

# THE MYSTERY

(The Church of God)

By RICHARD HOLDEN

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# The Kingdom of Heaven

By SAMUEL RIDOUT

With Chart

Showing ISRAEL'S HOPE, the CHURCH of GOD,  
and the KINGDOM — Present and Future

"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).

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## ISRAEL'S HOPE.

*Keeping the chart folded* the reader has outlined before him :—

1st.—The line of prophecy running through the Old Testament, to the fulfilment of the Promise—the coming of Christ. First announced at the Fall, (Gen. iii. 15) it is more and more clearly revealed as we progress in Scripture: through the Law in its sacrifices, priesthood, etc.; through the Psalms and the Prophets, the glories of His Person, His sufferings, and His enduring Kingdom are told out at length. Isa. vii. 14; ix. 6, 7; liii.; Ps. ii.; xxii.; etc. etc. Finally, in Daniel ix., the time of His coming is marked out; and Malachi announces the Lord's messenger coming to prepare the people for Him (iii. 1; iv. 5). Thus closes the **Old Testament**.

2d.—The forerunner of Messiah, John, (the promised Elijah, if the nation will receive him) preaches the Kingdom is at hand,—the King was coming after him. Jesus too announces it (Matt. iv. 17; Mark i. 15). But John is beheaded; the King is rejected and crucified; God takes Him up to glory. Thus close **the Gospels**.

3d.—Favored Israel having rejected their King, God has broken them off, nationally, and grafted others—the Gentiles—in their place of blessing (Rom. xi.), until Israel repents. Through deepest tribulation “ungodliness will be turned away from Jacob”; they will “look on Him whom they pierced,” and own Him as their Saviour-King. Israel then will be restored and the Kingdom established. **Revelation** closes with the blessed picture of it.

## THE CHURCH OF GOD.

*Unfold the chart.*—A new display of the wisdom and surpassing grace of God (Eph. ii. 7; iii. 10) is now revealed. It is the purpose of God to give Christ a heavenly Bride (v. 25-32); this was a “Mystery” hid in God (iii. 9) from all previous Ages. Israel's national setting aside for the present time, on account of the rejection of Messiah, gives occasion for the display of God's eternal purpose; and the Church is called out from the world, as Rebekah from her country and kindred, to be Isaac's bride in Canaan (Gen. xxiv). Christ, exalted at God's right hand, is preached to the world as Saviour, and the Spirit sent down to witness of Him, now forms believers into the Body of Christ (Eph. i. 22, 23; 1 Cor. xii. 12, 13),—soon to be His Bride and taken to Him in heaven. John xiv. 1-3; Rev. xix. 6-9; xxi. 9-11. (*The blue is intended to indicate this heavenly character.*) Ephesians especially unfolds this; 1 Corinthians shows it as now on earth; Acts traces its development from its origin at Pentecost. The Mystery complete, the Church is “caught up” to its heavenly home (1 Cor. xv. 51, 52; 1 Thess. iv. 15-17).

In the present time

## THE KINGDOM

also is in its mystery-form (Matt. xiii. 11, 35)—unknown even in Old-Testament prophecy; the King being absent, and its administration committed into the hands of men (see Matt. xxv. 14-19 and the parables of chap. xiii), whence a mixed condition, to be rectified only when the Lord appears, and judgment removes the evil out of it—the Church having previously been removed from the earth.

Prophetic time (which had stopped with Israel's cutting off) is resumed—as shown by folding of the chart. Daniel's seventieth week is now to be fulfilled (Dan. ix. 27); Israel is brought through her time of trouble to repentance (Dan. xii. 1; Matt. xxiv. 15-27); and Christ appears for their deliverance. as the above 3d part indicates: the Kingdom is then set up in power.

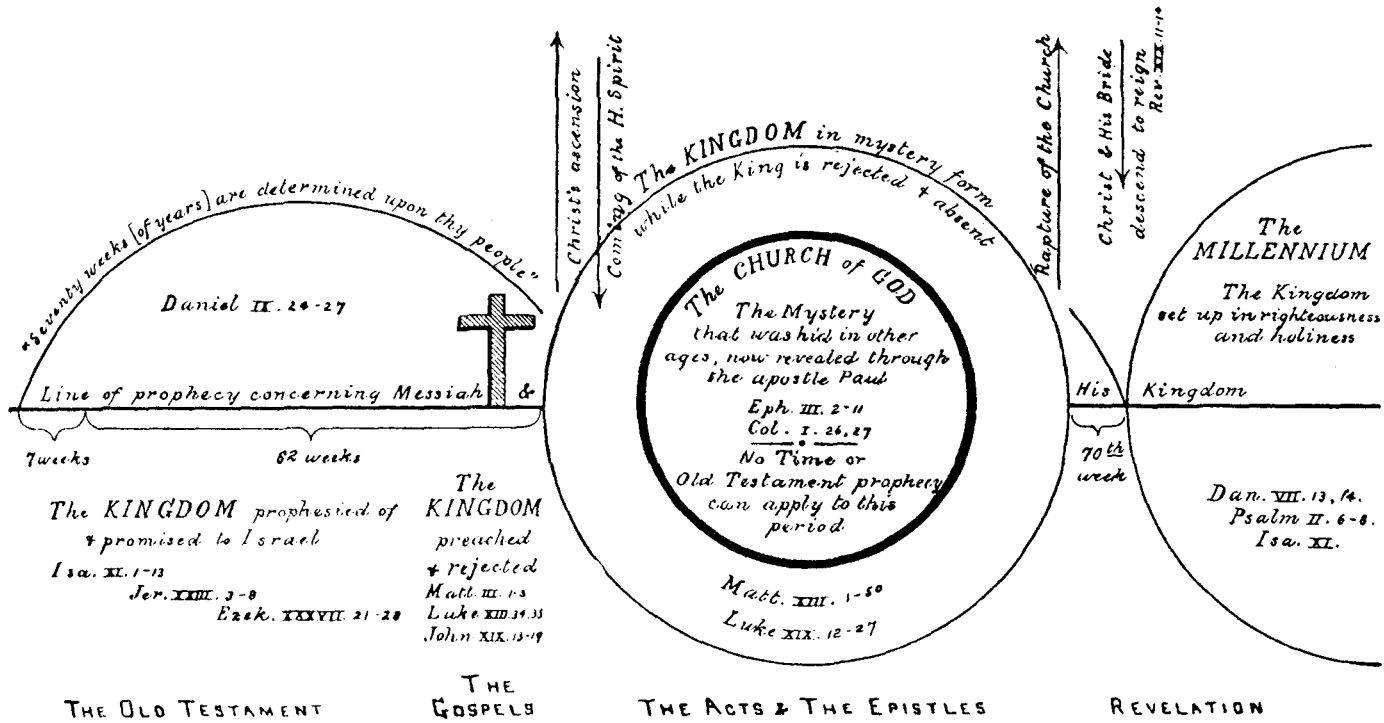
Israel then, and the Gentiles as such, continue the Kingdom upon earth under the rule of Christ and the heavenly saints (Rev. xx. 4-6; etc., etc.).

O depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out! . . . of Him, and through Him, and for Him, are all things: to whom be glory forever. Amen.”

## ISRAEL'S HOPE

## THE MYSTERY

## THE KINGDOM



# THE MYSTERY

EPHESIANS III.

**T**HERE were two objects embraced in Paul's ministry. He has expressed them in verses 8 and 9 of this chapter, where he states in brief and plain terms the character of his commission as an apostle or evangelizer:—

“Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; and to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ.”

First, the grace of being sent to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ among the nations, was bestowed upon him.

The emphasis here is on the fact of the *Gentiles* being those to whom he was specially commissioned. The publishing or unfolding of the riches of God's grace in Christ Jesus was in itself no special charge to Paul. Others before him had been sent forth to preach these precious truths, but their labors were in the main, if not exclusively, directed towards the Jew. A richer and fuller exhibition of these unsearchable riches there certainly was in Paul's ministry; but otherwise the specialty of the grace given unto him lay in his being selected to preach them “among the Gentiles.”

The second branch of the apostle's commission, was that expressed in the words, “To make all see what is the fellowship of the mystery.”

There is here, I apprehend, an intended contrast between the "all" and the "Gentiles" of the preceding verse. Jew and Gentile were alike indebted to Paul's ministry for the knowledge and intelligence of a "mystery" unveiled through him, and which he was specially commissioned to make all see. My occupation is not now with the former, but with this latter branch of his charge.

To many it will seem a bold or even a rash assertion, that to the vast majority of Christians, learned and unlearned, this side of the apostle's commission has remained to this hour without effect. The Reformation (great and blessed work of God as it was, for which we cannot be too grateful), while it brought once more into light much of "the unsearchable riches of Christ" that had become encrusted with the corrosions of Popish error, left this side of truth wholly in darkness; and it has been reserved, in God's inscrutable wisdom, to a later day, and to "a feeble folk," to exhume from the Word the long-buried treasure. As a sovereign, in the dispensing of His grace, God is pleased to revive or restore, at the moment, and in the ways and measure that please Him. When men, because they did not like to retain God or His truth in their knowledge, have been given over of Him to a reprobate mind, and suffered for a season to reap the fruit of their doings, He is under no obligation to restore to them the knowledge and appreciation of truths they have forfeited. When, in the loving compassion and grace of His tender heart, He is pleased in any

measure to do so, He chooses His own time and His own instruments; the latter, generally "the weak things of the world"—"earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us."

It is no disparagement of the Reformation, to say that it brought back only a part of the long-lost truths of the Word. It was pure sovereign grace that led men so far into truth as they did then go; as it is pure sovereign grace that has in these latter times, through other instrumentality, directed the minds of numbers of God's children to other truths in the Word, not then discerned. The investigation of the subject before us, will make it sufficiently clear that we have to do with a matter concerning which, in the writings of the Reformers, as in those of all subsequent theologians, entire obscurity prevails.

The first point to be looked at is one of criticism, in reference to the text of the passage.

If the reader has access to the little hand-book of *Textual Criticism* published by Bagsters (p. 56), he will see, on reference to this text, that the unanimous voice of criticism reads "dispensation or administration" (*oikonomia*) instead of "fellowship" (*κοινωνία*); and so he will find "dispensation" given in the Revised Version, as also in the translations of Alford, Boothroyd, Ellicott, Davidson, and Darby; Green has "stewardship;" Kelly "administration."

"To make all see what is the dispensation (or administration) of the mystery," is then the lan-

guage of the apostle and of the Holy Ghost, which it becomes our task to weigh and search into the meaning of.

At first sight the change will probably seem to many to render the text less rather than more intelligible; and this feeling it probably was, that, at the hands of some man more confident in his own understanding, than imbued with a sense of the inviolable sacredness of the word of God, led first to the substitution.

To many readers "dispensational truth" may be sufficiently strange, to render not unfitting nor unwelcome a few words in explanation.

The word before us, *oikonomia* (occurring also in verse 2 of the chapter, and translated "dispensation" there) is a compound word, uniting two, which mean respectively "house" and "law;" so that to give its exact counterpart in English, it would stand thus—"house-law;" and its obvious and primary meaning would be—the law, rules, regulations or administration, of a household. The word itself is quite familiar to our English ears and tongues, in an Anglicised form—"economy." This term (correctly used in such phrases as "political economy"), in current usage is mainly taken in the sense of carefulness in expenditure, or in the dispensing of means or substance; a portion undoubtedly, though far from being all, that pertains to proper household rule.

