

**Demonstration of Errors in the New Teaching
as affording opportunity for presenting the Truth.**

12. THE ASSEMBLY ACCORDING TO THE REVELATION OF THE MYSTERY GIVEN UP, AND ALL NOW REDUCED TO INDIVIDUAL UNITS.

The "Mystery of the Christ," as ministered from heaven after the Ascension, ought to rivet the attention of every heart that is true to Him who loved the Church, and gave Himself for it. The vast importance of this immensely blessed truth would be difficult to over-estimate, and hence it demands the most careful consideration.

The Meaning of the Term.

"Mystery" does not mean something that nobody can understand, but something previously kept secret, and never before revealed, but is now revealed so that everybody (subject to the Word) can understand it.

The Prominent Place the Mystery holds in God's Word.

This will best be shown by citing what Scripture says. "According to the Revelation of the *Mystery* which was KEPT SECRET SINCE THE WORLD BEGAN, but is now made manifest," (Rom. xvi., 25). "But we speak the wisdom of God in a *mystery*, even the hidden wisdom which God ordained BEFORE THE WORLD unto our glory." (1 Cor. ii. 7.)

"If ye have heard of the administration of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward, how that by REVELATION He made known unto me the *mystery* (as I wrote afore in few words, whereby when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the *Mystery of the Christ*) which IN OTHER AGES WAS NOT MADE KNOWN UNTO THE SONS OF MEN, AS it is NOW revealed unto His holy apostles and prophets (of the New Testament) by the Spirit." (Eph. iii., 2-5.) "And to make all men see what is the dispensation of the *mystery*, which, FROM THE BEGINNING OF THE WORLD, HATH BEEN HID IN GOD (not in the Scriptures even) who created all things, to the intent that NOW unto the PRINCIPALITIES AND POWERS IN HEAVENLY places might be known by the CHURCH the manifold wisdom of God, according to the ETERNAL PURPOSE, which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Vers. 9-11.)

"This is a *great mystery*, but I speak concerning CHRIST AND THE CHURCH. (Chap. v., 32.)

"Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of the Christ in my flesh for His BODY'S sake, which is the CHURCH, whereof I am made minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given me for you to complete the Word of God, even the *mystery*, which HATH BEEN HID FROM AGES AND FROM

GENERATIONS, but now is made manifest to His saints, to whom God would make known what is the RICHES OF THE GLORY of this *mystery* among the Gentiles." (Col. i., 24-27.)

"To the full knowledge of the *mystery* of God, in which are HID ALL THE TREASURES OF WISDOM AND KNOWLEDGE." (Col. ii., 2-3.)

"Withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance to speak the MYSTERY OF CHRIST, for which I am also in bonds; that I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak." (Col. iv., 8-4.)

On reading this, the unique and conspicuous place which the mystery occupies in the truth of God is unmistakable. Observe the number of times it occurs and mark the strong and emphatic language used concerning it. There is no doubt as to what God thinks of it, and would have us value it according to His estimate. But it is not its prominence only these passages bring out, but

Its Unparalleled Character.

No one can read these surpassingly rare and magnificently glorious statements without perceiving that there is a "great mystery" most clearly taught and enlarged upon, so much so that the inspired Apostle labours for words to show that what had been revealed to him, and by him communicated to others, was something new, hitherto kept secret, unprecedented, unheard of, and unknown. Something "kept secret since the world began;" something "ordained before the world to our glory;" something "which, in other ages, was not made known unto the sons of men;" something "which from the beginning of the world had been hid in God;" something "that had been hid from ages and from generations;" yea, something spoken of as the "riches of the glory of this mystery." It is all so transcendent that we feel the need of imploring "that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of Glory, would give unto us the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, the eyes of our heart being enlightened to know" this incomparable portion, and the unity and the glory of the "Church which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all."

It is according to God's Eternal Purpose.

