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REVELATION

SPIRITUALLY UNDERSTOOD

PART 23

REVELATION 19

Total Victory of Christ

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REVELATION SPIRITUALLY UNDERSTOOD

PART TWENTY-THREE

TOTAL VICTORY OF CHRIST

Revelation 19

“After these things...” “These words relate not to a succession of events, but to a new phase in the series of visions. The Book of Revelation is not a record of historical events in unbroken sequence. Prophecy is not like that. What we have in this Book is a constant repetition in varying pictures, of one great principle presented in a variety of changing forms, making the entire Book applicable to all the generations and experiences of the Church throughout her long pilgrimage through time to eternity. This principle must never be lost sight of, great though the temptation may be to give an exclusive application of some vivid, striking picture to some contemporary event or condition. We must be taught by the example of the letters to the Seven Churches of chapters 2 and 3, that the conditions represented by those Churches at the time of writing were prophetic of the Church’s condition right throughout her history, while at the same time recognising that they may also show, in succession, the various phases of the Church’s experience in the passage of time. So Laodicea, the last of the Seven might well represent the Last Apostasy, while at the same time reflecting a condition to which all Churches are liable at any point in history.

“... I heard a great voice of much people in heaven ...” It is comforting to know, despite appearances, that the number of those in heaven is very great indeed - a ‘great multitude which no man can number of all nations, and kindreds, and peoples, and tongues’ (Rev. 7:9). On earth we have no means of measuring that multitude. We have no difficulty in including all who die in infancy of whose blessed destiny we can have no doubt whatever in view of the dear Saviour’s words, “Suffer them to come unto me, for of such is the kingdom of heaven”.

The scripture fulfilled in the dreadful massacre of the innocents of Bethlehem over the birth of Christ - unconscious martyrs for the cause of Christ - fills us with a quiet assurance that all is well with the little ones who, though born of Adam’s fallen race, yet have no actual sins of their own. Here therefore the remainder of the passage left unquoted by Matthew from Jeremiah 31:15-17 –“Thus saith the

Lord, refrain thy voice from weeping and thine eyes from tears they shall come again from the land of the enemy”

We are not permitted to know all mysteries down here below, and must pursue our commission to let the whole wide world know that Jesus Christ is Lord and Saviour. We are ever mindful of the Saviour's warning, “Few there be that find it...” but despite all appearances to the contrary we are also encouraged here to expect, there will be ‘much people’ in heaven. We are prepared to leave unanswered the questions which it pleases God to leave unanswered, repelling all fleshly curiosity and not prying into those things which it has pleased God to keep secret till the Great Day.

“... saying, Alleluia: salvation and glory and power, unto the Lord our God.” This is the first of the four Alleluias (Greek for what in the Hebrew is “Hallelujah”, meaning “Praise the Lord”), ensuing in the opening verses of our chapter.

THE FOURFOLD HALLELUJAH

What we are seeing in this chapter is the victorious end to what God planned when by an all-creative act; He made the heavens and the earth. He made the world for Himself as a field wherein to unveil Himself and make visible what He is, in all the perfection, wisdom and truth of His Being. So our chapter 19 begins with this FOURFOLD HALLELUJAH. Hallelujah, Hengstenberg reminds us, occurs only here in the whole of the New Testament. “It is borrowed” he says, “from the Psalms, of which fifteen either begin or end with Hallelujah.” The Hebrew means “PRAISE YE THE LORD”. Hengstenberg states that this magnificent word “has its original place Psalm 104:35, and there can be scarcely any doubt that allusion is here made (in Rev. 19) especially to that passage. It is there said, Sinners shall be consumed out of the earth, and the wicked shall be no more. Bless thou the Lord O my soul. Praise ye the LORD.”

Hengstenberg continues, “The sinners are the wicked heathen host gathered together against the Lord and His kingdom. By her Hallelujah, the Church of the Lord, amid the great tribulations which she had to suffer from the world, had stirred herself up to faith and confidence. It was the shield she held up against despair; and now with it the heavenly church celebrates the victory over the worldly power. The triumphant Hallelujah looks back to that which was of old sung in the vale of tears. The preservation of the Hebrew word, as also is the case with Amen and Hosanna serves like a fingerpost to mark the internal connection between the Church of the New Testament and that of the Old.”

Further, Hengstenberg points out that the doxology with which chapter 19 of Revelation begins, “Rests upon the doxology of the Lord’s Prayer in Matthew 6:13 - Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory for ever, Amen” -

“I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia; Salvation and glory and honour and power, unto the Lord our God”. (Rev. 19:1)

Here Hengstenberg has a note which should deter some who are abandoning the Authorised Version, and omitting from the Lord’s Prayer this doxology. For its genuineness in the Lord’s Prayer Dr. Hengstenberg says the quotation in Rev. 19 affords decisive evidence, and shows that the omission in certain copies only arose from its having been omitted by Luke (see Luke 11:2-4). Luke’s account relates to a later occasion in our Lord’s ministry, when the doxology was omitted because of the altered context.

The fourfold Hallelujah in our chapter is based on the symbolic nature of the number four which in Scripture is always used as the signature of Creation. Hence this prophetic construction in chapter 19 indicates the divine sovereignty over all creation, and by consequence the full and final achievement of the divine and holy purposes of God, who made all things, and made them not in vain.

The first Hallelujah is linked (in verse 2) to the downfall of the Satanic system represented by ‘the great whore’ (Babylon) which had corrupted the world for so long by her false and delusive religion. At last she pays the price for her corruption to the earth and the shedding of the blood of Christ’s servants in age after age (see verse 2).

The second Hallelujah (verse 3) confirms the righteous judgment of God and shows that the doom of the false bride, Babylon, is perpetual – “Her smoke rose up for ever and ever”. The last judgment will see the perpetual end of all which disturbs the harmony of creation. The doom of the wicked will be seen at the last, to be a matter for praise of the righteous judgment of God.