In Scripture we have it translated "stewardship," in Luke xvi. 2-4; the kindred word, *oikonomos* (literally, an economist), being translated

"steward" in Luke xii. 42; xvi. 1, 3, 8; 1 Cor. iv. 1, 2; Titus i. 7; 1 Peter iv. 10; "governors" in Gal. iv. 2, and chamberlain" in Rom. xvi. 23—while in 1 Cor. ix. 17, Eph. i. 10, and Col. i. 25 we have it, as in the chapter under review, "dispensation."

As employed in these passages, and in the phrase "dispensational truth," it looks at the world as a great household or stewardry, in which God is dispensing, or administering, according to rule of His own establishing, and in whose order He has from time to time introduced certain changes, the understanding of which is consequently needful, both to the intelligent interpretation of His word and to intelligent action under Him.

If we suppose a couple of households in any city, conducted on very different principles—the one, the household of a godly man, of regular and orderly habits, who rules his house in the fear of God, ordering everything as under His eye and for Him; the other, that of a godless, dissipated man, in which everything is at sixes and sevens; and then imagine a domestic to pass from the latter into the former, and to proceed to regulate her conduct in her new place by the order or disorder with which **she was** familiar in the old, one can at once discern what a source of confusion she would be in the family. In order to her becoming a faithful and profitable servant in the godly household, she must first acquaint herself with its order or "economy," and then conform herself to that. Although there are certain general duties that



may pertain alike to all households, the points of detail, even in well-ordered families, will of necessity vary with the varying circumstances, position in life, occupation, etc., of the inmates; so that, the "domestic economy" being different—as meal hours and the like—a servant has always to change or modify her action in each case as required. Even a change in the circumstances of the same household will necessitate sometimes a change in its rule, and demand therefore a corresponding change in the conduct of its servants.

Now surely it is just as simple and plain, that if God has, from time to time, introduced changes into the order of His dealing with the world, and dispensing *its affairs*, the nature of these changes must be studied, understood, and acted on by His servants, if they would prove profitable servants, and co-operate intelligently in His plans. To import into one dispensation the directions or conduct prescribed for another, must entail confusion and disorder, whether in the interpretation of the Scriptures relating to it, or in the regulation of action, individual or corporate, under it. Hence the necessity of what the apostle calls "rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Tim. ii. 15), the neglect of which has ever been and ever must be the source of unutterable confusion; in short, of most of the confusion we see around.

When man, beguiled by Satan, with the prospect of being "as gods," tasted the forbidden fruit, and acquired the coveted knowledge of good and evil, God allowed him to make proof of the fruits

for a season, leaving him (with exceptional dealings in the case of individuals) to his own courses. The result is painfully developed in first chapter of Romans.

At a certain period in the world's history God took up a special family, Israel, which He developed into a nation, and, so far as they at least were concerned, introduced a change in His world-rule, placing them under a dispensation of *law*. That dispensation closed at the cross; and subsequently a thorough and universal change was introduced, constituting the dispensation under which we now are, called in this passage "the dispensation of the mystery," and in verse 2 declared to be a "dispensation of the grace of God."

To "make all see what is the dispensation," or, in other words, to be the divinely-appointed instructor in the character and order of the present time, as Moses was in that of the dispensation of "law," is that special feature in the commission of Paul, in which it was distinct from that of the other apostles.

If then it shall appear that, far from seeing what is "the dispensation of the mystery," the mass of Christians have entirely missed it,—and as the natural consequence have almost completely misunderstood Christianity, importing into it the things proper to another dispensation, and so make of Judaism and Christianity a singular confusion—surely it is matter for deep humiliation before God, and for earnest, prayerful effort to retrieve this important and neglected teaching.

Let the reader then observe, first of all, that Paul claims to have had the truth in question given to him "by revelation" (ver. 3). Now the word "revelation" means unveiling or uncovering, and is used in Scripture to signify the communication, by God, of truth not previously known, or, up to that time shrouded under the veil of secrecy. The fact of "a revelation," that the apostle claims for the truth he speaks of in this chapter, ought in itself to prepare us for the discovery in his teaching, of somewhat not to be met with in any previous portions of the word of God.

Next, be it observed, he calls it a "mystery," or secret, which, he insists on with repetition and emphasis, was entirely hidden till given to him to tell out. Thus in verses 3 and 5, by revelation God made known to him the mystery which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed; and so in verse 9, "the mystery which from the beginning of the world had been hid in God." Language could hardly be more explicit than this. A secret "which had not in other ages been made known to men," but from the beginning of the world "had been hid in God," *is now made known to the apostle by revelation*. Granted for the moment that the "as it is now revealed" of verse 5, might, had it stood alone, have borne the interpretation that it was not before revealed with *equal* clearness or fulness, verse 9 thoroughly excludes the ambiguity, for language could not be more absolute than there employed. Nor is it here only that the apostle has

put this on record. As though the Holy Ghost, foreseeing how this truth would be let slip, and the consequent need of special clearness in His teaching, in order to its ultimate recovery in the latter day, had been heedful to furnish the requisite light with superabundant power, one finds it again brought out in Rom. xvi. 25,\* where the apostle speaks of "the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, but is now made manifest;" and in Col. i. 26, "the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but is now made manifest."

At the risk of seemingly unnecessary repetition, I insist strongly on attention to this, and would have the reader to weigh well the Spirit's language, and mark by what varied forms of expression He has labored to shut out all cavil, and to fix attention on this truth. To other ages (or generations) it was not made known; from (the) ages and (the) generations it has been hid—"hid from the beginning of the world," "hid in God," "kept secret since the world began." I know of no truth in the whole range of the Word to which the testimony is more explicit and unmistakable, and I trust the reader will be prepared, in view of it, to set it down as a point of certainty, that whatever "the mystery"

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\* It is to be noticed in connection with this text that a mistranslation in the following verse, might lead the English reader astray, inducing him to suppose, as many doubtless have done, that the Old Testament prophets are there referred to. This is not so; "and by prophetic writings (his own, to wit) . . . made known to all nations," is the correct rendering.

may be, it is something quite unknown until the day of Paul.

If the reader has now fully bowed to the Word on this point, he will at once perceive that to look for an unfolding of this mystery in the pages of the Old Testament must be a hopeless and deceptive proceeding. For any man to imagine he finds there that which the Holy Ghost so expressly declares was hidden—an unrevealed secret, when that book was written—must be to follow a will-o'-the-wisp that will lure him into the quagmire of misinterpretation and confusion. Let the reader keep this point in memory; it will meet us again when we have advanced our enquiry another stage, examining next into the subject of "the mystery" itself.

We have not far to search in order to the discovery desired. In verse 6 the apostle gives us the statement, in summary, of that which was the burden of "the mystery," specifying it under three particulars:

- 1st. That the Gentiles should be *fellow-heirs*.
- 2nd. That they should be *one body*.
- 3rd. That they should be *partakers* or co-partners of God's promise in the Messiah.

In other words, the Church or assembly of God as distinguished alike from the Jewish assembly and from the kingdom.

For this thing, (the Church of God) or any one of these three features which distinguish it most markedly from all that has gone before, as from all that will follow after, the reader will search

in vain throughout the pages of the Old Testament.

This, then, is "the mystery;" the Church of God, as the apostle states it in chapter v. verse 32, where, after exhibiting the typical counterpart of it in the marriage relationship, he sums up by saying, "This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the Church." In this connection he had set forth the headship of Christ over and to the Church (enforcing by it that of the husband to his wife), and His relation to the Church as His *body*, of which He is the Saviour; the individuals saved being "members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones," as Eve was said to be of Adam, when he owned her as "bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh." So in Colossians i. 24-26 he fills up the afflictions of Christ for His body's sake, which is the Church, according to the dispensation given to him . . . even the mystery.

"But," the reader may say, "surely the Church is spoken of in the Old Testament;" does not Stephen affirm it in Acts vii. 38, where he speaks of "the Church in the wilderness"?

That Stephen uses the word (*ecclesia*) translated "Church" in king James' Bible,\* and applies it to

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\* It may be useful, and of interest to the reader, to know that when king James gave orders to make a translation of the Scriptures, that it might be used throughout the Church of England Establishment, (on this account called "the authorized" translation) he gave a set of thirteen rules, to which the translators were to comply. The third rule read as follows:

3. The ecclesiastical words to be kept, namely, as the word *church* not

Israel as found in the wilderness, is beyond a question; and just as certainly the Holy Ghost employs the same word in Acts xix. 41, and applies it to the idolatrous rabble gathered into the theatre of Ephesus; of whom, after they had spent two hours in shouting "Great is Diana of the Ephesians," it is said, "He dismissed the church,"—if the Greek word *ecclesia* is translated, as it should be, by the same word, in both passages. The employment of the word "church," or *ecclesia*, no more implies that one assemblage in the one case was the Church of God more than in the other.

Let it then be fully understood by the reader, that it is not for a moment a question of the word, but of the thing known in the New Testament by the name of the Church of God. Of this thing it is that, with the apostle, we affirm, not a trace is to be found in the Old Testament; save in the

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to be translated *congregation*, etc.

King James' reason for this ruling was obvious: the Romish priests had long appropriated the word "church" and built upon it the highest claim and clerical order, "the clergy" in contrast with "the laity." King James desired to retain this authority and position for his Protestant Anglican clergy, especially as the Puritan influence, which James now opposed, was strongly felt in the kingdom.

But for this interference of king James, the Greek word *ecclesia* would no doubt have been translated *congregation* or *assembly*,—its correct rendering.

On account of these rulings, some of the most able translators withdrew.

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For a full and able history of the English Bible translations and the times and circumstances in which they were made, see "Conant's Popular History of the translation of the Holy Scriptures into the English tongue." Cloth \$1.00.

form of types, intelligible and expressive now that the veil has been taken off, but which in themselves revealed nothing whatever on the subject to their contemporaries.

Let us consider, then, in detail the three particulars of "the mystery" supplied us.

1st. **That the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs.**

The broad statement in this, as in the other points, is that of *Gentile equality with the Jew*. To be a fellow-heir, though it does not of necessity imply that each gets an equal share in the inheritance, does argue an equality of position or title. One heir is not necessarily as near a blood relation as another; but if he has a legal title to a share in the inheritance, be it to a large share or a small, his title is as good and his position as definite. As an heir he is the peer of all the other heirs, just as a baron is the peer of a duke, though he does not hold so elevated a rank in the peerage. A person admitted to a share in the benefits of another's inheritance, or of another's share in an inheritance, is not a fellow-heir. And such is the highest position of the Gentile in the prophecies of the Old Testament; he is to share in the benefits of Israel's inherited blessing, but is never lifted into the position of a co-heir—never made Israel's peer.

