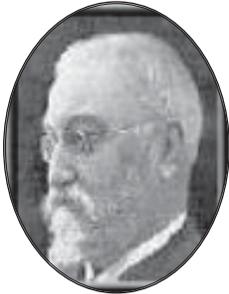


The Bride and the Bridegroom and Ephesians Chapter 5



E.W. Bullinger (1837-1913)

In Scripture the church of this dispensation is symbolized as “*the Body of Christ,*” never as “*the Bride.*”

— Sir Robert Anderson (1841-1918)
The Coming Prince (Chapter 15)

Christians, in their usual selfishness, attempt to rob others of their place as the Bride, and thus lose their own still better place as part of the Bridegroom.

It is clear from all of the Scriptures which treat of the Mystery that the Church is the Body of Christ, and that the members of that Body are members of Christ, Who Himself is the Bridegroom.

It is also clear that the Bride is the subject of Old Testament prophecy, and therefore could not form part of the Mystery which was kept secret, and formed no part of Old Testament revelation or prophecy.

Isaiah 54:5-8; 62:4; Jeremiah 3:14; Hosea 2:16, 19; and other Scriptures, speak of the Bride as of Israel – perhaps an elect remnant – for all through there were those who walked by faith (Hebrews 11) and who were therefore “*partakers of a heavenly calling*” (Hebrews 3:1; 11:10, 13-16). If we compare Hebrews 11:10 with Revelation 21:9-27, are we not distinctly to infer that the “*city*” for which Abraham looked was “*the Bride, the Lamb’s wife*”?

True, the Apostle might address the saints concerning his desire to present them “*a chaste virgin to Christ*” (II Corinthians 11:2); but this no more declares that the Church *is* the Bride of Christ than that the Apostle himself was their father (I Corinthians 4:15), or their mother (Galatians 4:19). It is merely an illustration, to show his jealous care of them as a “*friend of the Bridegroom,*” as the others showed his painful anxiety as a “*mother,*” and his loving care as a “*father.*”

So in Ephesians 5:28-29, the argument is that “*husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies; for he that loveth his wife loveth himself; for no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the Church, for we are members of His Body,*” i.e., AS Christ loves His own Body, the Church, so ought husbands to love their own selves, (i.e., their wives), because they and their wives are “*one flesh.*” Thus the great secret is employed as an argument as to the reciprocal duties of husbands and wives. In neither case is it said that the Church *is* the wife, or that Christ *is* the husband, but that AS Christ loves His Body (the Church), so husbands ought to love their own bodies (their wives).

What is clear and certain is that the Church is the Body of Christ Himself, and that the members of that Body being “*in Christ*” are PART OF THE BRIDEGROOM and cannot possibly, therefore, be the Bride herself.

A remarkable example of the perversity of Expositors is this: while they hold that the Bride is the Church, they persist in interpreting the parable of the Ten Virgins as though the Bride’s attendant “*Virgins*” are also the Church. Though, whoever heard of an Eastern Bride going out “*to meet*” the Bridegroom? The Virgins, “*her companions,*” went, but not the Bride. So our expositors can hold whichever of these two positions they please; but, clearly, they are not entitled to hold them both. The “*Bride*” must be distinct from “*the virgins her companions that follow her.*” If we rightly divide the Word of Truth, we see that the Church is neither one nor the other, and that the subsequent revelation of the “*Mystery*” cannot be read into either Psalm 45 or Matthew 25; which are perfectly clear as they stand, and must have been capable of a plain interpretation to the first hearers or readers of those words, quite apart from the truth subsequently revealed.

The mystery was “*hid in God.*” It does not say that it was hidden in the Scriptures, but “*hid in God*” Himself. There can be therefore no *types* of it in the Old Testament, inasmuch as *types teach*, and were meant to teach, doctrines, which are elsewhere clearly revealed in the New Testament. ... The *illustration* or *application* of Old Testament Scripture to the Church is quite lawful and profitable, so long as it is kept distinct from *interpretation*. It is one thing to see an illustration of the Church in the Old Testament; but it is quite another thing to say that there is revealed that which God distinctly declares *was not revealed* or “*made known to the sons of men.*”

It will be observed that the scope of Ephesians 5 is practical: and therefore this reference to the Mystery in verse 32 is not for teaching, doctrinally, but only by way of illustration to enforce the practical precept.

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