearts be more familiar with them, and with Him the trophies of whose victory they are!

*Or, 'everything,' as the Greek word might properly be rendered.

Passing over the various anticipations of their reign with Christ expressed by the heavenly saints in Rev. 1 and 5, as well as the vision of it described by the apostle in Rev. 20, we may pause for a moment in view of another vision narrated by the same inspired pen, in Rev. 21: 9 - 22: 5. It is a vision of the glory of the Church in its connection with the millennial earth. "And there came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will show thee the Bride, the Lamb's wife." The marriage of the Lamb had been previously witnessed of in Rev. 19: 7. Now, while preparing under the hand of her Divine Fashioner, the Holy Ghost, the Church is said to be "espoused to one husband, that she may be presented as a chaste virgin to Christ." (2 Cor. 11: 2.) The passage just referred to in Rev. 19 celebrates the accomplishment of the union. "Let us be glad and rejoice and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready." The latter part of chapter 19 shows us heaven opened, and the Rider upon the white horse coming forth to judge and make war, and tells us that "the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean." The fine linen is declared, in verse 8, to be "the righteousness of saints." It is evident, therefore, that the Church, and no doubt all the risen saints, are meant by "the armies which were in heaven:" but as thus

following, or attending Christ to judgment, they are not spoken of as His Bride, neither are they so designated in Rev. 20. They are said to be kings and priests, and they reign with Christ; but other saints, as we are assured, will share this kingly and priestly character with those who compose the Church. The vision of chapter 21: 9 - 22: 5, is restricted to the Church, "the bride, the Lamb's wife." It is to behold her that John is summoned by the angel. And what did he see? "And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God." The description follows. It is not to consider it in detail that it is now referred to; but to call attention to it, as presenting the peculiar place of the Church in glory, both in relation to Christ as His Bride, and to the millennial earth in connection with which it is here presented. Observe, it is as the "Bride, THE LAMB'S WIFE," we see it here. It is not as the Bride of the King, but the Bride, the Lamb's wife. She, who through grace has known and loved Him in His rejection; she, who has partaken of the character and sorrows of Him who was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and who was dumb as a sheep before her shearers, opening not his mouth; she is manifested in glory as the Bride, the Lamb's wife. And it is particularly sweet to notice, that the only influence she is represented as exerting *in this character* on the millennial earth, is a gracious and beneficent influence. She is represented as a city, of which the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are both the light and the temple, and in which is the throne of God and of the Lamb. The spared nations are said to walk in the light of this glorious city; and the kings of the earth, we read, do bring their glory and honour into it. From the throne of God and of the Lamb proceeds the river of life, by which grows the tree of life, the leaves of which are for the healing of the nations. Thus, all the connection with the earth which the glorified Church will have in this character of "the Bride, the Lamb's wife," is one of light, and healing, and beneficent influence. There will indeed be righteousness maintained by power during the millennial period; but it would seem that the earthly Jerusalem will be the special instrument in maintaining this. (Cp. Psalm 45 and Isaiah 60: 12.) The relation of the Church, fair witness and full expression as she will then be of the exceeding riches of God's grace — specially associated with Christ as the Lamb rather than as the King, though of course she will reign with Christ — her relation to the scene beneath will, in harmony with this her character, be one of love and goodness rather than of retributive righteousness, or repression of evil by power. Christ's relation to the earth in that day will be of both these characters. The earthly Jerusalem (and, it may be, those risen and glorified saints who do not form part of the Church) will be specially* associated with Him in the one character of rule — that of righteousness; the Church in the other — that of grace.

*Specially — not exclusively; for while we know that restored Israel will be "as a dew from the Lord, as the showers upon the grass," (Micah 5: 7,) we are equally sure that those who compose the Church, the Bride, will, with all the risen saints reign with Christ, and so share in the exercise of His righteous rule. It is what specially characterizes each that is treated of above.

The last view we have of the Church in Scripture is where her attitude and desire, as the Bride of Christ, are expressed in those memorable words — "The Spirit and the Bride say, Come. And let him that heareth, say, Come. And let him that is athirst come: and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." (Rev. 22: 17.) Assuming that it is to Christ, the Bridegroom, that the first invitation is addressed, (and to whom should the Bride say, Come, but to the Bridegroom?) what a view does this passage afford us, of the proper attitude, and desire, and hope of the Church! As actuated by the Spirit, she cries to her Lord and Bridegroom, Come.