Take as an example of this, Isa. lx. 3—"The Gentiles shall come to *thy* light, and kings to the brightness of *thy* rising." "Oh, but," says some one of my readers, "isn't that Christ's light?" Not at all. Look at the context. It is Israel's



light. Christ *is* the Light of Israel; and hence, in the first verse, she is bid to arise and shine, because *her* Light is come, and the glory of Jehovah has risen upon her; that is, when the time shall have arrived, as stated in verse 20 of the previous chapter, that the Redeemer shall have come to *Zion*, and shall have turned away ungodliness from *Jacob*; and when, while darkness still covers the earth, and gross darkness the peoples (plural), the Lord shall arise upon Zion, and His glory be seen upon her, so that the Gentiles shall come to her light, as already quoted. It is not Christ, but Zion who is invited, in verse 4, to lift up the eyes and see all gathered *to her*, the abundance of the sea converted to her, and the forces or wealth of the Gentiles coming unto her. It is not Christ's, but Zion's walls that the sons of strangers are to build up (ver. 10); not Christ's, but Zion's gates are to be open continually that the forces and kings of the Gentiles may be brought thither. It is not of Christ, but of Zion that it is said, "The nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish; yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted" (ver. 12). Not Christ, but Zion is to suck the milk of the Gentiles (ver. 16), and to know that the Lord is her Saviour and her Redeemer, the mighty One *of Jacob*. True, it is of Zion, as enjoying and reflecting the light of Christ's presence, and as the centre of His rule, that these things are said; but still it is of Zion or Israel that they are spoken, and the Gentile is there exhibited as coming to her light to be blessed, and finding

his blessing in ministering to her; as might happen where the servant of a master who has come into a rich estate, might share in the benefit of his master's improved circumstances, though not himself a co-heir with him in his inheritance. Israel is to inherit the Gentiles (Isa. liv. 3); but the Gentile is not to inherit Israel (Isa. lxi. 5).

**2nd. That the Gentiles should be "one body"—one body with the Jew.**

Did my reader ever detect, in the course of his study of Moses and the prophets, anything that looked like this? Most surely not. If there is one thing more evident than another in the Hebrew Scriptures, it is the steadily-maintained distinction between Israel and the nations, from first to last; under the glory of the future as under the vicissitudes of the past. The welding of Israel and the nations into one body, from which their nationalities shall disappear—all distinctive autonomies be lost—is a thought as foreign to the ancient oracles as heaven is to earth. Take any of the scriptures that refer to the Messiah's reign and the blessings that are to attend it; the nations and Israel will ever be found in separation. Shall we select, for instance, the striking picture of the promised glory presented in Psalm lxxii.? Here we have "the King" judging *His* people with righteousness, and the poor with judgment; descending in blessing like rain upon the mown grass; His dominion from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth. But here also we have the kings of Tarshish and of the isles bringing presents, the kings

of Sheba and Seba offering gifts; all kings falling down before Him, and all nations serving Him; all men blessed in Him, and all *nations* calling Him blessed. Blessed, indeed, yet still "nations" with kings reigning over them—no blending with Israel here. Or shall we turn to Isaiah ii.? Here again we have the mountain of the Lord's house established in the top of the mountains, and exalted above the hills, and *all nations* flowing unto it. Then many peoples (plural, Heb.) say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; the law goes forth from Zion, Jehovah judges among *the nations*; "nation shall no more lift up the sword against nation;" but there, the nations are.

So again in the kingdom-picture of chapter xi., when the "Branch" from out the roots of Jesse shall be reigning, and Jehovah shall have set His hand to recover the remnant of His people (singular, Heb.) from the lands whither they are scattered, assembling the outcasts of Israel, and gathering together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth; He sets up "an ensign for the nations," the root of Jesse stands for an ensign of the peoples (plural), and "to it shall the Gentiles seek." Blessing for Israel, Judah, and the nations; but, the nations are "peoples" and "nations" still. Or again, in Isa. lxi. 6, when Israel are to be "named the priests of Jehovah," and men shall call them "the ministers of our God," then shall they "eat the riches of the Gentiles, and boast themselves in their glory;

... their seed shall be known among the Gentiles and their offspring among the peoples" (plural). In Ezekiel's vision there is the division of the land among the tribes of Israel. In Zechariah (xiv.), when Jehovah shall be king over all the earth, and there shall be one Lord, and His name one, then every one that is left of all the nations which came up against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles, etc. Everywhere it is the same: Israel and the nations in their respective places, in most telling contrast with what the apostle insists on as distinctive of the present order of things, wherein "there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free; but Christ is all, and in all" (Col. iii. 11).

**3rd. Partakers, or co-partners in God's promises in the Messiah**

If there is any one thing that excites the ire of the Jew, it is the claim of the Gentile to an equal share with himself in the Messiah. He laughs to scorn the Gentile pretension to show from the prophets that such a thing should be; and he does so triumphantly,—it is not there; and to pretend to it is to weaken the Christian cause under pretence of strengthening it. God has said it is not there; to profess to find it is to pervert His truth, and must lead to the confusion of him who attempts it. Intimations of Israel's failure and their rejection there are; predictions of blessing to the Gentiles under Israel, and in connection with the Messiah,

abound, as in the scriptures that have already been before us; but a co-partnership, anything like the equality of privilege in the Messiah that the gospel has introduced, and we ourselves at this moment enjoy, will be sought for in vain.

But if there is indeed no mention of the mystery—the Church of God—in the Old Testament Scriptures, of what, then, is there mention? I answer, Of the Kingdom.

A reign of righteousness and peace under the kingship of the Messiah. Zion, the seat of rule. Israel, a people of peculiar nearness and special privilege, with the nations grouped around this centre, in their subordinate places; blessed in Israel's blessing, in whom all the families of the earth are to be blessed. Such is the future depicted by the prophets, alluded to in the New Testament (Acts iii. 19-21), as "times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord," "the times of the restitution of all things." This and this only is the theme of the prophets of old. A state of things with which the present dispensation in no wise corresponds, at almost any point. A state of things the world has not yet seen.

Have, then, the prophecies failed? By no means. So certainly as these things are foretold, so surely will they one day come to pass.

Throughout the word of God two mighty truths run side by side—God's sovereignty and man's responsibility. **Man**, in the narrow grasp of his little mind, is ever prone to lose sight of one or

other; or, deeming them irreconcilable, to fill his eye with the one to the exclusion of the other; it is faith's office to maintain the balance; accepting truth in its completeness, as given forth by God, without pausing first to bring all down to the level of man's own small standard. From the plan of God's revelation, as from His counsels, neither of these truths is ever omitted. While in the fulness of His sovereign power and far-reaching wisdom, He governs all, orders and shapes according to the counsel of His will, giving no account of His matters unto any—triumphing over all the workings of evil—bringing forth higher and higher blessings out of the deepest falls and failures of the creature—everywhere gracious and righteous—at the same time, He ever gives to the responsible creature his full place in responsibility, throughout his actings; never treats him as a mere machine, nor fails to leave scope for the freedom of his choice. And for us to do otherwise, in the interpretation of His word, is of necessity to miss its teaching and go astray.

In His dealings with Israel this principle of action has been studiously maintained. If the national failures and their righteous chastisements were from the very first foreseen and preintimated in words of warning admonition, it never took on the form of a mere irresistible fatality. Opportunities for better things were ever provided; opportunities which might have been turned to account, for the averting of evils and the securing of good. Even so in the matter of the Kingdom

and of the prophecies concerning it; while the certainty of its rejection and postponement were assuredly present to His mind throughout, and find expression in the admonitions of His watchful love, yet all is ordered, with the most careful provision for the full and uninvaded responsibility of Israel, so that if to this hour unblest and under the ban of Lo-ammi, they suffer but the righteous retribution of their guilt.

For the Christian, then, to-day, to read the prophetic Scriptures simply and purely in the light of the existing order of things, and try to bring all into harmony with that, without taking into account the contemplated issues of Israel's responsible action as such, is and must be misleading. The more closely the prophecies are studied, the more evident it becomes with what skill they are framed, so as to leave full room for the alternative of responsible Israel's faithfulness, had such been found. In the coming of the Messiah there was a real and perfectly consistent offer to Israel of the long-propheesied Kingdom; an offer which, had it been accepted, would have led to the immediate accomplishment of the promises, in the introduction of His glorious reign. To say how this *would have been effected* is no doubt beyond us, to discern how it *might have been* is within our province, and the limits of sobriety. Had a portion of the nation, sufficiently large to give it a representative character, accepted the Messiah when He appeared, it is surely no vain overstraining of possibilities to conceive how the more politically

powerful party might still, in league with the Romans, have fulfilled the prophecies in His death, as actually occurred; in which case, His resurrection, instead of being followed by a suspension of the Kingdom, might have been followed by immediate judgment on His enemies; the deliverance of His adherents—who by espousing His cause would have drawn down on themselves the wrath of persecution; the seventieth week of Daniel, with its crowded events, matured (as they ultimately will be) with a more than hot-bed forcing, might at once have run its course. Prophecy might have fulfilled itself to the letter, without any such interregnum as at present has place.

To Satan, for whom, be it borne in mind, the counsels of God are as secret. until revealed, as to the children of men, it must have appeared a marvelous triumph of his ingenuity and devilish craft, when he had succeeded, to appearance, in overturning the plans and giving the lie to the prophetic teachings of God, by securing the rejection and crucifixion of God's King. That the Messiah should take into His hand the reins of earthly government, and set up a Kingdom of heaven on earth, was clear to a demonstration in the Word. That the Messiah had come, and no such kingdom had been set up, was no less clear from the facts. That the prophecies should ever now be capable of a literal fulfilment, such as should vindicate the truthfulness of God and His word, seemed to him, doubtless, as impossible as it has seemed to thousands of God's own children,



who have therefore long abandoned the expectation, and exchanged it for the fruitless effort to spiritualize the prophecies into a forced and unnatural harmony with existing events. While many of the latter still cling to this error, Satan has assuredly long since been undeceived. The revelation of "the mystery," unfolded in vain before the eyes of God's children, has been seen of him with clearer discernment. Nor let the reader consider this as mere conjecture; it is the teaching of the Word itself. In verses 9 and 10 of our chapter, the apostle, in opening his commission "to make all see what is the dispensation of the mystery, which from beginning of the world hath been hid in God," adds "who created all things by Jesus Christ: to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in the heavenlies might be known by the Church the manifold wisdom of God." Here we have the fact that the display of God's manifold wisdom, by means of the Church, was a fore-contemplated object of creation, and that, with express reference to "the principalities and powers in the heavenly places." Now, if in Eph. i. 21 and Col. ii. 10, "principalities and powers" seem employed to designate celestial inhabitants in favour with God, in Eph. vi. 12 the same is used for the deadly enemies of God and man, the wicked spirits known elsewhere as "the devil and his angels." This manifold wisdom is learned by these to their confusion and dismay, as by the others to their edification and joy, through the demonstration of God's ability to accomplish the highest and most blessed

results, through the instrumentality of the very elements that seemed most to thwart His plans and traverse His purposes.