"According to the eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Eph. iii., 11.) Nowhere else in Scripture do we get the expression "eternal purpose," and then it is in connection with the "mystery hid in God." The thought had its origin with Himself in a past eternity—His own blessed will its source. "Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever He had formed the earth and the world," this mystery was in the purpose of God. It has no date, but from those timeless periods was an "eternal" resolve in the mind of the Father "earth's foundation long before." Have we not often sung?—

"What raised the wondrous thought,
Or who did it suggest?"

And the answer—

"O God! the thought was Thine,
Thine only it could be!
The motives, too, Thine own,
The plan, the counsel Thine!
Made for Thy Son, bone of His bone,
In glory bright to shine.

Did we deserve to be thought of like this—poor, sinful, worthless, worms of the dust? But, it all sprang from the heart of Him who loved without cause, and, to Him be glory! continues to love without any pause.

The Mystery a Fact now in Time.

There had to be the death, resurrection, and ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ, before the mystery purposed in eternity could come into existence. The Holy Ghost had also to descend from heaven, the promised Comforter, in order to effect its positive formation. Now, there is that on earth united to Christ in heaven which constitutes the "Mystery of the Christ." It is no longer only a purpose in God's mind. Adam was in the dust of the ground on the *third* day as a purpose in the thought of God; but he was created a real *living man* on the *sixth*. So the mystery was a purpose or counsel in the Divine mind unexecuted until Pentecost. Then, for the first time, it was taken out of purpose and put into reality; became a fact here in this world, consisting of Christ and the Church, and is animated and maintained by the Spirit. It is peculiar to this age. In "other ages" it did not exist, and was made known to Paul by *revelation*. We may bless God that we were ever born in this period of the world's history; for only now can we have a place in this "Mystery," that is, from Pentecost to the Coming of the Lord. The Scriptures already quoted indisputably prove this, and in such remarkable language as was never before employed in God's Word, so that you are impelled to put the question:

What is this Mystery?

It first came out at the conversion of the Apostle on the road to Damascus, and is essentially wrapped up in that marvellous utterance spoken from heaven out of Christ's own mouth, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?" (Acts ix., 4.) In other words, these suffering ones, who were being hunted down, were Himself, so to speak, His body, so that whoever touched them, touched Him, just as the head of my body feels the prick of a thorn in my foot. Saul was persecuting the saints, but such is the wonderful relation between Christ and His members, according to this "Mystery," that, speaking from glory, He calls them "*Me*." Not My disciples, My friends, My people, but "*Me*." This is the strongest expression of our *more than union* to Himself as glorified Man, that could be employed, for we have really no word that expresses the full reality. But "persecutest thou Me," tells it better than any other words. The feeblest member is truly part *of* Him, not merely has part *with* Him, however true that also is, but is nourished and cherished as "His own flesh."

The Mystery consists of *two* great parts summed up in Eph. v., 32. "This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the Church." The first is *Christ*, and the second is the *Church*. It means neither Christ alone nor the Church alone, but Christ *and* the Church united together. Some Scriptures speak of Christ and unfold what the *Head* is to the body; others, what the *body* is to the Head, *i.e.*, the other part, the Church, while yet others again speak of it as the *one grand whole*, like the "*Me*" of Acts ix., and the "so also is the Christ"

of 1 Cor. xii., 12. "For, as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body being many, are one body, so also is the CHRIST." These are the words inspired by the Spirit, and so absolute is the identity—going beyond even the thought of united—between Christ as glorified Man and His members, that the whole, head, body, and members, as if one man, is called CHRIST. It does not say, so also is the Church, or so also is the body, but, "so also is the Christ." We have to use the terms union and unity, because we know no better words to express it, but they are short of the reality we have here, for the body is not merely said to be united to Christ, but to be Christ Himself. The length to which the figure is carried is most striking, where all is spoken of, as the Christ, and the Church is, so to speak, *lost in Him*. There is a closeness and completeness of identity in the language between Christ and the Church that may well fill our souls with wonder and adoration, and which defies explaining away. The Church side of the mystery has also the *bride* aspect.

How and When was it Formed?