The third Hallelujah (v.4) is preceded by the word, Amen, which is the token of approval of the divine judgment, and the finality of the doom pronounced upon the entire Satanic conspiracy. This third Hallelujah is sounded by the ‘four and twenty elders, and the four beasts (cherubim)’ whose acquaintance we first made in chapter 4 where the elders symbolise the completed church of Old and New Testaments (the double twelve), and the Cherubim are the voice of animate creation which gives back to its Creator the glory and praise which is due. These

assessors of the divine wisdom, holiness and truth show the perfection of all God's works, and the glorious outcome of all that the Lord ever set out to do.

The fourth Hallelujah (v. 6) is the magnificent climax of all. George Frederick Handel made it the subject of the greatest piece of music ever heard on earth (or ever will be heard). It is the voice of the glorious company of the redeemed of all ages, with the seraphic assent of the peerless angelic company, proclaiming,

“Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.”

It is, says John, “as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings”.

This swelling chorus concludes with the refrain,

“Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready.”

THE PURPOSE OF CREATION - A MARRIAGE

The end of all creation is a marriage - a marriage between Christ and the glorified beings whom He has redeemed by His own blood. That all creation should end at the marriage altar - that the parties should be God and Man, with the angels as witnesses - is beyond science and can only be understood by those who have the foretaste of it already in their hearts.

When we come to the last two chapters of Revelation we shall have larger opportunity to examine the glorious prospect which lies before redeemed humanity, but meanwhile we note that the true history of Man begins and ends in a Garden. The lower Eden, which means “Delight” is a parable of the Upper Eden, the Garden of God (see Rev. 22). There the Bride at last meets her Beloved, never to part again. A different story this, from that invented by the Devil in hell, that Man evolved from a disgusting past and suddenly became a poet, a philosopher, a musician, an artist, yet has no credible future. Satan hates Man because he hates God in whose image Man was originally created, and hence Satan has invented the fable of man's inglorious origin and so has laid the foundations of modern unbelief. Man no longer has a credible future, nor has the universe which is his home. Modern unbelief has made man wholly insignificant, but the Bible has a different story to tell - a story which Satan hates because it involved him originally in his own ruin.

The Bible assures us that Man was made for God, to exhibit the divine likeness, and bear the divine glory. The fall of Man did not quench that hope or forbid that destiny. God will bring a greater good out of dreadful evil, sorrow, pain and death. From man's ruined creation will spring a glorious bride, outshining the angels in her splendour. Eve was created from the wounded side of the Man. She exists because of him and not he because of her. When the mystery of God is finished, she who exists only for Christ and who has no life but His life; who comes forth out of His sleep of death in the Garden tomb, taken from His wounded side - His bride, His Church, shall be brought unto Him at the end of the days in raiment of needlework (Psalm 45 - denoting her virgin state, for Him alone) and this shall be the glorious end of Creation.

But taken from His wounded side... Is this the meaning of that last thrust of the lance at Calvary? Thank you, Roman soldier: You taught us better than we knew....

The believer should not have any doubt as to the final outcome of God's work in creation. The Lord cannot be defeated - the Cross proves that. He permits evil to be and then submits Himself to all that evil can do to defeat or thwart His gracious purpose. He suffers the Evil One to continue, only that creation should ultimately be enriched by such a revelation of Himself and such an unveiling of Himself as Eternal Love, as could not otherwise be possible. It is thus that sorrow is turned into rejoicing, and the final splendour answers all questions and dispels all mysteries.

Verse 8: The Bride appears in her marriage robes of 'fine linen, white and clean' (explained for us as 'the righteousness of saints'). Her garment is no garment at all but is the bright outshining of that righteousness which she has in Christ - the unsullied beauty and glory of the divine perfections with which the church is henceforth clothed, and forever.

John falls at the feet of the angel who unfolds to him these mysteries (v.10), to render to him the worship of honour deemed to be due to the angelic messenger. This angelic dignitary is the same as he whom we met in the first verse of the Apocalypse - "He sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John". Now at the end of the vision (for the remainder of the Book of Revelation is only the amplification of this glorious ending) John would render thanks to the angel who had guided him through all the perils and trials which the Church (whom John represented) was to endure for twenty centuries thereafter, much as Dante in his great epic poem felt the debt he owed to the spirit of the poet Virgil by whom he

was guided through Inferno and Purgatorio to the borders of Paradise.

The angel quickly rebukes John: “See thou do it not. I am thy fellow servant, and (the fellow-servant also) of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus. Worship God ...” John of course was not guilty of the folly of rendering to an angel the worship due to God alone. Worship in its various forms is the respect we owe to any through whom we receive kindness and help. It is proper in English to address men in position of authority as ‘Your Honour’ or ‘Your Worship’ and even (in the case of judges), ‘My lord.’ But John’s angel would have no such deference.

Hengstenberg compares the deference shown by John to the angel, with the case of Cornelius who fell down at Peter’s feet and ‘worshipped’ (Acts 10:25). Peter raised the good man from the ground saying, “Stand up; I myself also am a man”. Says Hengstenberg, “It was becoming in Cornelius to take into view the surpassing dignity of Peter, in whose person the church was represented, and to fulfill the word spoken in Isaiah 49:23. It was likewise becoming in Peter to give expression to the other side of the matter, that of the equality of all men before God.”

Perhaps we should recall here the contrary example of George Fox, founder of the Quakers, who declined to remove his hat in the presence of dignitaries. No doubt Fox went to the other extreme and failed to realise that all honour should be paid to those to whom honour is due (Romans 13:7).

Hengstenberg adds, “The God of the Bible will be honoured in those who bear His image, and who fulfill His offices. He will be honoured in father and mother, in the men of grey hairs (Leviticus 19:32), in princes (Exodus 22:28), in judges (Deuteronomy 1:16-17) and hence also in His heavenly messengers. It is godless to refuse this honour by its natural expression in the bowing of the body” (and we might add, in the salute, the curtsy, the raising of the hat, etc.). In the case of John and the angel, the latter forbade the honour for as the messenger of the Lord he was only acting as John himself was acting, as a ‘fellow servant’ in the transmission of the divine message of the Church. Similarly the angel forbids the honour in chapter 22:8-9, where again he indicates that John’s office in the matter was the equivalent of his (the angel’s) – “See thou do it not: for I am thy fellow servant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God”.