Is the reader one of those who vainly dream of a gradually diffused gospel, converting the world, under the agency of the Spirit, and ushering in a millennium of spiritual blessedness, without the presence of a personal Messiah, in manifested glory, on the throne of His father David? If so, he will have to revise his position ere he will be able "to see what is the dispensation of the mystery." Can a child of God rest satisfied that such a victory should abide in the hands of Satan as that he should have balked the literal accomplishment of prophecy, and reduced God to the necessity of giving to it only such a, so-called, spiritual accomplishment, as no simple reader of the Word could ever suppose to be its purport? No; Satan has not triumphed. God's purpose is not foregone. God's plans have suffered no frustration. A postponement, but a foreseen one, has delayed the immediate establishment; but, in his seeming victory the prince of darkness has outwitted himself; has wrought out God's secret purpose, to suspend for a season the erection of the throne, in order to the preparation of a bride for His King, to be associated with Him in His reign—the Church of the living God. Otherwise it had remained unknown—a people brought into a special place of nearness; who, owning and taking part with Him in His humiliation and rejection, shall also have part in His exaltation and glory; who, be-

cause they "suffer with Him, shall also reign with Him;" filling that very place in the heavenlies in which Satan and his angels now are—those powers of the air of which he is prince, the "wicked spirits in the heavenlies," against whom, as the opposers of her blessing, the Church in her individual members has now to contend in spiritual conflict (Eph. vi. 12, margin). No; the prophecies spoke only of earth; there was in these no intimation of a people to fill the place of the Satanic powers, no word of their being dispossessed in favor of a people redeemed from the earth.\* This was a secret, a mystery hid in God, which Satan's seeming triumph gave occasion both to its unfolding and accomplishment, to his own utter and eternal confusion, and to the display of God's multiform wisdom, His grace and His glory. And the kingdom—the kingdom which Satan thought to frustrate—will yet be set up on earth (the millennium of New Testament prophecy) to the literal accomplishment of every detail of God's word, and the full vindication of the faithfulness of God and the truthfulness of His prophets.

The present dispensation is, then, an interregnum or parenthetic period, contemplated indeed

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\* While prophecies could not speak of the Church, or its heavenly inheritance, (being *then* a secret, hid in God) now that the revelation of it has come, we can see, under the form of types, much that applies to it: e. g. Israel, type of God's redeemed people,—brought out of Egypt, through the wilderness, into Canaan where the seven wicked nations in the land were to be dispossessed by them. ED.

in the counsels of God, but not revealed till "given" to Paul, as set forth.\*

Once this truth is seen, it becomes the key to the interpretation of Scripture and to the "rightly dividing the word of truth," in the sundering of things Jewish from things Christian. Until it is seen, neither Testament can be understood aright; and Christianity, instead of having its proper and distinctive character, is degraded into a sort of bastard Judaism. Of the manner in which this acts, king James' translators of the Bible furnish a ready example.

Far be it from me to detract from the merits of these beloved men of God, to whose labors we, together with all the intervening generations, owe a debt of deepest gratitude. Their work is a monument of faithful and painstaking industry, and a marvel of success for their times. But they did not "see what is the dispensation of the mystery;" and because they did not, they have also left us, in their chapter-headings, a monument of the inevitable consequences of ignorance of this cardinal truth. In common with all the divines of their day, they took up the erroneous notion that Christianity, instead of being, as taught by Paul, a distinct thing, and a previously unrevealed secret, was but the foretold outcome—the regular and anticipated development of what had preceded—the full-blown flower from the bud of Judaism. Of the parenthetic or interregnal character of the dispensation, they had not a conception. That

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\* See central portion of chart.

the Church of God was a thing so distinct and peculiar, in respect of all that had gone before, as to be quite unknown to prophecy, was a thought to which they were wholly strangers—a thought so foreign to their minds, that, taking for granted that Christianity and the Church must be there, they turned to the Old Testament scriptures, with the deliberate purpose therein to discover it. The natural result of a research for what was not, under the control of a foregone conclusion that it was, is easy to anticipate. They must of necessity misapply to it what belonged to something else; and accordingly, the prophetic announcements concerning Israel and “the Kindgom,” are made to do duty on behalf of the Church, with the necessary consequence, in their own minds and of all that have followed in their wake, of an entire misunderstanding of the Christian dispensation, no less than of the millennial age yet to follow—a blending of things Jewish with things Christian, to the lowering of the entire character of “the heavenly calling,” and a misapplication, throughout, of the truth of God.

Let the reader take up his marginal Bible of the “Authorized” version, and turn, almost at random, to any of the chapter headings where prophecies of the future are found, and he may at once verify the point. He will find “the Church” abundantly in the headings, but for the Church in the text, he will search in vain; he will find there only Israel, Zion, Jerusalem, or the like.

A single example to make it clear. The head-

ing of Isaiah lii. begins with "(1) Christ persuadeth the church to believe His free redemption;" but on looking into the chapter, the reader will perceive that it is Zion who is exhorted to awake and put on strength; Jerusalem, the holy city, that is bidden to put on her beautiful garments, and to shake herself from the dust; the people who went down aforetime into Egypt to sojourn; the people whom the Assyrian oppressed; and so throughout the chapter. The only glimpse of truth, in the heading, is in its last clause, "(13) Christ's kingdom shall be exalted." The kingdom is undoubtedly the thing in view in the place, but then, "the kingdom" in the view of the chapter headings, is but another name for "the Church," with which they invariably confound it.

Nor need we wonder at the widespread confusion that prevails in the interpretation of the Word, if we accept the correction of the critics\* on Col. ii. 2; who, omitting from the text, as an interpolation, the words, "and of the Father, and of Christ," read, with the following verse, "all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, wherein are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge."

If all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hid in "the mystery," so that the dispensation of it as given to Paul is the filling up, or completing of the word of God, as stated in verse 25 of the previous chapter, then it is self-evident, that

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\* Griesbach, Scholtz, Tischendorf, and Alford. (See *Textual Criticism*, p. 59.)

where "the mystery" is not understood, the key to the understanding of the Word is not in the hand; "and the treasures of wisdom and knowledge," though fully revealed of God, must remain locked. "God would make known to His saints," through this ministry of Paul (ver. 27), "what is the riches of the glory of this mystery," and, alas! the vast proportion of them are indifferent to the acquisition of the knowledge.

Christ is the centre of the truth and ways of God; but the Christ of God's counsels is not simply the man Christ Jesus, but, "as the body is one, and has many members, so also is the Christ." It is "Christ and the Church"—the mystery; the second Adam, not alone, but with His Eve; united with Him even under a common name, as was the first Eve with him; bone of whose bone, and flesh of whose flesh, she was; so that in Gen. v. 2 it is said, "Male and female created He them; and blessed them, and called *their name Adam*." As Adam was incomplete without Eve, so is the Christ of God's counsels and purposes incomplete without "the Church, which is His body, the fullness (or complement) of Him that filleth all in all" (Eph. i. 23).

The hope of the Church is "the hope of glory." Israel's hope, in the wilderness, was the hope of the land (Deut. xii. 8). Their hope, in the future, is still the land, under the kingdom, in the millennial blessedness. If there is glory connected with it, as there certainly is (Isa. iv., etc.), it is still

earthly glory—glory in the earth. The Church's glory, on the contrary, is celestial glory—the glory of God and of Christ. “The glory which thou hast given me I have given them;” “I will that they also, which thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory.”

Israel's hope of promised blessing rested on the presence of Jehovah *with* them in the pillar of cloud and of fire. “My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest.” “Wherein shall it be known that I and thy people have found grace in thy sight? is it not in that thou goest *with* us? so shall we be separated, I and thy people, from all the people that are upon the face of the earth.” “For the cloud of Jehovah was upon the tabernacle by day, and fire was on it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel, throughout all their journeys.” “They have heard that thou Jehovah art among this people, that thou Jehovah art seen face to face, and that thy cloud standeth over them, and that thou goest before them, by day time in a pillar of a cloud, and in a pillar of fire by night.” “For what nation is there so great that hath God so nigh unto them?”

Jehovah, with and among them, in a symbolical presence, was thus the glory of Israel's position in the midst of the nations of the earth, and the guarantee, on which their hope of the promised inheritance reposed.

The riches, or wealth, of the glory of “the mystery” is, Christ *in* His people, the hope of glory (Col. i. 27).



Great as was Israel's privilege, in having Jehovah so nigh to them as never to any other people or nation, their pledge of a land flowing with milk and honey, that glory is eclipsed by the overflowing abundance—the wealth of glory pertaining to the pilgrim Church of God, in the dispensation of the mystery; which glory is, personal union with a risen, exalted, and divine Head, as members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones—a union which is to them the unfailing guarantee and basis of that hope of glory which is set before them, as the goal toward which they journey onward. Well may the apostle term this a “wealth of glory”—a glory veiled indeed from carnal and unbelieving eyes, so that “the world knoweth us not, because it knew Him not;” but how real and how unspeakably precious to him to whose faith and experience it is known! Well might he, in comparison of Israel's glory, say—“Even that which was made glorious had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory which excelleth. For if that which is done away was glorious, much more that which remaineth is glorious.”

“Christ in you, the hope of glory!” Do our souls enter into it? Does our faith lay hold on the fulness of its riches? Does the glory fill our eye and satisfy our hearts, till all earthly glory pales beneath its brightness? What an inheritance is ours—glory!—“an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God.” This is much. To be kept by power, and

that the power of God, is strong, and sure, and precious; but there is more. The thought before us goes beyond it. It is more than being kept; it is union, oneness, with the Keeper. "He that is joined to the Lord is one Spirit;" "by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body;" "members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones." And this is the peculiar, the excelling glory, of "the mystery;" and we, by grace, have our portion in it. Surely, for such a portion, we would praise and bless "the God of all grace, who hath called us to His eternal glory, by Christ Jesus."

These thoughts lead us upward, to what may be called the heavenly side of the mystery, to which we are introduced in Eph. i. 9: "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 [the] Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth." This is not another mystery, but another phase, or a more advanced stage, of the same great secret.

The third chapter (which, along with Colossians, has mainly occupied us thus far) introduces us only to the present or earthly side of the mystery—to the Church, in her pilgrim character, as journeying towards her inheritance, in the dispensation called by the Holy Ghost "the dispensation of the mystery;" the unfolding and development of the truths of the mystery, give the tone and character of the dispensation.

Here we are introduced to another, and yet

future, dispensation; equally secret to the by-gone ages, but now brought forth, as the complement of the uncovered mystery—the union, under the sceptre of Messiah, of heavenly as well as earthly things in one Kingdom of God. This coming dispensation is termed “the fulness of times,” as that in which the dealings of God with this earth (to which times and seasons belong) will attain their completion; and that which characterizes it is the gathering together—literally, the heading up—of all things in heaven and on earth in the Christ. The language is peculiar, and strikingly impressive, this heading up. Has the reader ever seen a cooper “heading up” a cask? He groups the staves together on end, around the head of the cask, fitted into the “chime” or groove, cut in each to enable it to receive and grasp the beveled edge of the head. When all are in position, he tightens a hoop around, and drives on hoop after hoop, till all the separate pieces are firmly compacted into one vessel. Did he drive the hoops on the upright staves, without the head, the first stroke of the hammer would cast all into confusion. The centre of cohesion, around which the staves are headed up, is the head or end of the cask; and once that is in place, the greater the compression, the firmer and better the work.