"For by One Spirit have we all been baptised into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free, and have all been made to drink into One Spirit." (1 Cor. xii., 13). Thus its formation was effected by the baptism of the Spirit, and the time was on the day of Pentecost. (Acts ii., 33.) This was how believers became "one body," and inseparable from Christ, by the indissoluble bond of the Holy Ghost.

The Mystery the Lesson-book of Angels.

"To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the Church the manifold wisdom of God." (Eph. iii., 10). It is something by which God is giving the knowledge of a new kind of wisdom to the heavenly hosts. Nor is it when we get to heaven that this is so, but *now*. It is "now unto the principalities and powers," this unexampled Divine reality is being made known by the Church. What a place is thus given to the Assembly according to the revelation of the Mystery! It is not a question of what others think of us, or whether we are loved or disliked by them. The holy angels behold in us the dearest objects of Christ's affections, and that we are united to Him in the closest of all relations, namely, as His body, and they learn from the wondrous "mystery of the Christ" in which there is neither Jew nor Gentile what could not be learned from anything else. Through this masterpiece of His workmanship, God is giving a hitherto unknown character of instruction to the principalities and powers above concerning His own all-various wisdom. To receive the magnitude of this new wonder into our hearts we need faith in God and dependence on the Spirit. May it indeed be made to our souls a living reality in simplicity and power. Alas! for the feebleness of its apprehension by us whom it most intimately concerns, for surely the profound interest taken in the Mystery by the ranks and grades of the multitude of angelic beings, though they can only look on as spectators, and their intensity of desire to become acquainted with its marvels of wisdom and love, put us all utterly to shame! But, what shall we say of the ingratitude of those

who, notwithstanding they, through God's grace, are themselves part of it, do not hesitate to pare down and even moralise away altogether its true and proper blessedness.

Its Place in the Dispensation of the Fulness of Times.

Formed now, while Christ sits at God's right hand, by the Spirit come down from heaven, and *maintained* in its integrity here till His Coming again, all this will be **DISPLAYED**, and much more besides, in the "dispensation of the fulness of times," of Eph. 1, 10, according to another and wider mystery, called the "Mystery of His will," which refers to a future period different from this one, and concerns what God is ere long going to do for the glory of His Son in connection with the heading up of all things in heaven and earth in Christ. He is soon to leave His Father's throne, and come for His own, who will afterwards appear with Him, when He is manifested in "His own glory, and in His Father's and of the holy angels." Then the church, His body and bride, complete, that, according to the "great mystery" of "Christ and the church," had been gathered out during this present interval, will reign with Him as His co-heir, when He takes, as glorified Man, the inheritance of all things heavenly and earthly. In this glorious display there will be two parts, namely, the things "which are in heaven" and the things "which are on earth," or the celestial and the terrestrial, having a glory peculiar to each. Nearest to Christ, and reigning *with* Him, in the heavenly department, is the church in the central place, with all the others, such as angels, principalities, and powers, grouped around that, while in the earthly domain, will be the favoured nation of Israel in the central position, and all other nations round it, not reigning *with*, like the church, but reigned *over*, in Christ there being headed up two combined, yet distinct states of visible glory, without the earthly mixing with the heavenly, each having a sphere proper to itself, and a distinct centre to which all other things are to be subordinated.

But, after this glorious reign of a thousand years, during which there will be this united system of heavenly glory *with*, and earthly glory *under* Christ, there will be still the other and final display, after the delivering up of the Kingdom when God will be all in all for ever and ever. That is, the "Mystery" will have

Its Place in the Eternal Ages yet to Come.

That which had its origin in God's own thoughts and purposes in a *past* eternity, and effectuated here in *time*, will be for the display of God's brightest glory throughout *the ages of ages*. All this wonder-working on God's part has been with the ultimate object "That, in the ages to come He might show the *exceeding riches* of His grace in His kindness towards *us* in Christ Jesus." (Eph. ii., 7.) It, accordingly, becomes us to exclaim "Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, to Him be glory in the church in Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen." (Eph. iii., 20, 21.) May our hearts humbly and reverently adore the unspeakable love and grace which have thought of us, and dealt with us, undone as we were, after so ineffable a manner!