The concluding words of this angel are indeed remarkable -

“The testimony of Jesus is the Spirit of prophecy.”

The word arises out of the declaration immediately before, as the angel gently but firmly refuses the 'worship' of John – "I am thy fellow servant, and (the fellow servant likewise) of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus".

The profundity of the angel's words are what we might expect from such an utterance direct from heaven. The prophetic word, both in the Old and New Testaments, has this in common - to present, declare, and unfold, the glorious mystery of Christ as the source, and the object, of all that God has to say through the Spirit. It is in this largest sense that Dr. Chalmers understood this statement of the angel, and though many commentators have either ignored it or repudiated this fulness of meaning, we hold, with Dr. Chalmers, that the entire principle of prophecy is here being declared. Prophecy is about Christ. He is the centre of it all from the earliest divine utterances in Genesis to the final word to John in Rev. 22, "Surely I come quickly," with John's concluding response, in which all the Church concurs, from the days of Adam to the moment of His appearing who fulfills all things in Himself – "Amen. Even so come, Lord Jesus".

The first word of the Bible is a creative word – "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth and God said, Let there be light...." Compare the opening words of the Gospel of John – "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God". Compare also Genesis 3:15 – "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed. It shall bruise thy head and thou shalt bruise his heel".

Christ is God's uncreated Word. When we read of the day of creation, "God said, Let there be light and there was light" - we are not to suppose that a voice rang through some great non-existing void. God speaking is God putting forth His almighty power, and that power is Himself. But John assures us in his gospel that the Word God spake was Christ, the Eternal Son who was ever in the bosom of the Father, the Second Person of the glorious Trinity - in the beginning with God, and who was in fact God, and by Him all things were made. It is manifest that He is excluded from that creative act, because God cannot make Himself - therefore the Word which proceeded from God was God in the mystery of the Second Person, by whom all things were made. From the Father and the Son together the one Eternal Spirit of Life proceeded - the Spirit moved upon the face of the deep, as the eagle broods over the nest till life is kindled and brought forth. This is the mystery of the Holy Trinity.

The whole of the Bible continues the story of the unfolding of the divine Being, fully revealed at last in the Babe in Bethlehem where God Incarnate entered into

His own creation for the purpose of redeeming it. This is what the angel was declaring to John. The Spirit of prophecy presents the mystery of God in Christ. This is the great end of Creation and the means by which God fulfils Himself and unveils the glory and wonder of His Being.

The Jew is not the key to prophecy as some good men have it who have not learned yet what is the true spirit of prophecy. Christ is the key, and Christ came and died for all men, not for a favoured nation. It was the world which God loved, and gave His only begotten Son to die for it that whosoever (Jew or gentile) believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

A world made without a plan or a purpose could never be God's world, and therefore we must attend to the "Spirit of prophecy" - and prophecy is the assurance that all is planned from the beginning and must infallibly come to pass. But that "Spirit of prophecy" is concentrated on one only object, Jesus the Son of God, God incarnate, true Man and true God in one glorious Person in whom is manifested all that the Father is - and He is ETERNAL LOVE.

Formal theology we must have, to cover the vast range of Divine knowledge made available in the written Word, but not formal theology as an end in itself, but only as it is the means by which divinity is seen to be centred upon the eternal Son. We are glad that the angel said to John that "The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy," because Jesus is the name of His manhood, and it is through His manhood that the divine Being shines forth, and we know what our God is like. The promise in Eden was that the seed of the woman must obtain the victory over the serpent power which caused the Fall of Man. All human history is clustered around that expectation, and the whole Bible is the story of its long awaited fulfillment. That our God should appear as 'a man of sorrows acquainted with grief' is not any part of the wisdom of man. No-one could have guessed that it would be that way. Jewish unbelief rejected it out of hand - not only at Calvary but long before that Mystery. How often was Christ repudiated in the person of kings, prophets and righteous men, in the past ages? How often since, has antichrist raged against the true church? How often has Babylon boasted that she is the Bride of Christ and bitterly persecuted the Woman who brought forth with much travail, the Manchild? Yet this is the true history of the world. All else is the mere drapery of history. Always it is the testimony of Jesus which is the spirit of prophecy, and so it will be to the end.

THE FOURFOLD NAME – FIRST - FAITHFUL AND TRUE

All is now ready for the last act in the divine drama of the ages. All is set for the last battle. The despised and rejected Nazarene appears on His white horse, His eyes as a flame of fire, on His head many crowns, out of His mouth a sharp sword, all powerful to destroy all foes, ready to tread the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. All is set for the last battle. What is His Name? Here it is fourfold, and as we have already seen that four in the Bible is the number of universality, we must examine this fourfold Name to discover the secret of the final victory over all the power of darkness.

“And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war”. (v.11)

We have seen this Rider before. At the beginning of the story we saw him (chapter 6:2) commencing His glorious career, riding forth conquering and to conquer. That was in a day when the Church’s troubles were just beginning on the Isle of Patmos. Mounted on the white horse of spotless purity, He was then crowned with a single diadem, to denote His kingly authority to lead the armies of the Lord to victory. Now we see Him crowned with many crowns, denoting the long career of total victory now complete, during which He has added to Himself all the crowns of conquered foes which have fallen to His bow.

We now have the first of the names given to Him to denote His faithfulness, His puissance, His glorious achievement of all the Father gave Him to do. His name is called “Faithful and True”.

It is upon the faithfulness of our God and the truth of His Word that all hopes rest. Unless we have this assurance concerning the divine nature we can have no real confidence. The stability of all things, the ground of all our expectation, depends on the faithfulness of God to His own Word, and it is a most formidable proof of the absolute deity of Christ that this peerless divine attribute is ascribed to Him. Moses is among the first to instruct the Lord’s people in this aspect of God’s holiness, in his last words to the tribes in the wilderness:

“Know therefore that the Lord thy God, he is God, THE FAITHFUL GOD, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations”. - Deuteronomy 7:9

THE FAITHFUL HIGH PRIEST PROMISED

When the faithless line of Israel's priests was broken in the days of Eli and Samuel, God promised to raise up in its place, "a faithful priest that shall do according to that which is in mine heart and in my mind: and I will build him a sure house; and he shall walk before my anointed for ever" (1 Sam. 2:35). This remarkable verse clearly foreshadows Christ in His twofold office of Priest and King. The Speaker's Commentary fully concurs in this and points out that the phrase, "he shall walk before mine anointed for ever" uses the word MESSIAH where in English it is ANOINTED. Likewise the Greek Septuagint translation of the OT uses here the title CHRIST which is of course the exact equivalent in Greek of the Hebrew MESSIAH, both meaning ANOINTED.