Christ is the centre and head, in whom are to be headed up all the separate elements, both heavenly and earthly, whose union, under the hand and sceptre of the Messiah, like that of the union of Jew and Gentile in one under the present dispen-

sation, was wholly foreign to the scope of Old Testament revelations.

I have already somewhat anticipated this part of the subject, when speaking of the suspension of the Kingdom and its results. It is the culminating glory of Him who, when seen of John in vision, as coming forth to inaugurate "the dispensation of the fulness of times" of which we speak, had on His head "many crowns;" and was followed by "the armies which were in heaven," when descending to set up the throne of His millennial glory on the earth (Rev. xix.).

I now turn from the doctrinal view of the subject to its practical bearings on our course and conduct.

As those whose lot is cast in "the dispensation of the mystery," it clearly behoves us, not only to inform our minds as to its true character and objects, but also to fashion our conduct in accordance with its order and aims. God never reveals truth to us for the mere gratification of our curiosity, but in order that it may exercise a formative influence over us, moulding us into agreement with itself.

If God has revealed to us, that the order and plan of the dispensation in which He has set us is, that Christ should, by His death, not only save our souls, but should "gather together IN ONE the children of God that were scattered abroad," so that there should be "ONE FLOCK and one Shepherd" (John xi. 52; x. 16); that in reconciling

men to Himself by the cross, from among Jews and Gentiles, it was His will that this should be effected, not as scattered units, as in former ages, but that those so reconciled, should be found in unity—"in one body" (Eph. ii. 16); that this "body," of His divine purpose, *has been* formed by the "one Spirit," by whom all are baptized into it (1 Cor. xii. 13); that He "has tempered the body together," and "has set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased Him" (1 Cor. xii. 18, 24), in order that "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, should make increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love" (Eph. iv. 15); and that, for this reason, His will is "that there should be no schism in the body" (1 Cor. xii. 25)—if, I say, such is the revealed mind and will of God, as concerning ourselves, and the dispensation under which He has placed us, then clearly all action on our part that does not conform to this truth, and has not this principle as its basis, must be in contravention of His plans and in opposition to His will, and therefore SIN. Had we not from Him one single word beyond the simple announcement, "There is one body," the divinely-communicated knowledge of that fact would put us under as complete a moral obligation as any amount of preceptive teaching could do; for divinely-constituted relationships are quite as valid a ground of moral obligation as divinely-given precepts. A

Jew was as truly under obligation to "honor his father and his mother" while dwelling in Egypt, before he had heard a commandment on the subject, as he was after God thundered it forth from Sinai; though the command gave an additional clearness, and added an additional sanction to the obligation. If he failed to do it in Egypt, he sinned; if he failed to do it in Canaan, he both sinned and disobeyed.

Now God has both revealed to us the fact, and enjoined on us the conduct befitting us, as arising out of the fact. He will have us to "walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called" (Eph. iv. 1); and inasmuch as we are not only called with a holy and heavenly calling, but are "called in one body" (Col. iii. 15), accordingly, among the instructions in detail which follow, a most prominent position is given to the duty of "endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." And this as arising out of the truth that there is one body and one Spirit, even as the hope of our calling (the glory) is one, and unity characterizes all that pertains distinctively to it—"one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all."

To act then in any manner contrary to this divinely formed unity, is to walk unworthily of the vocation wherewith we are called, and to set oneself in opposition to the whole order and plan of the dispensation;—the very thing the entire Church of God has been doing for centuries.

What doctrine, in all the range of truth, has been so trampled under foot—so daringly and systematically set aside, as unity? Who, that lets the eye range over Christendom, would suspect for a moment that it was a fundamental truth of Christianity, that these people were professors of a calling to be one body, and that on their unity its founder relied (John xvii. 21) for the standing evidence of His divine mission? What a multitude of bodies stand out on the platform, with their various names and characters. Look for unity anywhere but in Christendom. Judaism is a unity, though the nation be scattered. Mohammedanism is a unity; but Christianity, of which unity should be the prominent characteristics, alas! alas!

Popery, the earliest parent of schism, is the only sect that has retained even the shadow; while Protestantism, yielding to the exigencies of its own position, has adapted its doctrine to these; and for the most part, laid claim to the liberty of ignoring the obligation entirely; with at best but an occasional sigh over unity, as a thing of the past. How few have the courage, or the faithfulness, to look the obligation in the face; to go down to the root of the evil; to judge it, and to return to the old paths. Perhaps the most subtle snare and obstacle to which enquirers after this truth are exposed, is the apparent impossibility of turning aside from the pathway of schism, without thereby increasing the very evil disclaimed, by adding another to the number of the already too numerous divisions. Most specious is this diffi-

culty, and many a soul does it hold back from taking the stand for God; but it is as unreal as it is specious. To separate from schism is not schism. To withdraw from that which has itself withdrawn from the order of God, is not to divide the Church of God, but to renounce that which has already divided it. Let us suppose a ship's company to have mutinied, taken possession of the ship, and turned their captain and officers adrift, as the mutineers of the *Bounty* did. Would it be mutiny, for an individual, or individuals, of their number, to repent of their share in the crime; to protest against and separate from fellowship with the unlawful acts; and, at the risk of life or liberty, to insist on maintaining and owning only the Queen's right of ownership, and seeking to recall the others to duty? Would these few repentant loyalists, be chargeable with another mutiny; or would they only be doing the right thing under the circumstances?

But mark here a distinction. Supposing these individuals, instead of withdrawing from the others, in order to return to their allegiance to the Queen; separated, merely on the ground of some difference of judgment or will, as to the navigation, movements, or destination of the vessel; how different would be the case!

Just such is the distinction between return to unity and sectarian division.

The origin of all sectarian divisions has been diversities of judgment or will, as to points of detail, in principles, doctrine, or customs. No doubt,



in many of these cases, there has been a conscientious desire for the glory of God, supposed to be involved in the maintenance of this or that peculiar tenet; but in no case have the reformers gone to the root of the matter. In no case, until very recently, has there been a sifting of the question to the bottom—a digging through, and clearing away, of the rubbish, right down to the foundations; that God's own foundation might be reached again, and built on. Each fresh sect has but modified or patched up the form of things it has been used to; and so, in coming out from one sect, has done so only to form another. *So long as one item of unscriptural human corruption is clung to, sectarian ground is still maintained* no matter what the pretensions may be.

When, however, the divine foundation has been reached, the divine ground once more taken up, this is not schism, whatever men may say; but obedience, and faithfulness to God. This, and this only, is to "walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called;" this only is honestly to endeavor "to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

What! exclaims some startled reader, do you mean to call it endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, to break peace and disunite yourself from every body, or from all but a mere handful of people as mistaken in this as yourself? Yes, I answer, I do. I mean unhesitatingly to say, that the Spirit has formed, and does form, no unity on any other ground, than

that of scriptural obedience to God. The unity of a sect, or of all the sects together, could they to-morrow be compressed into a gigantic Evangelical or Catholic Alliance, is not, and would not be, the unity of the Spirit. Did the whole of Christendom succeed forthwith in arranging a platform on which they could once more unite, and form a single body, I should spurn it, and stand aloof from it, as much as I stand aloof from a divided Christendom this day. Every platform of union, other than that which renounces *all* that is of man—and with the rest all principles of voluntary association—is of man, and not of God; is a unity in the flesh, and not the unity of the Spirit.

R. H.

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## THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN

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IT is so natural with us to be onesided in our views, that, even when the truth is in question, our conceptions are apt to be partial and incomplete. Of course, we only "know in part;" of the vast fulness of divine truth we are but learners in our infancy. But while this is the case, we should at least possess ourselves of the circle of truth; we should know something of its many-sided symmetry. Perhaps in no other connection is there a better illustration of incomplete knowledge than in the subject before us. The Kingdom of Heaven: what is it? Is it the Church? Is it heavenly or earthly; present or future? Such are some of the questions about which most of the Lord's people could give but vague answers. It is my object to endeavor to place before the Lord's people the material which will enable them to have at least clear, if not complete views, upon the subject.

Until the present century, so far as a copious literature shows us, there seems to have been no thought whatever as to the unique character, place and destiny of the Church of Christ. It was practically confounded with God's Kingdom in the past and in the future. The blessings promised to David, and to Israel through him and his Lord, were constantly referred to the Church. As a consequence, the Church was considered an earth-

ly thing, destined to "blossom and bud, and to fill the face of the earth with fruit." Nations were to be converted, the "leaven of the gospel" was gradually to permeate the whole mass of humanity, and the millennium was gradually to be ushered in.

But in the rich mercy of God, that secret of His heart, which, spite of His having revealed it in the Epistles, had again been lost sight of, was in His sovereign goodness to be brought afresh to the minds of His people. The third decade of the present century marks the beginning of a work which, apart from all pride (for, alas, it has been accompanied by sad weakness and failure on the part of many to whom the truth was entrusted) may be called a divine revival of truth, a testimony under the guidance and in the energy of the Holy Spirit.

In lovely contrast with much which at about the same time arose, this testimony recalled God's people to the Scriptures—to the word of God. No claim was made of a revival of the prophetic gift and the apostolic office, as in Irvingism. No new scriptures, full of nonsensical blasphemy, had been "discovered," as in Mormonism. No priestly aristocracy and ritualistic superstition, as in Puseyism, were there. All was simple. The whole Church was indwelt by the Holy Spirit, and we had our Bibles. Christians were simply to turn to their Bibles, and, in dependence upon the guidance of the Spirit, were to learn what was God's portion for His people.

The result was marked and blessed. "Things new and old" were brought out of the treasure-house of Scripture, and a corresponding clearness was given to what was already known and enjoyed. This is not the place to enumerate the precious doctrines which came into fresh and clearer light. Scarcely a department of divine truth could be omitted in such an enumeration. One of the especial helps was the understanding of dispensational truth, which enabled saints to classify what they already knew, and which showed the connection between various lines of truth. What I wish particularly to mention as a result of that revival, is the discovery from Scripture of what the Church is,—its place in the dispensations, its nature, unity, worship, discipline, ministry, and destiny.

All this was seen, (and when once seen, could not be lost sight of) to be unfolded simply and clearly in the epistles of Paul, where, without forcing, a clear and complete Church polity was seen, with provisions for detail which, having hitherto been thought to be left to human judgment, had been a source of division.

But it is only of the place of the Church dispensationally that I can speak at this time, and of that in a general way, as our subject lies in another direction.

Scripture declares that the Church is the body of Christ, of which He is head (Eph. i. 22, 23); that it is formed by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. xii. 13); who was promised by our Lord (Acts i. 5) and

given at Pentecost (Acts ii. 4); that it is composed of Jew and Gentile alike, all former distinctions having been set aside (Eph. ii. 14-16). Connected with the one Body is the one Hope, which shows the calling of the Church to be heavenly and not earthly (Eph. iv. 4). Its present position answers to this, the standing of Christians being in Christ in the heavenlies (Eph. ii. 4-6). It will be presented to Christ in glory as His bride (Eph. v. 26, 27), and, in view of its present position and future destiny, its members are characterized as heavenly, not earthly citizens (Phil. iii. 20, *R.V.*). All this, and much more, is declared by the apostle to be a mystery, a secret hid in God and only made known through him to the saints (Eph. iii. 1-11). Thus the eternal purpose of the heart of God is declared to men, and even to principalities and powers in the heavenly places. Angels who desire to look into the precious things of the gospel (1 Pet. i. 12), behold the manifold wisdom of God, and are spectators of the order of the Church (1 Cor. xi. 10).