She calls on any who may hear — individual saints, really part of the Church, but not knowing as yet the Church position and relationship — to join in the cry. But then, as already indwelt by the Spirit, and set to testify the grace of her absent Lord, she invites any who are athirst, yea, and whosoever will, to come to those waters of life and refreshing, which flow so freely from the Head, through the members, to any poor thirsty souls who may be drawn to Jesus by the ministry of reconciliation with which she has been entrusted. The Church, as here presented, has but one object — Christ. Whether she invites Him to come, or invites poor, parched, and thirsty souls to come to Him, He, He alone, is her object. But this may well lead us to consider, a little more minutely and attentively, the responsibilities of the Church, connected with, and flowing from, all that has now been passing under review. The Lord grant us a lowly spirit and a tender conscience, in turning to this practical view of the subject.

One remark it may be requisite to make, to prevent misapprehension. While it is impossible that any but those who are vitally united to Christ, as His body, by the Holy Ghost, should live and walk as becometh the Church, the responsibility to walk thus may be shared, and is shared, by all who profess to be the Church. None but those who have really been quickened and raised up together with Christ, and made to sit together in heavenly places in Him, can manifest the heavenly spirit and walk suited to such a position. But, then, this is the position of all true Christians; and whole nations, alas! profess to be such, and thus place themselves under responsibility to live and act according to this profession. How unspeakably solemn, in this point of view, is the present state of the professing world — of what is popularly designated Christendom! As to all who really compose the Church, the fact of their being a part of it — that is, of their being one body and one spirit with Christ — makes their final salvation sure: still, what cause for shame, and humiliation, and self-reproach, have all such, that there should be such a total failure to manifest the real place, and portion, and character, and object of the Church. It is not as being less guilty than one's brethren, that one ventures to give expression to such thoughts. Far from it. But is it not our place to ask ourselves — the place of all who really know the Saviour — Are we fulfilling the end for which we have been called of God into such nearness to Himself?

What is the first great responsibility of the Church? Surely it is to keep herself for Christ! Is she not betrothed to Him as His Bride? Has He not loved her, and given Himself for her, that He might present her to Himself, a glorious Church, unspotted, and without wrinkle or blemish? When, and where, is this presentation to take place? Where is the One to whom she is betrothed, the One who has loved her, and washed her in His own blood? Ah! He is not here, but in heaven. Rejected by the earth, the right hand of God is where He waits, till His enemies are made His footstool. But is it only for the subjugation of His foes that He waits? No; He has gone to prepare a place for His Church, His Bride; and He waits for the moment when He is to present her to Himself unblemished and complete. "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me." Is such the language of our Lord? Enthroned above all height, the object of heaven's deepest homage, His heart still yearns to have with Him, and beside Him, in the glory, the Church that He has purchased with His blood! And what is the response, my brethren, which He receives from us? Heaven, where He is owned and worshipped, suffices not for Him till we are there, to behold His glory and to share His blessedness. But does it not often seem as though earth would satisfy us? Stained though it be with the blood of Jesus, characterized though it be, to this hour, by the

haughty, scornful rejection of His claims, the contemptuous neglect of His dying love — how do our treacherous hearts still linger amid its delusive scenes! What a fearful power there is in its false glitter and glory to arrest our attention and to detain our hearts! Alas! for us, to make such returns to our Heavenly Bridegroom for all His self-consuming, self-sacrificing love to us.

What is the Church's place? How the Holy Ghost provides an answer to this question, in the yearnings of the heart of the apostle over the saints at Corinth, who had been the fruit of his ministry and seal of his apostleship! "For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ." (2 Cor. 11: 2.) Could any language more touchingly express the deep, devoted, single-hearted affection for Christ, and weanedness from all else, which constitute the only fitting response to the love wherewith He has loved the Church in espousing her thus to Himself? Ought even a converted world, if He were not personally present in it, to satisfy the heart of the one who is thus espoused as a chaste virgin to Christ? How do the laborious efforts, even of sincere, devoted Christians, to show that what is before us is a spiritual millennium, without Christ's personal presence, make manifest the condition into which the Church has sunk! Can anything but her Lord's presence satisfy the heart of the faithful Spouse? Then see the effect of this our departure in heart from the true scriptural hope of the Church as the Spouse or Bride of Christ. Adopting for our object, as the Church at large has done, the rectification of the world in the absence of *its* rightful Ruler, and our Lord and Bridegroom, we naturally avail ourselves of all the means and influences within reach to bear upon our object; and hence the strange, the anomalous sight, of the professed Bride of an earth-rejected Lord, possessing, using, and seeking still further to possess and use, the appliances of worldly rank, and authority, and wealth, and learning, and popular influence, to hasten on, as is affirmed, the epoch of the world's regeneration. The Church forgets her own calling, to wait as a desolate, widowed stranger in the world whence her Lord has been rejected, and where He is still dishonoured and disowned; and soon, instead of thus keeping herself for Him, she is found in guilty dalliance with the world whose hands are yet stained with His blood! She proposes, indeed, to convert the world; but it is the world that has converted her. To comfort her and sustain her heart amid rejection by the world, her absent Lord assures her that when He reigns she shall reign with Him — that when He triumphs she shall share His triumph. But alas! the world holds out the bait of present power, present influence, present glory; yea, and consents to adopt Christ's name, and allow, and even patronize, an outward, superficial regard for that name, as an inducement to the Church to enter into the unholy compact. And has she accepted the unhallowed proposals? My brethren, has she not? We know that the false Church says, (and, alas! to what an extent the true is mingled with the false,) "I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow." Let us never forget that it was in the true Church the mystery of iniquity began to work; and how soon it had assumed this character of self-glorification and living deliciously, contented and at rest in the present state of things! "Now ye are full, now ye are rich, ye have reigned as kings without us; and I would to God ye did reign, that we also might reign with you." (1 Cor. 4: 8.) That is, the apostle longed for the time to come when, as saints, they should really reign with Christ; for then, he knew, he should reign with them. But until then he was contented with his Master's portion here. And if, at so early a period he could say to the Corinthians, with how much more emphasis might he now have said to us, "For I think that God hath set forth us, the apostles, last, as it were appointed to death: for we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men. We are fools for Christ's sake, but ye are wise in Christ: we are weak, but ye are strong, ye are honourable, but we are despised." If,