"Doubtless" adds the Speaker's Commentary, "the use of the term Messiah here and at verse 10, is significant, and points to the Lord's Christ, in whom the royal and priestly offices are united. In this connection the substitution of the (Levitical) priesthood by a new priesthood after the order of Melchizedec may be foreshadowed under this verse". (See Hebrews 7)

See also Heb. 2:17; 3:2; 10:23; 11:11

Paul assures the Thessalonians that the Lord is "faithful" who would establish them (2 Thessalonians 3:3), and also reminds Timothy that "He abideth faithful". (2 Tim. 2:13).

In our Book of Revelation Christ is described as "the faithful witness" (Rev. 1:5), and again "The faithful and true witness" (Rev. 3:14). Christ says of Himself in Rev. 21:5 – "Write, for these things are true and faithful" - words which are echoed in the last chapter by the angel, "These things are faithful and true" (Rev. 22:6).

In His parting counsels in the Upper Room, Christ describes Himself as "The Truth" (John 14:6) and a little later identifies that Spirit who dwelt in Him as "The Spirit of Truth" (v.17). "He is another" says the Speaker's Commentary, "Yet such that in this coming (of the Spirit) Christ too may be said to come" (v.18). The deity of Christ, as One with the Father and with the Holy Spirit wonderfully flashes out in John, chapter 16:7 – "It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away the Comforter will not come unto you: but if I depart, I will send him unto you". Who is this who "sends" the very Spirit of God, the Spirit of Truth? Only one who is God has such attributes of divinity and this Oneness in Three Glorious Persons.

THE SECOND NAME - THE INCOMMUNICABLE

Verse 12 introduces us to the second name attributed to our Saviour, but it is the most mysterious name of all because it is inexpressible. John writes, “He had a name written that no man knew, but he himself”. This is the incommunicable name of deity. Nor man nor angel can pronounce that Name. Only God can comprehend God.

At the Burning Bush (Exodus 3) Moses asked for the Name of God, and the Lord answered “I AM THAT I AM” - that is, God is only known to Himself and His Name is incommunicable. Those who object saying that God had already declared His name to be Jehovah, speak too readily. The Name Jehovah is derived in fact from the sentence pronounced at the Burning Bush and means precisely the same – “I AM”. All other ‘names’ which are introduced as referring to God are simply descriptive titles. That Christ should have a name written upon Him in John’s vision - a name which could not be known except to Himself, places Christ on an equality with the Father and the Holy Spirit in the Unity of the Godhead. True, he bears the human name JESUS, but only as man, the child of Mary. Outside the Gospels Christ is seldom referred to by His personal human Name alone, but usually with Lord, or Christ preceding or following - a plain indication that we should be very cautious about speaking of the Redeemer by His personal Name alone. Reverence requires that we refer to Him as “The Lord Jesus Christ”. On the few occasions outside the Gospels where He is spoken of directly as “Jesus” there is always a special reason, as in Philippians 2:10 – “At the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, in earth, and under the earth”. Readers will not require an explanation for this notable exception to the rule in such a tremendous verse as that, which places upon the Eternal Throne One who is true Man as well as God. Matthew and Luke record that profound saying of the Lord: “No man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him”. (Matthew 11:27; Luke 10:22)

The incarnate Son of God is given in the prophecy of Isaiah a multiple Name - ”Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace” (Isaiah 9:6). The first of these names, WONDERFUL, occurs much earlier in history when the Angel of the Lord appeared unto Manoah and his wife, to whom Samson was to be born. They inquired after the name of the Angel who replied, “Why askest thou thus after my name, SEEING IT IS SECRET”. (Judges 13:17-18) That ‘angel’ was Christ in one of His pre-incarnation appearances as ‘the angel of the Lord’. The word for SECRET in Judges 13 is the same name

translated WONDERFUL in Isaiah 9.

Jacob's encounter with the Lord at Peniel had a similar conclusion. Surely nothing in the long history of mankind has anything comparable with this - that man should wrestle with God AND PREVAIL, so that when morning began to dawn the Lord said, "Let me go for the day breaketh" "I will not" said this peerless Jacob, "except thou bless me". Then he inquired after the Name of His mystic adversary, who replied, "Wherefore is it that thou dost ask after my name?" Jacob must be satisfied with that, and so must we.

Charles Wesley (great Charles Wesley!) felt he must go just one step beyond where Jacob halted, and in his greatest of hymns, Wrestling Jacob they call it, and at verse 6, he puts himself in Jacob's shoes and prevails -

Yield to me now for I am weak,
But confident in self-despair:
Speak to my heart, in blessings speak,
Be conquered by my instant prayer:
Speak, or thou never hence shall move,
And tell me if THY NAME IS LOVE.

The conflict is conceded, and the poet triumphs over deity - as deity loves to be so overcome. Yet in how much wrestling must the soul engage, till it is empty enough, and defeated enough, to conquer in weakness. The Lord Himself was crucified through weakness, but liveth by the power of God (2 Cor. 13:4).

Yet the poet's success really only enlarges the mystery of the Divine Name. Love is not a name, but is what God IS. But what is LOVE? It is God, we reply not knowing what we say, until we go to Bethlehem, to the Garden, to Calvary -and then to the empty tomb, to learn to say with Mary - "My Lord and my God". For love is not defined. It is what God is. Yet so far from that answering our question it only leaves the solution more mysterious than before, and we say with Paul, tremulously, wonderingly, scarcely able to frame the words, "...the Son of God loved me, and gave Himself for me...." (Galatians 2:20)

That is His Name, which no man knows in the depths of its mystery, though we get glimmerings of it in favoured moments when our souls are raptured for a moment - and then find ourselves again in this lower world, crying, "How long, Lord...."