All this new revelation, as to the Church, is entirely foreign to the ways of God in the Old Testament, where blessings are earthly, and connected with the nation of Israel and the throne of David (Deut. xxxii. 8; Ps. lxxxix. 20-27), but is in most beautiful harmony with the scheme of grace unfolded in the precious gospel of Christ crucified and risen. The apostle devotes three chapters to show the harmony between the new ways of grace and those of the Old Testament (Rom. chapters

ix.-xi.), where in the contemplation of the wonders of divine wisdom he breaks out in joyful worship (Rom. xi. 33-36).

But we must leave this side of truth, and returning to a remark made at the beginning, inquire if in the full blaze of "Church truth," we have not ignored Kingdom truth. To this end we must ask what is the Kingdom of heaven, and what place has it in the present dispensation?

The gospel of Matthew is the gospel of the King and of the Kingdom. In it alone occurs the expression Kingdom of Heaven, but it is frequently found there. In the other synoptic gospels we have the phrase Kingdom of God, used evidently as synonymous with that in Matthew. (Compare Luke vi. 20 with Matt. v. 3; Mark i. 14, 15 with Matt. iv. 17). In addition, the expression "Kingdom of God" seems to have a moral rather than a dispensational meaning, as in John iii. 3, 5; Acts xx. 25; Rom. xiv. 17, etc. These last passages seem to contrast the Kingdom of God with the kingdom or power of Satan (quite similar to Col. i. 13), in its inward character, while in Matthew the term "Kingdom of Heaven" evidently, as we shall see, refers to the outward authority of God upon earth, as contrasted with the power of man, or of Satan, his master.

Heaven is the opposite, alas, of earth. Man's thought of government is that it is earthly. Farthest removed from the truth is it that government is "by the people, of the people, and for the people." Man is a sinner, lost and alienated from



the life of God, and a stream can never rise higher than the source. Any government, therefore, that has but human authority is likewise away from God. It is for this reason, doubtless, that the figure, dispensationally considered, of the firmament in the heavens, corresponds with the period of government inaugurated under Noah, after it had been most clearly proven by the preceding epoch, from the fall to the flood, that man was incapable of self-government.

The sword was put by God into Noah's hands, and good it is for man that whatever civil authority there is now, is from a divine source. "There is no power but of God; the powers that be are ordained of God" (Rom. xiii. 1). When Nebuchadnezzar in the pride of his heart forgot this momentous truth, and imagined himself to be somewhat, he was reminded in no uncertain way, that "man being in honor and understanding not is like the beasts that perish" (Ps. xlix. 20). It was in connection with the humiliation of the proud gentile monarch to the level of the cattle that it was said he was to learn that "the heavens do rule" (Dan. iv. 26). The rule of the heavens, as contrasted with the rule of man,—no matter how exalted—that seems to be the thought intended in the phrase "Kingdom of Heaven." But let us turn to the gospel of Matthew.

It is the King who is, of course, prominent all through, but mention is constantly made of His Kingdom. It is very beautiful to see this One, higher than the highest, taking His place with the

lowliest, and His Kingdom described as of heaven. What a contrast to the Herods, the Cæsars or the Pilates. And it is just because earth, and His people too, chose these earthly rulers, that the Kingdom of Heaven could not have its heavenly King. "We have no king but Cæsar" shows how far earth was from heaven. It is so still.

So it is, all through Matthew, a Kingdom announced, its principles taught, its works done, but only to manifest the inveterate hatred of the natural heart for God and His rule. Need we ask whether this has since changed? What has occurred to produce the change? We need ask but one question to be assured that the world of Christ's day is the world now—*Where is the King?*

But let us look a little at the details. John the Baptist is the herald (in garb and manner of life prophetic of the chasm between man and God) of the Kingdom. Little wonder, then, that his announcement is begun with that solemn word, "Repent." "Repent ye, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand" (Matt. iv. 2). To enter that Kingdom sinful men must repent, and become as little children (Matt. xviii. 3).

After John's imprisonment our Lord, now fully approved by the voice from heaven, and the forty days fasting and temptation, takes up the same call, "Repent, for the Kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. iv. 12-17).

Notice, the Kingdom was not yet set up, it was at hand. What does this mean? God had been King in Jeshurun (Deut. xxxiii. 5, 26). Moses

was simply His vicegerent. Later on, when they desired a king, the Lord foretold their final rejection of Himself. But in David, the man after His own heart, He found one who could in some measure personally, but in fuller measure typically, represent Him upon earth. After David it was still his throne, and a light preserved in Jerusalem for his sake (1 Kings xi. 36). When the prophet spoke of the future glories of Israel, under the blessed reign of the Messiah, it was in connection with the "sure mercies of David" (Is. lv. 3, 4).

But the day came when even divine patience could have no longer fellowship with a throne of iniquity, and in Ezekiel we see Jehovah's throne departing from Israel. Infinitely pathetic and solemn is that departure. As we see the glory of Jehovah rise from between the cherubim and withdraw to the threshold of the house, and from thence, step by step, withdraw into the distance, until Ichabod is the only word to describe it, we can almost hear the voice of infinite love, "How can I give thee up?" See Ezekiel ix. 3; x. 3, 18, 19; xi. 22, 23.

From this time there was no king in Israel. The throne of David was vacant, and rule passed over to the Gentiles. Nebuchadnezzar was the first, and only one directly entrusted by God with rule. We have already seen that his kingdom was not the Kingdom of heaven. All other rulers have been successors with less and less power and authority. The image of Daniel ii. gives the history of the deterioration till the gold of the head be-

comes the miry clay mixed with iron, of the feet. Upon those feet will one day—soon now, may we not say?—fall a Stone which will crush all, and restore the rule into hands which are fully competent.

The kingdom, therefore, had ceased, though, as already seen, God was above all the follies of man. But when Christ, the rightful King came, the announcement was at once made that the Kingdom was at hand. But would man have it, would the Jew? Until they accepted Him, it could not be said to have been set up. Therefore it was not in existence, but *at hand*. This will explain not only the use of the term, but the following portions of the Gospel of Matthew.

In the Sermon on the Mount (chaps. v.-vii.) we have the principles, the laws we might say, of the Kingdom. In their purity and intense devotedness they reflect the perfect mind of Him who gave them. They provide for the path of the remnant, as persecution and trial are contemplated, and yet the principles of holiness and truth are such as will prevail when God's people shall be "*all* righteous." Mere outward profession is condemned absolutely, and the best human righteousness of that character is shown to be worthless. Christ's disciples are lights in the midst of surrounding darkness, salt where all else is without savor. All this was but the fulfilment of the law and the prophets; and this is illustrated by showing the true spiritual character of those commands which had been considered as merely external.

There was but one standard, to be as the Father in heaven. In like manner, all righteousness and religiousness to be acceptable with God must be, not for human applause, but from the heart, for God's eye only. Singleness of eye and confidence of heart are linked together.

The saints are warned against censoriousness on the one hand and indifference to the Lord's honor on the other. False prophets and false professors are characterized. The solemnity of the issues are pressed, and the wisdom or folly, in obeying the Lord's words, is seen.

Thus the true nature of the Kingdom of Heaven is presented for men's acceptance. Will they have it?

Next, that there may be every inducement to accept, the signs of the Kingdom are exhibited. Miracles, acts of divine power, are given for the authentication of the messenger and his message. Here they are given in abundance, and being acts of mercy and blessing establish at once the character and authority of the Kingdom. Will men receive such a King and such a Kingdom? It has come nigh them, to their very doors, will they have it, or reject?

Unquestionably there is all through the gospel the prophetic intimation of rejection. Thus in the tenth chapter, the Lord passes on from the present to the time of His coming in power—the rejection of His messengers being clearly foreseen. Thus the reception of the King and Kingdom is still in abeyance.

But there is more than mere negative non-reception. Fittingly from his prison, the herald of the Kingdom asks his question as to the Lord, Why the long delay; "art Thou He that should come, or look we for another?" The Lord's answer shows the blessings of the Kingdom are there, but the heart to receive Him is wanting in the "men of this generation." However, He holds open His arms to all who are weary and heavy laden, and promises them rest. The Kingdom will not be received by the nation. (Chap. xi.)

The time has now come for definite rejection, and this we have in the twelfth chapter. Mercy cannot be endured by self-righteousness, and those who would not scruple to murder the Son of God, cannot endure to see their interpretation of the law set aside. So they hold a counsel to slay Him. The last and definite act of rejection is at hand, and when divine power casts out demons, they ascribe it to satanic agency. Nothing can be done for such persons, so the Lord turns from them. The gospel narrative goes on down to the close, but the crisis is reached in the twelfth chapter. The Kingdom has been announced, its principles proclaimed, its works shown—only to meet with satanic rejection by the rulers of the Jewish nation.

Thus the Kingdom could not be set up in power and outward display. "His own received Him not;" those bidden to the feast were not worthy. The Lord therefore leaves the house (chap. xiii.) a symbol of His people according to the flesh.

and goes to the seaside, type of the Gentiles. Until Israel repent, there can be no Kingdom in the form foretold by prophets since the world began. Is there a Kingdom meanwhile? Yes, but it is

#### THE KINGDOM OF AN ABSENT KING.

The heavens have received Him till the times of restitution (Acts iii. 21), and from there He watches and waits, using no power but that of His word, and leaving the administration of His Kingdom in the hands of His disciples. This is what is prophetically unfolded in the seven parables of Matthew xiii. They are the mysteries, or secrets of the Kingdom, counter to all expectation of His disciples and a source of stumbling to the Jews. These parables give us, then, the history of the Kingdom of heaven during the present time when Christ is in heaven, and reach on till He sets up His throne in power. Any one, therefore, who understands this chapter knows what the Kingdom of heaven is at the present time. We must therefore take up in some detail this most important portion of God's word.

But before doing this, let us put ourselves at the place of rejection, at our Lord's death and the connected events. He is cast out of earth and the heavens receive Him. The Holy Ghost is sent down and the gospel of forgiveness is preached. The Church is formed,—though as yet the truth as to the Church, a heavenly body, is not known. The word of the Kingdom is preached, and that form of it of which we have been just speaking, is

set up. Thus the Church and the Kingdom of Heaven in its mystery form are set up at one and the same time, and run on together. The Church does not displace the Kingdom, for both are established together. They are not mutually exclusive either, for those who believe the gospel of the Kingdom, as preached by Peter and other disciples at Pentecost, are also in the Church. The Church, as we have seen, is a heavenly body, composed only of true believers, for it is formed by the Holy Spirit. What is the Kingdom? Our chapter will show us. We will find that it has to do with earth rather than heaven, with man, in the first part, rather than the Holy Spirit alone.