What now devolves on us is to trace the sad but gradual departure from truth so elevated and surpassing, as found in the development of the New Teaching, and will first of all demonstrate how decidedly the author of this system could once speak and write concerning the "Mystery of the Christ."

In 1892 the following was what was taught :

"Now, beloved friends, all that I have presented on previous occasions has been connected with saints, individually, whether the promises, or the better hope, or eternal life. All those subjects refer to the blessings we are brought into and privileged to enjoy *individually*. It is evident that life refers to us individually. To-night I am going to bring before you, by the Lord's help, what refers to us *corporately*. The moment we come to the *mystery* in the sense of one body, we bring in the truth of *corporate* blessing. And *corporate* blessing, what we are as *one body* here (for that is the mystery) is according to the purpose of God." (The Counsel of God, pp. 75-6, F.E.R., Vol. I.)

"I just show you the *two sides* of the mystery: On the one that Christ has become the Head of a joint body composed of Jew and Gentile, and, on the other, that the Gentile has become a joint heir, and a joint body, and a joint partaker of God's promise in Christ." (*Ibid* p. 82.)

"Now, if Jew and Gentile were to be a joint body, do you think the Jew was to come down to the level of the Gentile? Such a thing could not be. On the other hand, was the Gentile to be put on the Jewish platform? Not at all, for that was all gone, because on that platform man had failed totally. The Gentile was not to be put on the Jewish platform, nor was the Jew to come down to the degraded Gentile, but both were to be on a completely new platform. The Jew was baptised by the Holy Ghost; that put him on new ground. The Gentile, too, received the Holy Ghost, which put him on the same ground—it made *one body* of them, for the secret of the one body is the possession of the Holy Ghost."

"And I say, without hesitation, that *union* must come *before* unity. If there were not union there really could not be *unity*. Unity flows properly from *union*, that is, we are *united* to Christ by the Holy Ghost, and, therefore, there is unity down here. When the Holy Ghost fell on the day of Pentecost, the saints were *united* to Christ, though I do not think they knew it. Then, afterwards, the Gentiles, too, received the gift of the Holy Ghost, and were *united* also to Christ. And thus both Jew and Gentile were a *joint body*, though as yet the truth of it had not come out," etc. "When we come to *corporate* truth we have to remember that it lies outside of our *individual* path on earth. Each has his *individual* path subject to the Lord. But then, outside that we have our *corporate* blessing, on completely new ground by the fact

of *union* with Christ in the reception of the Holy Ghost. That is a point of all moment, because it was not a sort of mutual concession or a kind of evangelical alliance, but that the Jew who had forfeited his place upon earth was, by the fact of his receiving the Holy Ghost, *united* to Christ in *heaven*, and the Gentile, having received the Holy Ghost, was *also* united, and, therefore, they were *one body* upon earth." (*Ibid* pp. 87-90.)

Its Confirmation in 1894 with Emphasis.

"Before I pass on to speak of the body, I want to give an idea of what *union* means, for it is a great point to start with." "No one can rightly ignore the truth of the *Church*, as Christ's *body*, because whether you know it or not you are *united* to Christ if you have the Holy Ghost. And hence the Apostle can say to the Corinthians 'he that is joined to the Lord is one Spirit.'" It is certain in regard to the most uninstructed Christian that he is united to Christ if he has received the Holy Ghost. It is a good thing to know the *value* of union, but that does not touch the *fact*. I should not be entitled to seek to understand union if I were not united. I could not understand it if I had not the thing itself, but, being united, I may seek to understand what the import of union is.