THE THIRD NAME - THE DIVINE WORD

V.13: “His name is called THE WORD OF GOD.”

He who is God’s Word is the possessor of the divine nature, and is God. This is what the divine John says in the opening of his Gospel, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and THE WORD WAS GOD”. Paul puts it another way, “Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God”. (1 Cor. 1:24)

When God speaks it is not as when man speaks, Bengel says: “If the internal word did not already exist in our own mind, it could not be brought forth in speech. God speaks! How profound and eternal must that be which He brings forth”.

God’s speech is the putting forth of what He is, in eternal, unchangeable, never-beginning, never-ending Wisdom, Love and Power. When God said, “Let there be light” - and there was light, He was calling natural law into being. Light is the basic fact of Creation. When God ‘said’ we are not to suppose a voice was heard in the chaos, for His very speech was the creative act by which all natural law began to be. No sound shook the void. His speech was the putting forth of His power, which in this case was the putting forth of Himself, as John tells us in the beginning of his Gospel – “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him and without Him was nothing made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men ...” Here we are dealing not with a power as such, but with a Person. That which God put forth is Himself. God is not a reservoir of power. He IS power. The putting forth of His power is the putting forth of Himself. That putting forth of Himself brings into view the Second Person, the Son “by whom also he made the worlds” - Hebrews 1:2. That which proceeds from God is God, and that which proceeds from the Father and the Son together is also God - God the Holy Ghost. The Spirit of God as the Third Person is clearly shown in Romans 8:9 in the 'double procession' from the Father and the Son.

That Solomon had this sublime knowledge there can be no doubt, for in that mystic chapter 8 of Proverbs he clearly shows that before all creation, Christ was that Wisdom by which God created all things. If Christ was the Creative Wisdom of God, then He (the Son) must be uncreated, else there must have been a wisdom before wisdom. See Proverbs 8:22-31. Solomon’s inspired knowledge of these things is marvelously testified in that mysterious and little understood 30th chapter of Proverbs where (verse 4) he sets the proposition:

“Who hath ascended up into heaven, or descended? Who hath gathered the wind in his fists? Who hath bound the waters in a garment? Who hath established all the ends of the earth? What is his name, and what is HIS SON’S NAME, if thou canst tell?”

These words are referred to by Christ Himself in His conversation with Nicodemus (John 3:13) to set the thoughts of that inquiring man in the direction of discovering the true divinity of the expected Messiah. Only one who is Himself God can achieve our salvation and defend His people to the end.

CRUDEN’S NOTE ON “THE WORD”

Cruden has a magnificent note in his Concordance, introducing the use of “WORD” for the designation of Christ as the Eternal Son of the Father. He writes, “WORD: In Hebrew, DABAR, in Greek REMA, or LOGOS. It signifies the Eternal Son of God, the uncreated Wisdom, the second Person of the most holy Trinity, equal and consubstantial with the Father. John, more expressly than any other, has opened the mystery of this Word when he tells us, In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God... Christ Jesus was called the Word (1) In respect of His Person, he being the express image of the Father. (2) In respect of His office, because the Father made known His will to the Church in all ages by Him, as we declare our minds one to another by our words, John 3:34. (3) Because the Messiah was called the Word of God by the Jews. The Chaldee Paraphrasts, the most ancient Jewish writers extant, generally make use of the word MEMRA, which signifies the WORD, in those places where Moses puts the name Jehovah. And it is generally thought that under this term the Paraphrasts would intimate the Son of God, the Second Person of the Trinity. Now their testimony is so much the more considerable, as having lived before Christ, or at the time of Christ, they are irrefragable witnesses of the sentiments of their nation concerning this article, since their Targum, or Explication, has always been and still is, in universal esteem among the Jews. And as they ascribe to MEMRA all the attributes of Deity, it is concluded from thence that they believed the divinity of the Word. They say that it was the MEMRA or the WORD which created the world; which appealed to Moses on Mount Sinai; which gave him the Law, which spoke to him face to face; which brought Israel out of Egypt; which marched before the people; which wrought all those miracles which are recorded in the book of Exodus. It was the same Word which appeared to Abraham at Mamre; that was seen of Jacob at Bethel, to whom Jacob made his vow and acknowledged Him as God.”

THE FOURTH NAME - KING AND LORD OF ALL

“And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written,
KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS” - v.16.

This title denotes the absolute sovereignty of Christ over all the powers of this world, and of the world of the unseen. Neither man nor devil can successfully challenge His right or His rule. Believers should be assured that God has never abandoned to other powers the rulership of His dominions. Appearances to the contrary notwithstanding, the Lord reigneth, let the earth keep silence before Him. When Satan rages, and the dark powers of hell appear to be carrying all before them it is but to lead them to their own ruinous shame. Nebuchadnezzar was a great monarch, and it was he who destroyed Jerusalem and its temple, but he was only God’s executioner though he knew it not. Later when Daniel showed the meaning of the king’s dream of the great image of gold, silver, brass, iron and clay, Nebuchadnezzar's heathen heart was shaken with wonder, and he declared, “Of a truth, your God is a God of gods, and a Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets” - echoing without knowing it the words of Moses the Man of God, uttered eight centuries before, “The Lord your God is God of gods, and Lord of lords, a great God, a mighty and a terrible”. (Deuteronomy 10:17)

Nebuchadnezzar was a long time learning his lessons. He threw three of the servants of this great God into a fiery furnace because they would not obey his ferocious, heathenish decree. He saw them unharmed, walking in the midst of the flames with Another whose form, said the king (no doubt under a divine impulse), was ‘like the Son of God’ (Dan. 3). Still with pride unbroken, this Chaldean monarch had his reason taken away and was reduced to the status of a beast, until the mercy of God restored him. A truly converted man now, he records, “At the end of the days I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted up mine eyes to heaven, and mine understanding returned to me, and I blessed the most High, and I praised and honoured him that liveth for ever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is for ever and ever”. (Daniel 4:34)

Thus one of the greatest of world conquerors humbly acknowledged that he had no power but of God, who liveth for ever and whose kingdom endures throughout all generations. That same Son of God he saw walking in the midst of the fire, is similarly described in our verse - King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

This is the name which Christ wears on vesture and thigh. Who else but the Eternal God is king overall, as Moses and Nebuchadnezzar alike acknowledge? Yet this

title is given to Christ and can any now deny that Jesus Christ is Lord and God for ever and ever? This honour is His because He is the eternal Son of God, without beginning or ending. He could not otherwise bear the Father's honour and glory or sustain in Himself the omnipotent rule over all. Cults and sects which do not perceive this, must surely be blind and perverted. Better for them to surrender their Bibles than to pervert them.