Thus the truths of the Church and the Kingdom are parallel. The Church is formed by sovereign grace; the Kingdom is wider. While including those who receive the gospel truly, it is, as we have seen, in the hands of men. They may sleep, and at His return the Lord will have to purge His Kingdom of all who do iniquity.

We shall find, therefore, that, while the Church is composed of none but saints, it is not so with the Kingdom. Profession, true in many cases, false in others, is the word that characterizes it. This will come out as we proceed in the examination of the parables, but it is as well to state it at the outset, forming a sort of hinge upon which all revolves. Let us now take up the parables.

There are seven in all, and in their number would certainly suggest a complete view of the



whole subject. As has been noted by another,\* the seven are divided into four and three. The four, spoken to the multitude on the seashore, suggest both in contents and number the external or world-aspect of the Kingdom; while the three last, spoken to His disciples in private, in like manner suggest the internal aspect.

One thing must strike us at once in the parable of the sower, that we have not here a kingdom set up in power, overcoming all obstacles and taking possession of all things. It is significantly divided into four parts, suggesting the weakness and failure liable to things upon earth. The seed is good, but the ground fails to receive it aright. The seed is the word of God, pure and incorruptible, but the hearts of men, where it is sown, are, alas! marked by feebleness and failure. In three out of the four cases where the word is received, there is no fruit brought to perfection.

In the first, the seed falls by the wayside, the hard beaten path pressed into passive resistance by the tread of thousands. This suggests the heart of the natural man who hears the word of God. His mind is the highway for everything of earth to pass over. It has thus become callous, completely secularized; there is no opening for the seed to enter in. The word is heard but not grasped. It takes its chances with everything else that passes along that highway. But that is not

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\* Mr. F. W. Grant in "Numerical Bible," notes on Matt. xiii.; also his "Mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven," to be had of the publishers.

all. Such a state of heart is but the opportunity for Satan to come in and take away what was sown. Indifference is always more than mere indifference. Satan is behind it.

We need hardly be reminded of the fulfilment of this in the preaching of the word, since Pentecost. The good seed has been sown, and countless multitudes have heard the word, but how has it been with the many? Satan has snatched the word away.

The seed on rocky places is similar to that upon the wayside, but here there is an apparent effect. A slight covering of earth is over the rocky subsoil, and the seed springs up all the more quickly because of lack of depth. But lack of depth means lack of moisture, and the sun which would have furthered development, now scorches and blights the scant growth, which withers away as quickly as it had appeared.

Again, how close the resemblance to the reception of the word by many during the Christian period. If those by the wayside resemble those who as the merest matter of form profess to belong to the Kingdom, as in national establishments, these on the rocky places suggest those, may we not say, in protestant countries, outside establishments, who hear the gospel, and profess, without brokenness for sin, to accept Christ?

Next comes the seed among the thorns, and here it is not the manner of reception, but the rivalry of the cares and pleasures of earth that chokes the word. Thorns came in at the fall,

and witness to a world away from God. They are shriveled fruit-branches, which, barren themselves, as all barren things, prevent fruitfulness from other sources. They crowd out, and choke the good seed in its growth.

Look about us to-day. What is prosperity doing for Christendom? If persecution blights false profession, does not prosperity choke that which promised better things?

Pausing a moment, is this the history of the Church or the Kingdom? Is it possible for way-side hearers to be in the Church? for stony-ground professors to be sealed by the Holy Ghost, baptized into the One Body of which Christ is Head? Can thorns effectually choke the work of divine grace in a regenerate soul? To ask such questions is to answer them. But here we have the Kingdom, including most evidently a wider area than the Church. This will be clearer as we proceed.

Good ground is at last reached, where the word is heard, understood, and received. Fruit is the result, fruit not blighted or choked, but fruit that remaineth unto eternity. The thirty, sixty, and hundred fold show, even where there is a work of God, that the results vary, reminding us of the five and two talents. Thank God, there is in Christendom much fruit amid the surrounding failure, and when the Lord of the harvest gathers in, there will be that which speaks of the fruits of righteousness in multitudes of redeemed saints, not one of whom will be with-

out some fruit, if it be not Isaac's measure (Gen. xxvi. 12).

The first parable, then, gives us a picture of the Kingdom in connection with the sowing of the seed, the varying results of the preaching of the word, during the present time, when all influence is moral, and not, as in the coming day, external.

Coming to the second parable, we have the work of the enemy in introducing tares—"children of the wicked one"—into the midst of the wheat. The tares resembled the wheat considerably, save that they were utterly worthless. It will be noticed that it was "while men slept" that the enemy sowed the tares, and this emphasizes what has already been said, that we are dealing with the time when the King is absent, and His Kingdom is being administered by men. Alas, how true it is, that whatever is entrusted to men must show failure. Men, even godly men, slept on the mount of transfiguration and in the garden of Gethsemane. Neither the glory nor the grief of the Son of God could hold open their heavy eyes. Little wonder, then, that His interests suffer in like manner. "The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." The apostle alludes to something like this when he speaks of the material to be built upon the foundation. "Let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon" (1 Cor. iii. 10-17). Indifference in reception, and failure to look to the Lord for guidance, will open the door of the Kingdom to the Gibeonites, the enemies of God. These may bring stale bread and worn-out shoes,

may loudly profess to be pilgrims, and yet be the bitter enemies of all that is of God. Jude (v. 6) speaks of "certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ." Men who should have been vigilant porters, keeping watch at the Lord's gates, were asleep, and then men crept in "unawares." The faithful servant goes on in that brief epistle to characterize these, "filthy dreamers," "spots in your love feasts," false professors, whose end will be "the blackness of darkness forever." Paul also speaks of such (2 Tim. ii.) as being vessels to dishonor in the "great house" of Christendom, which answers closely to the Kingdom in the hands of men who sleep.

The enemy's work to-day in this direction is only too apparent. In the broad field of the world, with the name and much of the outward appearance of God's children, we find all sorts of "damnable heresies." "False brethren" were a menace to Paul, and all down the history of the Kingdom we see these wicked ones, men taking up the most precious truths of grace, and turning them into deadly and horrible error. Particularly in these closing days do we see these multiply, and in the providence of God, band themselves together—bundles ready for the burning.

As is customary in Matthew, we do not have the Church period distinctly marked out, and the harvest-time has many features that strongly

point to the appearing of our Lord, when He will "gather out of His Kingdom all that offend and them that do iniquity." This emphasizes the fact that the Kingdom and the Church are not coextensive, and that the former goes on after the Church is removed. These tares may well be the leaders who even now are spreading a lie, and will in that day, after the Church is removed, spread the "strong delusion." These with their leader will be taken and cast into the lake of fire.

In like manner, it seems consistent to think of the children of the Kingdom as including saints up to the appearing,—all who have part in the first resurrection. This would explain the gathering the tares *first*, and would be somewhat similar to the blending of saints of two eras in the twenty-four elders of Rev. iv.

We pass next to the parable of the mustard-seed, giving us another aspect of the Kingdom. What is emphasized here is that from the smallest of seeds grows up the largest of all herbs, becoming a tree—without its stability?—and affording shelter to the birds. We have the development of the Kingdom as a world-power in this, from the smallest beginnings—see the list in Acts i. 15, etc.—until it becomes a vast system, affording protection rather than needing it. The figure of a tree as world-power is found elsewhere. (See Ezek. xvii. 22, etc.; Ezek. xxxi. 3, etc.; Dan. iv. 20, etc.) Nebuchadnezzar was such a power, and the kingdom of which he was head. What is particularly significant is that the birds, seen in

the first parable as satanic power snatching away the good seed, here find shelter in the branches. The small beginnings of the Kingdom have ended in this externally great system — but what does it shelter ?

Babylon is the name given to that false church which is the "cage of every unclean and hateful bird" (Rev. xviii. 2), and that name significantly connects her with that kingdom of the first Gentile king who is likened to the protecting tree. Surely, the true Church, the bride of the Lamb, is no such habitation of demons, but that mass of profession, committed into the hands of men, has become just such an abode.

Is it not true that Christendom is such a protection? Whence come the assaults upon the truths of God but from within the professing body? Here rationalism, ritualism, and every form of evil find their protection. Under the plea of liberality and broadness, all kinds of infidelity have their home within the pale of Christianity. There is scarcely a heathen superstition so gross, scarcely an error so blasphemous, as not to find itself at home under the protection of that which was meant to be the abode of faithfulness. How closely this connects with the preceding parable, and how it tells out the divine foresight of Him who knew from the beginning that such would be the condition of His Kingdom left in men's hands.

If the growth of the mustard seed speak of outward enlargement, the parable of the leaven tells of the inward state of that enlarged corporation.

Leaven in Scripture, both in Old and New Testaments, is invariably a figure of an evil, corrupting influence. Under the legal economy, its use in sacred things was absolutely prohibited, save in one instance, where the type strikingly confirms the general meaning of evil. Whenever a loaf typified Christ, it had no leaven, for "in Him was no sin." But in one instance (Lev. xxiii. 17) it typifies believers, and fittingly, as telling of the evil present in them, leaven was there; and therefore with such an offering, a kid had to be presented as a sin-offering. Such an exception only proves the more clearly that leaven was considered evil, and only that. The New Testament usage is equally plain: the leaven of the Pharisees is hypocrisy (Luke xii. 1); moral evil is symbolized by it in 1 Cor. v.; and doctrinal evil in Gal. v. 9.

The three measures of meal as clearly speak of Christ, the fine flour—the bread that came down from heaven. The *three* measures would tell of the divine fulness of Him in whom "dwelleth all the fulness of the godhead bodily." The woman suggests the professing church, and when the Church assumes to be teacher it is like that woman Jezebel in Thyatira—all connected with Babylon, as we know.

When therefore the Church began to corrupt the truth of Christ in all His fulness, and added human teaching, it corrupted the very bread of life. What has the history of Christianity been but an illustration of this? Take Rome as the most com-



plete instance. What precious doctrine of Christ—His person, His testimony, His work—has not been defiled and corrupted by the leaven of human additions? Nor is it otherwise elsewhere. The whole professing body has acted in the same way, and wherever corruption is mixed with the truth of Christ, we see the working of the leaven.

This, then, is the picture of the Kingdom of Heaven in the hands of men during the absence of the King. These four parables give us the earth or outward side of the Kingdom, and what is most prominent is weakness and failure. In three cases the seed fails to bear fruit; the enemy introduces false among the true, the feeble company becomes a great world-power sheltering the evil; while the precious truth of Christ is corrupted by the false teaching of the woman, the professing church.

Let us ask ourselves again, Can this be the picture of the "chaste virgin," espoused to Christ? can this be the Church? Ah, no! But is it heathendom, without the knowledge of the word of God? Again, we must answer, No. It is the Kingdom under the maladministration of man, but responsible. Till Christ comes it will be in this state, and all in it will bear their share of responsibility. He will then take His power and reign—with His saints.

The three remaining parables, spoken to His disciples, give us the Lord's rather than man's side of the Kingdom, and here grace in the first two, and judgment in the last are prominent.