my brethren, he could institute such a contrast then, between the results of faithfulness to Christ in himself and the other apostles, and the commencing indications of departure from Christ in the worldliness of the Corinthian saints, what could he have said to us in the present day? Who so realized as the Apostle Paul what the true place of the Church is, in fellowship and union with Christ? And what was the present result in his earthly condition? "Even unto this present hour we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling place; and labour, working with our own hands; being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we stiffer it; being defamed, we intreat: we are made as the filth of the world, and are the offscouring of all things unto this day." If the opposite of all this among the Corinthians called forth from the apostle such a pathetic warning — "I write not these things to shame you, but as my beloved sons I warn you" — what must he have said to us, I would again inquire, in the present day? If these things were not written to shame *them*, they surely do shame us! The tide of worldliness which then was setting in, has since rolled on with such resistless force — it has so swept away all the old landmarks, and effaced every vestige of the Church's separation from the world — that now, saints are diligently taught to use every lawful effort to improve their circumstances, and raise themselves in the social scale; while he is deemed the best Christian who seems to approach the nearest to the practically giving Him the lie who said, "Ye cannot serve God and mammon."*

*Only think, as one instance, of the title of a pamphlet, by a popular Nonconformist minister, "How to Make the Best of Both Worlds!"

The Church Christ's Bride! Nay, more — the Bride, the *Lamb's* wife! What affinity is there in spirit and character between the Bridegroom and the *professing* Bride? He took the lowest place on earth: she seeks the highest. He was the poorest man on earth: she rolls in wealth. He lived for His Father's glory, and it is her place to live to Him; but she lives, alas! to herself. His life was one of dependence on His Father; her dependence is on the world. He pleased not Himself; she lives in pleasure, and is dead while she lives. He never resented one of the ceaseless injuries and insults He received: when reviled, He reviled not again; she, without scruple, wields the world's power to maintain what she calls her rights, and often, alas! to inflict the most grievous wrongs — "In her was found the blood of prophets and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth." (Rev. 18: 24.)

My reader may perhaps be saying, "Ah, but it is of Rome that you are again speaking; and what has Rome, or Romanism, to do with Christ and the Church? Dear reader, it is of mystic Babylon that the pen of inspiration uses the words just quoted; and no doubt Romanism is the principal part of that which mystic Babylon represents. But it is not the whole: and even so far as it is what we are to understand by Babylon, has my reader forgotten that all the blood shed by Papal Rome has been shed in the name of Christ? What, you ask, has Romanism to do with Christ and the Church? Does not Romanism embrace the greater part of what professes to be the Church? How, then, in considering the responsibilities of the professing Church, as measured by the calling of the true, can Romanism be left out?

But is it Rome alone that, under the name of Christ and the profession of being His Church, His Bride, unites herself with the world that has rejected Christ, and uses the world's power to enforce her rights and avenge her wrongs? "He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep

before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth." And the Church, as we have seen, is the Bride, the *Lamb's* wife. And think of the perfect grace in which the true Church stands — consisting, as it does, of sinners saved by grace, and saved after such a sort as to be placed nearer to God's throne, and to the Father's heart, than any creatures besides; — saved thus, "that in the ages to come, he may show what is the exceeding riches of his grace, in his kindness towards us through Christ Jesus!" Think of this, and of the way in which we are preceptively taught, both in the gospels and in the epistles, to manifest this grace — preferring the loss of both coat and cloak to the suing for the recovery of either — going two miles with any who compel us to go one — when one cheek is smitten, presenting the other also — never being overcome of evil, but always overcoming evil with good. When man's utmost hatred was expressed in the crucifixion of God's Son, God's utmost love was manifested in taking out of the world a number of its guilty inhabitants, cleansing them by the precious blood which had thus been shed, quickening them with the very life of the risen and ascended Saviour, and forming them by the Holy Ghost on earth to be the Bride, the Lamb's wife, when all in heaven and all on earth shall bow the knee to Jesus, and every tongue confess Him Lord. Is not this grace? perfect, infinite grace? And what has the Church to manifest, or exemplify, but grace? But is this her character? I speak not now of Romanism, but of what bears the name and sustains the responsibilities of the Church in countries where Romanism is not predominant. Is it grace, or retributive righteousness, which holds together the very framework of society in these so-called christian countries? Yea, and let me ask further, Do individual Christians generally, scruple in the least either officially to administer retributive justice, or to use it for their own defence? "Who made me a judge or a divider over you?" said our blessed Lord. And again, "The Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them." He stood thus the fair, bright, perfect witness of His Father's grace. He has left His Church in this world as a witness of His own. How do we practically bear the testimony?

In treating thus of the responsibility of the Church, one is obliged to regard both the true and the false, the real Church and the professing body. The Church was left here, God's assembly upon earth, to be the witness, in patient, suffering grace towards the world, and in true single-hearted affection and fealty to Christ, of all that she will be manifested to be in power and glory, when the marriage of the Lamb having taken place, and the Lamb Himself being enthroned, the Church, the Bride, the Lamb's wife, shall take her place as the vessel of His glory, and the channel and dispenser of healing and light and blessing to the millennial earth. This twofold blessedness, of the most intimate union with the Lamb, and of the efficacious ministration of grace to the world, will be made good in full power and glory in the Church in the coming dispensation. She was morally, by the power of the Spirit, to have maintained and manifested both characters of blessing during her sojourn on the earth. Has she done so? Is there anything which does so at this hour? Where is God's assembly or Church at this moment? Is it the great professing body, including Romanism, and all else that ostensibly bears the name of Christ? Is that the holy, elect, unspotted Bride of Christ? My readers know well that the thought cannot be entertained for a moment. Where is the Church, then, the Bride of Christ? Are we to be referred to the individual saints, dear to Christ, scattered throughout the professing body, or standing apart from it? Most gladly may all such be owned, as those who really compose the Church, the body of Christ. But where do they exist *as a body*? Where are they manifested as incorporated by the Holy Ghost, and actuated and inwrought by Him? Why do I ask these questions, my brethren? That we may all see to what a low estate we are reduced, and humble ourselves before

God. Surely this becomes us all. The body of Christ, as it respects its actual existence before God our Father, has not ceased to exist, and cannot cease to exist. All the living members will be found in the Bride, the Lamb's wife, when manifested in glory. Not a stone of the holy Jerusalem will be wanting, or out of its place then. Meanwhile, as a witness for Christ on earth, by the Holy Ghost dwelling in it, where is now the body, the Church? Let our consciences weigh this question well. The Lord grant us to take the place of unfeigned humiliation in His presence.

If we view the Church in its completeness as the body of Christ, the Bride, the Lamb's wife, and think of its ultimate blessedness and the display of the glory of God therein, we are assured that it is impossible for these to fail. Christ is yet to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that believe. That great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God, will to eternal ages make manifest the exceeding riches of God's grace, as well as the glory of His manifold wisdom, unfailing faithfulness, and almighty power. The final result is in His hands, and cannot fail.

If we view the Church as a body or assembly on earth, placed here in responsibility to manifest Christ, and its union with Him by the power of the Holy Ghost indwelling it, and working in it, we find two things. First, those who do really compose the Church, who are vitally united to Christ, have totally failed in this responsibility; and there is in consequence, no such manifestation of Christ, and of our union with Him, as there ought to have been. Secondly, those who do really compose the true Church, are mixed up with a vast professing body, which, in assuming the name and privileges of the Church, has become responsible for manifesting its true character and destiny; but which, alas, so far from this, has so apostatized from Christ and become so wedded to the world, that nothing but judgment awaits it. The true saints, those who really compose the Church of God, will all be changed at Christ's coming, and with the departed saints caught up to meet the Lord in the air. Judgment will afterwards fall on the false professing body which will be left on earth — that judgment the certainty of which has been already considered in a previous paper, on "The Doom of Christendom."

What remains, then, but that we humble ourselves before the Lord, and prayerfully and diligently search His word, and wait on Him, to learn how He would have His people act in the solemn emergency of the present hour? May His light shine clearly on our path! May we have grace to take our true place before Him, and faithfully use, at any cost, the light He may in His grace afford! And may the assured certainty of the speedy return of our blessed Lord both comfort our hearts, and induce all holy watchfulness and circumspection in keeping our garments unspotted from the world!