As for those in established churches who have departed from the Bible and acknowledge no infallibility but the infallibility of unbelief (their own unbelief) we can do them no good till they turn again to behold in deepest humility such a glorious picture as this (and so necessary to the welfare of mankind) of One who is named King of Kings and Lord of Lords, who not only wears the panoply of heaven so emblazoned with this Name, but who wears equally proudly our own human nature and whose destiny is to go forth conquering and to conquer until all foes and all evil powers are made His footstool. What hope is there for Man if this be not true?

THE SPIRITUAL ARMAGEDDON

“And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war.

His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself.

And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God.

And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean.

And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.

And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.”

These words introduce the last great battle between the forces of light and darkness, generally known as “Armageddon” though this name does not occur in

this description. There are probably few subjects in prophecy which have been subjected to such maltreatment as that suffered by the battle referred to by this name. It is a favourite ground, alike for our own respected but sadly mistaken prophetic writers, as for the apocalyptic sects which have arisen chiefly in America. Frightful descriptions have been offered on every hand to show the involvement of the Jewish people in this 'battle' supposed to take place in the plain of Esdraelon to the north of Palestine where Deborah and Barak overthrew the army of Sisera, and, centuries later, where good king Josiah lost his life warring against Pharaoh Necho of Egypt.

The fallacious nature of these sensational expectations concerning the supposedly imminent conflict on this fateful field, is exposed immediately by the verses quoted above, which all and sundry appear to overlook. The battle is not an earthly battle at all. It is a spiritual battle between the forces of light and, darkness, for it is a battle between 'the armies of heaven' (see v.14 above) led by none other than Christ Himself, and those of Satan. It seems incredible that this simple fact should have been lost in the deluge of paper propaganda and speculation which has disguised the entire nature of and meaning of this great 'battle'. We intend when we submit our commentary on the next chapter (chap. 20) to prove that the great battle there described is the same as that in chapter 19 -another separate account of the same final encounter, not separated by a thousand years from the event of chapter 19, but (as is the manner of the Book of Revelation) a special and supplementary account of the event in chapter 19.

We begin by drawing attention to the symbolic description of Christ and His army in the verses quoted above. The symbolism is clear. Christ does not ride to war on a white horse, nor do the armies of heaven- the holy angels - who also are symbolically mounted upon white chargers, and neatly dressed for bloody conflict in fine linen white and clean. Nor does Christ have a sharp sword proceeding from His mouth to smite the nations. All these figures are either ignored by the speculative writers of today, or embarrassingly intermingled as types where all else is presented as literal fact.

Let us therefore proceed to details.

CHRIST'S VESTURE DIPPED IN BLOOD

We note that Christ is clothed in 'a vesture dipped in blood'. This is not His own blood shed for a sinful world on the Cross, but the blood of His foes. This is made clear in the passage from which the description is taken, Isaiah 63:1-6:

“Wherefore art thou red in thine apparel, and thy garments like him that treadeth in the winefat?

I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the people there was none with me: for I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury; and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment.

For the day of vengeance is in mine heart, and the year of my redeemed is come.

And I looked, and there was none to help; and I wondered that there was none to uphold: therefore mine own arm brought salvation unto me; and my fury, it upheld me.

And I will tread down the people in mine anger, and make them drunk in my fury, and I will bring down their strength to the earth.”

The vesture dipped in blood therefore is the token of the complete triumph of Christ over all the foes of His Church.

“The armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean” (v. 14). These are the angelic forces which are ever marshaled in defence of the people of God. Their presence here, with Christ at the head, are a token that the ensuing battle is not a visible one fought on earth with earthly weapons - the kind of Armageddon so beloved by the Literalists of all parties, including the heretical sects which are abounding more and more. Indeed the only weapon observed on this battlefield on the side of the forces of light, is the sword which proceeds from the mouth of Christ (v.15) - which we already know to be no weapon of earthly manufacture, but THE WORD OF GOD. Likewise the white cavalry of heaven is symbolic of the righteousness of the cause in which they are engaged. Such cavalry and weaponry belong to no earthly battle fought between contending armies on a little plain to the north of Palestine - and away goes all the exciting and imaginative predictions of a bloody battle shortly to be fought on that ancient battleground -a battle which eager imagination sees as ending in a horrible disposal scene of some 200,000,000 corpses!

THE NAME ARMAGEDDON MISSING

Much play has been made by writers who use the term “Armageddon” to describe this battle fought against the two agents of Satan, the beast and the false prophet, in chapter 19, but in fact the name ‘Armageddon’ does not occur in this chapter. Indeed the only place in the whole Bible where the name ‘Armageddon’ occurs is in Rev. 16:16, where it relates to “the battle of the great day of God Almighty” (v.14) and is part of the events related to the pouring out of the sixth Vial. See our commentary on that verse (in loc.).

John forms this name from Megiddo, where King Josiah fell in battle with Pharaoh-Necho. As a place name, Megiddo occurs eight times in the OT. Once only it appears as Megiddon, in the prophecy of Zechariah 12:11. That John should add a new dimension to the word should warn us that we are being carried beyond mere literal interpretation.

For a full discussion of the significance of the name Armageddon, readers should refer to Serial Number 047-20 – ARMAGEDDON of this series. There we endeavour to show that Armageddon is not a literal battle fought with carnal weapons, but (as the manufactured name indicates) the battle of the Gospel, a spiritual conflict fought on the only ground on which Satan can be confronted and overcome - the battleground of the Word of God, according to that superlative definition, “The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy” (Rev. 19:10).