The purchase of the field for the sake of the hid

treasure is a beautiful figure of the value of Israel in the Lord's eyes. "The Lord's portion is His people." The treasure is not manifest to human eyes; it is "hidden." So when Christ came, the mass of the nation were scattered out of their land; the ten tribes were practically lost; even the Jews (though partially returned to their land that Christ might be born there and presented to them as their deliverer and King) had but scant place in the world's appraisalment. But the Lord finds the treasure, and hides it again—for Israel is still hidden. But He buys the field—the world—at the price of His own precious blood. In the day when the Kingdom is displayed, then will "Israel my glory" be manifested, the peculiar treasure of the Lord, redeemed with His own blood. Meanwhile there is a remnant at this present time according to the election of grace, and these form part of the Kingdom even now.

The parable of the pearl is similar, with differences that show its meaning. The Church, the pearl of the heavenly city, is evidently meant. Buried in the sea of the Gentiles brought out at the risk—at the cost—of the life of Him who saved her, destined to shine forever as the brightest jewel in His crown; this is evidently the meaning of the parable. For the Church, as for Israel and the world, Christ sold all that He had. He gave *Himself*.

The closing parable, of the net cast into the sea, seems to go on beyond the Church period, to the time when the gospel of the Kingdom will be

preached, by the Jewish remnant, to the Gentiles, when out of the sea of the nations will be gathered a great multitude of true and false. The good will be gathered for the millennial Kingdom, while the bad will be cast away, "into outer darkness." This will take place during the brief period between the rapture of the Church and the appearing of our Lord to judge. It is comprised in the seventieth week of Daniel, and is fully described in the second part of the book of Revelation.

Further comment upon this portion is scarcely necessary. The Kingdom of Heaven lies before our view, from its first formation until it passes from man's hands into His whose right it is, and who will at last make good in accomplishment fully and perfectly what He claimed for it and the character which He Himself exhibited.

What, then, is the nature of that Kingdom as found in man's hands? It is mixed, composed of good and bad, the children of God and the children of the evil one. It embraces all profession, real and unreal, that through the preaching of the word on the one hand, or the indifference of men on the other, has been brought within the sphere of responsibility.

The remainder of the gospel of Matthew is in fitting accord with all that has so far come before us. The Lord is practically rejected, and walks on calmly to the cross. His own Nazareth rejects Him; John passes from the prison to the tomb; the Lord withdraws to a desert place, then to the coasts of Tyre and Sidon. He scatters blessing

wherever He goes, but all shows that the time of the Kingdom and glory has not and cannot yet come. A glimpse of the glory of that future Kingdom, is given to the three witnesses apart on the mountain summit, but this brightness is not for the unbelieving heart and eyes of the nation, and it passes into darker night.

But what man's eyes cannot see, the eye of faith does. And Peter discerning Christ as the Son of the living God confesses what is the foundation of the Church, and has intrusted to him the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven (Matt. xvi. 13, etc.) Mark, the Church is built upon the Rock, Christ the Son of God; the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven are entrusted to Peter, representative of all confessors of Christ. The Church and the Kingdom are here clearly distinguished, just as we have found all along. And the difference is the same. The Church is Christ's building; pure grace and divine power cooperate in that heavenly work; the Kingdom has its keys, symbols of authority and administration entrusted to man.

We see Peter at Pentecost, using the keys to open the doors of the Kingdom—to loose, as our Lord says,—governmentally remitting sins. This is in Acts ii. In Acts v. we see Peter binding, or retaining sin, when he pronounces sentence on Annanias and Sapphira. Later (Acts viii. 20) he does the same morally in the case of Simon Magus. Thus the Kingdom is entrusted to man. Peter was faithful, but others came in, as he himself foretold (2 Pet. ii. 1, etc.) who were grievous

wolves, and who would not spare the flock. How clearly Paul foresaw this we have already in some measure seen. His address to the elders at Ephesus (Acts xx.) is a sample.

The Church and the Kingdom then are distinct. The Church emphasizes grace; all is divine. The Kingdom emphasizes responsibility. Profession is the prominent thought, and all who assume the Christian badge are treated as responsible to maintain that profession and to walk accordingly.

But let it not be thought that our Lord *provides* for this false profession. He simply foretells what will take place. When He comes, He will purge His Kingdom of all evil; now He patiently endures with much longsuffering. In His mind the Kingdom must be pure. Therefore in giving the qualifications for entrance and describing who is greatest in it, He declares they must be converted and become as a little child, or they cannot enter into that which will one day be manifest as the Kingdom of Heaven. He, the faithful One would admit none, and allow for the admission of none save truly converted ones.\*

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\*Of course, the reference is to persons who have reached the years of responsibility. It would be a mistake to argue from what is said in the text against the recognition of the households of believers as being by that very fact in the Kingdom. As this is an integral part of our subject it will not be considered controversial to speak of it here. For full discussion, the reader must look elsewhere. We would hardly speak of *receiving* the children of believers into the Kingdom, by baptism or in any other way; they are in it, by virtue of the fact of membership in the household of the believer. Baptism is the recognition of this, that they enjoy

From this it has been argued that the Lord simply ignores everything but reality in the Kingdom, and that false professors are as really out of it now, as when openly cast out. This is evidently a mistake, and all that we have seen in His own parables proves it. He who is thrust in unworthily has an awful responsibility upon him which he cannot shirk. A Judas, who took the place of a disciple—a professed follower of Christ—is made an apostle, a depository of ministry, and, should he last so long, of government.

This is a most solemn side to our subject, and one that must not be overlooked. Scripture, and particularly the New Testament where the contrast between profession and reality is brought out, abounds with passages illustrating this. All those passages in Paul's epistles and elsewhere which are so frequently misused and misinterpreted by persons who are untaught, are easily understood when we see that profession and responsibility are the subject. Who that understood

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the privileges and must meet the responsibilities of their position, which they cannot escape. Nor let it be thought that this opens the door to all kinds of false profession. If the children of believers grow up in unbelief, where does the blame lie? Let conscience enlightened by the word of God answer. Where there is faith and obedience on the part of the parent, who would dare say that his children, baptized or not, would remain unsaved? What are the promises of God? Let the Elis and the Davids tell why their families were unsaved.

But baptism is the outward sign of membership in the Kingdom. It is part of that great commission, (Matt. xxviii.), the closing command of our Lord as to His Kingdom.

this could think that "fallen from grace" referred to true believers? or that the solemn passage in Hebrew vi., the terror of the weak believer who does not understand it, means that a true child of God can perish?

Let the reader take every passage that speaks of professors falling away and being lost, and let him apply the principles that have been before us, and he will have no further question as to the impossibility of a true child of God ever being lost. The distinction between the Church and the Kingdom, between grace and responsibility will prevent any misapprehension.

But what of mere professors in the Kingdom? Is it true that they have absolutely no different standing from the heathen who never heard of Christ? There is scarcely need to answer the question. Who could think of the language of Heb. vi., being applied to a heathen? The servant who knew his Lord's will and did it not shall be beaten with many stripes.

There is a place of privilege which everyone enjoys who is in the Kingdom, even though a stranger to grace. He has the word of God, the advantage of Christian instruction and example, — all the varied and precious opportunities so much prized by the child of God. What if he do not believe? Is he exempt from responsibility?

There is a passage in the epistle to the Romans which pursues this course of reasoning, and shows how mere profession is responsible for its privileges. The term "Kingdom of Heaven" is not

mentioned, but a similar state, from the standpoint of privilege, is dwelt upon. It is in that third division of the epistle, where the apostle is showing the consistency of God's ways of grace under the gospel with His dealings with His earthly people prior to our Lord's coming to earth (Rom. ix.-xi.).

First of all he shows that outward privilege and election are not the same: "They are not all Israel who are of Israel." So he traces from Abraham down:—Isaac, and not Ishmael, is chosen; Jacob, the younger, displaces Esau. So now grace has reached out to the Gentiles, a thing foretold in the prophets (Rom. ix.).

Next, he goes into the causes of there being but a remnant in Israel. There was no faith. They sought a righteousness by the works of the law. They did not obey the gospel. Only a small remnant were left, the spiritual Israel. Of the nation at large Isaiah had said, "All day long have I stretched out my hand to a disobedient and gainsaying people." Moses had foretold the foolishness of the nation in departing from God (Deut. xxxii.), and in that connection had foretold the displacement of the nation by the Gentiles: "I will provoke you to jealousy by them that are no people." Taking this up, Isaiah had gone further and said, "I was found of them that sought me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after me." Now all this establishes this fact: that privilege and responsibility are not grace, and those who, as the nation of Israel, had



enjoyed the privileges, and were subject to the responsibilities, but who were strangers to God's tender grace and mercy, were treated according to the measure of their position. The nation was set aside, though there was then, and is now, "a remnant according to the election of grace" (Rom. xi. 6).

But the apostle goes on to apply the same reasoning to the Gentiles who had been brought in after Israel was displaced. Under the figure of the olive tree and its branches, he shows, first of all, that the root and fatness of the olive tree were in the promises made to Abraham. The natural branches were his natural descendants who partook of all the privileges and advantages of being linked with the father of the faithful. But they abused their privileges and ignored their advantages. As a result, though branches of the parent olive-tree, they were broken off. Further the Gentiles as a class—those who took their place by profession among the people of God—were grafted in and made partakers of "the root and fatness" of the olive-tree.

This was not grace, but the participation in all the privileges attached to such a place, as is suggested by the figure. They were brought under the light of divine truth, the Scriptures were opened to them, the example and teaching of the people of God were theirs. What amazing privileges! and what corresponding responsibilities. How did they meet them?

Those who had received the gift of grace un-

questionably were God's; they abided in His goodness. But the apostle indicates only too clearly the progress of unbelief, and the final cutting off of mere professors (Rom. ii. 22).

Let us ask ourselves the question, Did these people, these outward partakers, have a recognized standing in responsibility? Most unquestionably they had. If they continued in God's goodness, well; but if not "thou also shalt be cut off."

It may be contended that the subject of this part of Romans is not the Kingdom. Nevertheless the subject is the responsibility of those who are brought into a place of privilege, and this the Kingdom is.

Thus we are forced to the conclusion that the Kingdom is wider than the Church, for, if not, then all in the Kingdom are in the Church. But if that be the case, then we must go on to two other conclusions; the Church has in it mere professors whose link with Christ can be severed, and it ceases to be a heavenly body. For we have seen the Kingdom to be earthly.

But what confusion and deadly loss such a conclusion would involve. Are we prepared, can we for a moment think of that Church for which Christ gave Himself, bone of His bone, indwelt by the Holy Ghost, soon to be the heavenly bride—can we conceive of that Church degraded into an earthly thing, subject to man's mistakes, open to mere professors? Surely every one who knows the truth of God will answer without hesitation.

But let it be seen that the Kingdom is a wider

sphere than the Church, that it has to do with earth and earthly responsibilities, that it is entrusted for its administration into the hands of men, during the absence of the King—and a flood of light is shed directly and by reflection, upon a vast mass of most necessary truth. Scriptures relating to profession, to earthly testimony, to outward allegiance to Christ, to falling away, to households of the Lord's people, to water baptism—all such will yield their meaning in beautiful harmony with other lines of truth, from which they are clearly distinct.

May we awake as to our responsibilities in connection with the Kingdom of Heaven.

S. R.

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