"Now, to guard against misapprehension, I feel it needful to say this: That when I speak of *union* I do *not* mean union in the sense of *marriage*. Marriage has sometimes been spoken of as the declaration of union, but I do not get that now. The church is espoused as a chaste virgin to Christ, and has the bride-place in that way, but when I speak of *union*, I mean ORGANIC UNION AS OF THE MEMBERS OF A BODY TO THE HEAD. It is very evident the Head was there before ever there was a body at all. Christ was set at God's right hand in the heavenly places before the Holy Ghost was given, then *union* was *effected*—it took place on the Day of Pentecost." (The Assembly in Four Aspects, pp. 10-12. F.E.R., Vol. ii).

This (virtually) is the mystery of Scripture, and is most explicitly and decidedly stated. Why was it not held fast, and adhered to? There could have been no such system, as that we are exposing, had the sound teaching of these quotations not been departed from.

Its Sorrowful Repudiation in 1895.

The same man who gave utterance to these emphatic declarations turns his back on them the year following in these words:—

"Further, I *think* it is a *mistake* to connect the thought of union with the body. Unity is what appears to me to be connected with that in Scripture. I did take up the PREVALENT IDEA that union was connected with the body." (Newcastle Notes, p. 146. also F.E.R. Vol. iii).

The first thing that is so striking here is the sudden indecision of the language compared with that he used before. It is no longer "I say without hesitation," but "I think." From the moment the fact of

union in connection with the body was denied, there was no certainty about anything, and this got worse and worse till it culminated in the American Readings (1898) which were simply a mass of "I thinks." The fall in so short a time was tremendous! What was God's truth in 1894 is called a "mistake" in 1895. The *body* was no longer a *unity* resulting from *union*, without which, it was said, there could be *no unity* at all. Then, mark, though the Scriptural facts as to union and unity were stated so lucidly in *words*, how little he could have made them his own, when he had to confess they were no more for him than a "prevalent idea" the very year after, *i.e.*, it was merely something he adopted because other people did so. Was this having it with the Divine certainty that it is God's truth, or slipping away from it? It was giving it up. Was this an advance morally? Far from it, and it has been drifting downwards ever after. Then, why were the former publications still circulated after this repudiation of the truth contained in them? Why was there not the honesty to withdraw them? Many were deceived as well as bewildered, especially by the "Assembly in Four Aspects," which was constantly being put into their hands. When the truth was no longer held, was it not like the circulation of false coin? Union, the very thing that made it what it is, being thus eliminated from the body, it became dissolved in this System into

Nothing more than a Band or Company.

So much was this the case, that you could not take up a New Teaching publication at that time without being confronted with "the company," "the company," *ad nauseam*. The instances are too numerous to quote, but, in 1898, I came across in one single Reading the repetition of "the company" more than twenty times; yet the church is never called a company. All the occurrences in the Acts, such as Chaps. iv. 23; xv. 22; xxi. 8 have no word for "company" in the original. Nor does the term "body" ever mean a company in the New Testament like a body of troops.

All reduced to Individual Units in 1902.

"Company" was then completely discarded by the author of the System, thus:—

"I cannot make out any defence of our position as a *company*. It is as individuals we have taken our stand outside the organizations that are accredited in Christendom, and we have not done so in order to form a Company." (Truth for the Time, Part xv., p. 21.)

"I do not understand a *collective* position." "I think our position is essentially *individual*. I cannot see any warrant for anything save what is *individual* in the present state of things." "I should not recognise a company. If I were asked to what company I belong, I should say 'to none.'" "Yes. The great point is that we must each individually be in faith. If anyone challenged me as to what I belong in Christendom, I should say 'to nothing.'" (*Ibid* pp. 38, 39, 43, 46). *Compare with first quotation 1892.*

Can anyone say this is progress or advancement? It has all been a going *down*, not up; a *descent*, not an ascent. The truth of the *mystery* clearly taught in 1892, and corroborated in 1894, with *union* as in a human body insisted on in order to *unity* that is characteristic of a *body*; in 1895 *union* denied of the body, which dissolved it into a *company*, this holding the field till 1902, when company itself was *rejected*, (nothing *collective*, much less *corporate*, being allowed), and all reduced to what is *individual*!

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