The identity of this ‘battle’ with that of “Armageddon” rests entirely on the quotations made from the description of the great battle in Ezekiel chapters 38 and 39, where the uncountable host of Magog, led by their chief prince Gog assembles to destroy the Lord’s people in the latter days. The conflict later described in Revelation 20, is likewise derived from the same chapters of Ezekiel and this has an important bearing upon the unity of these chapters. It is important to note however that nowhere does Ezekiel refer to any such place as Armageddon, (or even Megiddo). Only in Rev. 16:16 does Armageddon occur and nowhere else in the Bible. Our friends who speak so confidently of this Battle of Armageddon have not done justice to this strange fact. Indeed, we have no doubt that most of them are learning of it for the first time as they read these lines.

ARMAGEDDON - A SPIRITUAL BATTLE

The description of this mysterious battle in Rev. 19 bears all the marks of a spiritual conflict, because it rages between an army in heaven and one upon earth,

the heavenly army being led by Christ on a white horse (proof positive of the emblematic nature of this battle), and the army of earth by two characters known as the Beast and the False Prophet who are not men at all, or even devils, but emblems of the power of this world in opposition to the testimony of Christ (unless we are prepared to hold literally that the character known as The Beast has seven heads and ten horns, and his companion is also a beast with two horns). We have a greater respect for our opponents than to suppose they will take these characters literally, but when in their honesty they concede their emblematic nature they must also concede the emblematic nature of the battle which is fought. We have shown already by the fact that it is a conflict between heaven and earth that it is not a battle which is fought on earthly ground at all, but in the region of the spirit - the conflict eternally waged between the forces of light and darkness.

The figure must be relentlessly pursued. To give the bodies of the slain as carrion to the birds of the air is an Old Testament figure showing the utter and absolute overthrow of the enemy and their contemptible end. The origin of the figure is the confrontation between David and Goliath, where the inspired David, himself a picture of the heavenly David, great David's greater Son, the Christ of God, declares, "This day will the Lord deliver thee into my hand, and I will smite thee; and I will give the carcasses of the host of the Philistines this day unto the fowls of the air, and to the wild beasts of the earth; that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel" (1 Samuel 17:46).

THE FABLE OF THE VULTURES

"And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, Come and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God;

That ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all men, both free and bond, both small and great."

The fantasies woven around this 'battle' by theorists both inside and outside the evangelical testimony, have recently been brought to the last degree of absurdity by a pamphlet emanating we believe from Canada, telling us that there has recently appeared in the valley of Megiddo in Palestine "a new breed of vultures, a breed never seen before, multiplying at three times the normal rate," in supposed fulfillment of Ezekiel's prophecy that ravenous birds of prey will assemble to devour the carcasses of the slain in the great battle. The pamphleteer informs us

that these birds are buzzards, and the buzzard (he says) usually lays only one egg at a time, whereas these apocalyptic buzzards are laying four, so there will be enough birds to take care of the vast number of corpses slain in the great battle.

On account of this phenomenal rate of increase of the buzzard or vulture population, the writer naturally forecasts that the great battle must soon take place. He should be warned. Maybe it has already begun!

How trivial are these wild guesses compared with the solemn and sober meaning of prophecy. Had the writer of this pamphlet only looked into the preceding chapter he would have found feathered fowl enough to expose the folly of his guesses. He would have read these words in chapter 18 verse 2: “Babylon the great is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird”. There the unclean birds are synonymous with devils and evil spirits.

Yet another figurative use of birds denoting something very much more sinister than feathered fowl is found in our Lord’s parable of the sower (Matthew 13) where we read of the ‘wayside’ hearers who received not the word which was preached, and so the fowls came and devoured the seed. These fowls, the Lord explains as follows, “When anyone heareth the word of the kingdom and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart”. By what principle therefore does our Canadian friend conclude that the birds of Revelation 19 are vultures? He also overlooks the plain statement of the verse that not one variety of predatory birds assembles for the feast on the battlefield, but “all the fowls which fly in the midst of heaven”.

CAST ALIVE INTO HELL

“And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army.

And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone.

And the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, which sword proceeded out of his mouth: and all the fowls were filled with their flesh.”

Auberlen writes, “The World, in its opposition to God, when it has reached the highest development of its material and spiritual power, is after all only a decorated carcass, decaying, round which the eagles gather, and to devour which all the birds that fly in the midst of heaven are called together”.

The use of the term ‘cast alive’ into the lake of fire is part of the figurative description of the end of these Satanic forces.

There are those who sincerely think that because the Beast and False prophet are ‘cast alive’ into the fiery Lake this proves they must be actual persons, for you cannot (they say) cast systems or organisations into hell. This however is proving too much. The systems which these characters represent are in fact composed of innumerable individuals of the human race. There is no such thing as an organisation without individual people. The usages of language in tongues other than modern English have to be taken into account, and there is precedent in the Old Testament for John’s expression. In Proverbs 1:12 we hear the wicked saying of the righteous, “Let us swallow them up alive as the grave: and whole as those who go down to the pit”. John’s expression might well have been taken from that very text. To be cast alive into the grave is a Hebraism and in Rev. 19:20 it is descriptive of the sure and certain fate of all whose allegiance is given to Satan, the ‘god of this world’ (2 Corinthians 4:4).

As to the fact that these two characters in Revelation, the Beast and the False Prophet, are emblematic of systems and powers sinister, no-one who deals faithfully with the symbolic description of having seven heads and ten horns, or in the case of the second, the appearance of a lamb with two horns, can have any ground for doubt.

THE HALLELUJAH CHORUS A SOLILOQUY ON REVELATION 19:1-6

This great voice: “Hallelujah: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth,” teaches us two things: first, that creation has a Lord and Governor Who is in absolute control of the creation which He has made. The Lord God omnipotent reigneth. The all-powerful, all-mighty, all-wise Creator is Lord over what He has created.

Secondly the text teaches that the outcome of God’s control and government of His creation will be unqualified glory and praise, for the text says, “Hallelujah: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.”

It is not something we should deplore that God reigns over His own creation, but something that should fill us and does fill us and shall ultimately fill all creation, with glory, delight, and praise. For this is the last shout and the ultimate triumph of creation.

Creation has an origin and a purpose, and this origin and purpose were determined by the wisdom, the pleasure, of the Omnipotent Creator. The world around us has a meaning. It is not a world such as materialistic science supposes, which came from nowhere in particular, has no particular aim and nobody knows where it is going, nor what the end shall be. Against that we set our text. "Hallelujah, for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth," It came from God, it goes back to God. He reigns over it, and it will fulfill His purpose which is altogether and absolutely a glorious purpose. It will bring to God a revenue of praise and glory and adoration as no other device could do. Therefore it has a meaning. It is the field of the development and display of God's wisdom, a means by which He makes Himself known and understood, a means by which too, not only is God known, but a supreme joy and eternal blessedness will be achieved.

Creation as we know it is not an end in itself, but only the means to an end. This world will be abolished the moment its purpose has been fulfilled. As it came so it will go. "As a vesture shalt thou fold them up and they shall be changed." God divests Himself of a temporary garment and assumes in its place that eternal garment of which creation, the visible creation, is only the picture.

In effect, creation neither came from nothing, nor does it lead to nothing, for it came from God and it leads to the full and final exhibition of His glory. It is conceived in the heart of the eternal God and we can even show why it was so conceived, for we know the reason for creation, and the meaning and the purpose involved. This is the secret without which creation cannot be understood: that God made the world for Christ. "All things were created by him (Christ) and for him and by him all things consist" (Colossians 1:16-17).

That is the meaning and purpose of creation. It is an inheritance for the Son - not just the visible creation but what that creation is designed to bring forth, as the field of the divine purposes for the working out of the drama of the divine Life. The great end of redemption is that Christ should be magnified and glorified. "Unto Him that loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father, to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever" (Rev. 1:5-6).

The apostle Paul writes (Ephesians 3: verses 10 and 11): “To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church (that is by the means of the church) the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord.” There, the eternal purpose and the meaning of all creation are expressed. The redemption of the church in Christ is the means by which God declares who and what He is. But it is always in Christ: “The eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Creation is not only a material thing, it is a moral thing, and because our philosophers do not recognize this, humanity is in an impasse, a dilemma. They have no way out because they do not know the meaning of creation. They can explore by scientific means the natural or material works of God but until they realize that creation also is a moral thing, in which righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost are wrapped up; that it covers an eternal kingdom of God which is invisible to mortal eyes (for the kingdom of God is within us), they cannot understand what they see. Wrapped up in the original creation was the possibility (dare we say the inevitability?) of pain and death, and suffering and ruin and loss. The creation would never have been worthwhile even from God’s standpoint were it not that He was Himself bound up in this pain and travail and ruin. This was the material He employed that by it He should reign anew in that work of redemption, by which His name should be everlastingly exalted by myriads who should be able to say, “Hallelujah: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.”

It is not possible to consider creation apart from redemption and this is our dilemma today that we cannot separate history from its purpose which is to bring in the kingdom of God. History is a great subject in the universities of the world. It is a very important subject, and a very fascinating subject. But the world’s historians are astray. They are at sixes and sevens amongst themselves. They cannot agree and cannot tell us what it is all about, what it is and what it is working to. To most of them it is simply a chaos. They try to reduce it to reason, so as to yield some meaning, but the only reason is in the Bible. The history of the world is the history of redemption.

The entire burden of creation and its glorious outcome is borne by the eternal Son. By the appointment of the Father all is His and for Him, and when the work is at last accomplished, and all foes are made His footstool, redeemed creation will give back its Hallelujah, its praise and thankfulness in gratitude that it is the Lord God omnipotent Who reigns, and Who has achieved the utmost triumph at the utmost price.

The certitude of the glorious outcome of creation does not, however, rest upon an act of omnipotent power and sovereignty, as of a mere determinism. Evil cannot be abolished that way. Greater by far than all the stupendous acts of creation, is the solitary act of redemption. Omnipotence lays aside its glorious garment. The Creator enters His own creation as the poorest of all, to bear in the extremity of human weakness the curse and the blame. Deity descends from the Throne, and with the cry of a Babe nestles in the bosom of a human maiden, dependent upon the love and the care of one of the poor fallen creatures He has come to redeem. Our God must learn by experience of suffering and pain, in obedience and subjection, our common lot; must become a man of sorrows, acquainted with grief, from whom the world He has made must hide its face in horror. By the road of Gethsemane, the Judgment Hall, the Rejection, the Scourging, the Mockery, the crowning shame and suffering of Calvary, the hideous death of the Cross-by this road and by no other must God in weakness and not in strength, overcome sin and death, and become the head of a new creation which should eternally rejoice as in a marriage day - a marriage between God the Son and His beloved, redeemed Bride, the Church - a day which begins but never ends.

The fact of God dying for man is so stupendous a thing, and the welfare of all creation and the stability of moral law is so utterly dependent upon it, that it is inconceivable to consider the Cross in any other light than as the eternal purpose of God. To quote from the lips of the late Tydeman Chilvers, "The world itself was made for Calvary." When God created the world He anticipated His ultimate intention of dying for it. The remedy was in advance of the disease. The fall was the occasion of redemption, but redemption was always, and first of all, the ultimate intention of God, that thereby He might accomplish that which could not otherwise be achieved, namely, the display of His nature in all its manifold beauty of holiness and patience and longsuffering. By this means He achieves a creation which will not only be filled with an admiration of His almightiness, but with a rapture of praise, an ecstasy as upon an eternal marriage day, when long delays are consummated in the fulfillment of desire, when mourning is turned into joy, an innumerable company of blessed beings wear the garment of praise in exchange for the spirit of heaviness. They obtain beauty for ashes. They come to the heavenly Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads. They obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing flee away. A new creation bursts into universal song, as the meaning of all things is unfolded, all mysteries unveiled, all truth known, all evil forever put down, and that one great cry fills all things, "Hallelujah: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth."