

The Bride of Christ

A Sermon on the Church

⁹ Then came one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues and spoke to me, saying, "Come, I will show you the Bride, the wife of the Lamb."

¹⁰ And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great, high mountain, and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God,

¹¹ having the glory of God, its radiance like a most rare jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal.

¹² It had a great, high wall, with twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and on the gates the names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel were inscribed--

¹³ on the east three gates, on the north three gates, on the south three gates, and on the west three gates.

¹⁴ And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

¹⁵ And the one who spoke with me had a measuring rod of gold to measure the city and its gates and walls.

¹⁶ The city lies foursquare, its length the same as its width. And he measured the city with his rod, 12,000 stadia. Its length and width and height are equal.

¹⁷ He also measured its wall, 144 cubits by human measurement, which is also an angel's measurement.

¹⁸ The wall was built of jasper, while the city was pure gold, like clear glass.

¹⁹ The foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with every kind of jewel. The first was jasper, the second sapphire, the third agate, the fourth emerald,

²⁰ the fifth onyx, the sixth carnelian, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoprase, the eleventh jacinth, the twelfth amethyst.

²¹ And the twelve gates were twelve pearls, each of the gates made of a single pearl, and the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass.

²² And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb.

²³ And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb.

²⁴ By its light will the nations walk, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it,

²⁵ and its gates will never be shut by day-- and there will be no night there.

²⁶ They will bring into it the glory and the honor of the nations.

²⁷ But nothing unclean will ever enter it, nor anyone who does what is detestable or false, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life.

Revelation 22:1 Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb

² through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.

³ No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him.

⁴ They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads.

⁵ And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever.

⁶ And he said to me, "These words are trustworthy and true. And the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, has sent his angel to show his servants what must soon take place."

⁷ "And behold, I am coming soon. Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book."

⁸ I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. And when I heard and saw them, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who showed them to me,

⁹ but he said to me, "You must not do that! I am a fellow servant with you and your brothers the prophets, and with those who keep the words of this book. Worship God."

¹⁰ And he said to me, "Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is near.

¹¹ Let the evildoer still do evil, and the filthy still be filthy, and the righteous still do right, and the holy still be holy."

¹² "Behold, I am coming soon, bringing my recompense with me, to repay each one for what he has done.

¹³ I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end."

¹⁴ Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the tree of life and that they may enter the city by the gates.

¹⁵ Outside are the dogs and sorcerers and the sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices falsehood.

¹⁶ "I, Jesus, have sent my angel to testify to you about these things for the churches. I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star."

¹⁷ The Spirit and the Bride say, "Come." And let the one who hears say, "Come." And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who desires take the water of life without price.

(Rev 21:9-22:17)

Lyre of the Faithful

In 1866 a little book was published called *Lyra Fidelium* [Lyre of the Faithful]. A lyre is a musical instrument, and the subject of the book was discussed in the subtitle: *Twelve Hymns on the Twelve Articles of the Apostle's Creed*. Samuel Stone, an Anglican priest, wrote his hymns as a response to a serious theological controversy that was brewing in his church down in South Africa. The opponent was teaching

that “much of the Old Testament was mythology, and that Jesus had taught wrong things about Moses.”¹ Stone believed that the very core of Christianity was at stake, and thus he attempted to counter the heresy in a pastoral, devotional, and catechetical manner—through hymns that expounded The Apostle’s Creed in a form of writing that would touch both the head and the heart. In this, he took the Apostle’s injunction seriously, “teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs” (Col 3:16).

The most famous of these poems deals specifically with Article Nine of the Creed: “(I believe in) the Holy Catholic [Universal] Church: The Communion of Saints.” It is based in 1 Corinthians 3:11, “For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.” Hence, the title: “The Church’s One Foundation.” As the book itself shows, each verse contains no fewer than four biblical allusions and one has as many as seven (see Appendix), though it should be noted he could have chosen from among several verses for many of these. The song became popular and more than twenty years after it was written. One account indicates that it was sung with such vigor by such a large congregation that “some people say this hymn was

¹ John Gardner, “Hymnology: The Church’s One Foundation,” *Faith Bible Church* (Jan 8, 2020), <https://fbchurch.org/resource/hymnology-the-churchs-one-foundation>.

really more than they could bear. It made them feel weak at the knees, their legs trembled, and they really felt as though they were going to collapse.”²

The first verse of the song teaches, “The church’s one Foundation is Jesus Christ her Lord; *She* is his new creation by Water and the Word.” Why call the church a “she?” Is this just like calling a boat or ship a “she?” It continues, “From heav’n he came and sought her to be *his holy bride*...” The church is a “she” because the church is Christ’s Bride.

Like a confession of faith or a catechism, the book cites many proof-texts used to inspire the lyrics. In this case, the passage stone chooses is Eph 5:25-26, “Even as Christ also loved the Church and gave Himself for it, that He might sanctify and cleanse it.”³ But this is one of those citations that has many possibilities. Rev 21:2 tells us, “And I saw the holy city, *new* Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a *bride* adorned for her husband,” and vs. 5 adds, “Behold, I am making all things *new*.” Given that he cites two more passages from this chapter in the last verse of his song

² Welsey Milgate and D’Arcy Wood. *A Companion to Together in Song* (Sydney: Australian Hymnbook Pty Ltd, 2006), 335. On this history of the song see C. Michael Hawn, “History of Hymns: ‘The Church’s One Foundation,’” *Discipleship Ministries* (July 18, 2017), <https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/resources/history-of-hymns-the-churchs-one-foundation>.

³ You can find the section in the book here: <http://lyra-fidelium.faithweb.com/9lyra-thechurch.html#s%201>. See Samuel J. Stone, *Lyra Fidelium: Twelve Hymns on the Twelve Articles of the Apostle’s Creed* (Oxford: Parker and Co., 1866), <http://lyra-fidelium.faithweb.com/lyrafidelium.html>.

(vs. 3, “the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them” and vs. 17, “The Lamb...shall lead them unto the living fountains of waters”), it is clear that Stone was in fact thinking of this passage as he wrote it.

The bride of Christ is a glorious doctrine. We’ve seen her before. “Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready” (Rev 19:7). Revelation has contrasted the pure woman in fine white linen (vs. 8) with the scarlet-harlot of Babylon. Way back in the letters to the churches, we read about another harlot—Jezebel, a woman whose teachings the churches were tempted to follow (2:20). But if the churches overcame the wiles of that prostitute and her false doctrine, Jesus promised that they would “walk with me in white” (3:4-5, 18), a theme clearly related to the Bride of Christ at the end of the book.

This thought ought to thrill each man, woman, and child. Children know instinctively that a family is to have a father and a mother. This is good and right. It sets order and provides stability for them. They are welcomed here to be the Bride of Christ, to enter into the Marriage of the Lamb. Girls and women have something inside of them that yearns for the perfect wedding. When a British Royal gets married,

how many will stay up into the wee hours of the morning just to watch the ceremony? In a unique way, girls and women are invited to the Marriage of the Lamb—the King of kings, to become the very Queen at his side. **Boys and men** spend much energy pursuing a woman, wooing one, winning her over in hopes that she might say “Yes” to his proposal of marriage. The Father has given you permission and Christ is wooing you so that you might know the lengths he has taken to win his bride. These are the joys that enthrall the hearts of all, and perhaps it is among the reasons those original singers were overtaken by emotions when our song first appeared.

But the idea of a man becoming a “bride,” is this not some twisted perversion like homosexual marriage? No. We Americans are far too individualistic as we think about salvation. The Bride here is not one person, but many. We are talking about **something corporate**, not merely individual. It is *together* that believers become the (singular) Bride of Christ. There are not many brides, just one. Yes, there is a personal relationship that attends us as God puts his Spirit into each newly made heart by faith. But this is a song about **the church**—the corporate body of Christ, and rightly so, for the context of the Bride of Christ in Rev 21 is in fact the church.

The very notion of the church has fallen on **dangerously hard times**. Many people are “spiritual,” few are religious. Religion is a corporate activity, spirituality is individual. Many talk about Jesus. Few talk about his church or give it much attention or place in their walk with God. In fact, it seems that for most “Christians” today, church is almost a throw-away word. If you even go to church, it is to be entertained, not to be involved, to join as a member, to live out the Christian life with the Bride of Christ. As such, the church is in danger even more today than in Stone’s time. We need to be taught again what the church is ... what this Bride is, for they are one and the same.

There are **great heresies** that attack the Bride on every side. When the church is at stake, the very heart of Christianity is at stake, for the Marriage that makes all things right is torn asunder. The two are no longer one. The **family** of God is destroyed. **Brother and sisters** become orphans. The **wife** become an adulteress. The **Husband** ends up in divorce. When the family is blown apart, everything falls apart. The initial blast of the bomb destroys with fire, but the nuclear radiation works its way out into every part of the surrounding landscape, even outside the church, such that our **cultural** skin begins to rot, our hair falls out, we develop

cancerous tumors throughout our civilization, and soon only death itself is left to claim the hollowmen that are left in its wake. In my opinion, when a culture like ours falls, as it is presently doing, after the great heights its once achieved, there is only one explanation. Look no further than the demise of the church in its midst.

Bride of Christ: Context and Structure

To this end, I want to use [Stone's song to teach us](#) about the Bride. That was its original purpose after all. I do this at this point in Revelation not only because the parallel with the seven churches makes it appropriate, but because of two structures which each begin and end with the Bride. The first is from [21:2-23](#):

- A. New Jerusalem / [The Bride](#) ... Tabernacle of God (21:2-3a)
- B. God Himself will be with them and be their God / No more death (21:3b-4)
- C. He said ... I make (21:5)
- D. He said, "Write, for these words are true and faithful" (21:5b)**
- C'. He said ... I am (21:6a)
- B'. I will be his God and he shall be my son / the second death (6b-8)
- A'. The [Lamb's wife](#) / New Jerusalem / Lord God Almighty + Lamb are its temple (21:9-23)⁴

The second is from vs. 9-21:

⁴ These two are [Christine Smith](#), "Revelation 21," *A Little Perspective* (Dec 28, 2016), <https://www.alittleperspective.com/revelation-21-2016/>.

- A. The Bride with **glory** of God, **crystalline jasper** (21:9-11)
- B. Twelve gates with names of tribes, three in each direction (21:12-13)
- C. Foundation stones with names of Apostles (21:14)
- D. Measurement of the wall and city (21:15-17)**
- C'. Foundation stones (21:18-20)
- B'. Pearl gates (21a)
- A'. Pure **gold streets like pure glass** (21:21b)⁵

As we just saw, “**bride**” appears in **Revelation 21:2**, “... prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.” She appears by name in **vs. 9**, “Come, I will show you the Bride, the wife of the Lamb.” She appears one more time by name at the very end of the book. “The Spirit and the Bride say, ‘Come’” (**22:17**). Clearly, the Bride of Christ is a major theme of the end of Revelation. As these structures both demonstrate, **this Bride is the church**. Stone was exactly right. But because the church is also likened to a temple-city here, and because there is so much more to say about that, I’m going to save going through these verses **specifically for next time**.

Since we have already looked at the Bride as a woman (ch. 19), today we are going to spend most of our time looking at what his song teaches. We want to know about the *Bride of Christ*. But I want us to still remember that we

⁵ Both in his commentary and **Peter Leithart**, “Overlapping Structures in Revelation 21-22,” *Theopolis* (July 30, 2015), https://theopolisinstitute.com/leithart_post/overlapping-structures-in-revelation-21-22/.

are at the end of Revelation which parallels the beginning of Genesis. And so before we get to that, let's return to the Genesis-Revelation parallels, because they can help us understand this Bride even better. To know about the Bride of the Second Adam, it is important to remember that there was a bride of the first Adam.

- A. The Triune God (Gen 1:1-3)
- B. The Earth-Garden Temple (Gen 1:3-2:17)
- C. The Bride of Adam (Gen 2:18-25)
- D. The Curse and Sin (Gen 3:1-18-19, 24)
- E. **E. Sermon 1: All Things New (Rev 21:1-5)**
- D'. Sermon 2: Far as the Curse is Found (Rev 21:4ff)
- C'. Sermon 3: The Bride of the Second Adam (Rev 21:2bff)
- B'. Sermon 4: The City-Temple (Rev 21:2aff)
- A. Sermon 5: The Triune God (Rev 22:17-21)

There are at least three direct parallels that Revelation 21 has with Genesis 2:

Genesis 3 – Revelation 21-22 Parallels ⁶			
Genesis (Probationary World)		Revelation (Eternal World)	
2:21-23	Bride formed for her husband	Bride adorned for her husband	21:2ff
2:22	God brings the woman to the man	"Come, I will show you the bride, the Lamb's wife."	21:9
2:23-25	A man will ... be united to his wife	The bride of the wife of the Lamb	21:9-10

⁶ (Gold:) **Non Dignus**, "Is This a Valid Chiasm?" (March 2, 2013), <https://www.puritanboard.com/threads/is-this-a-valid-chiasm.78133/>.
 (Green:) **Dan Kidha**, "Genesis/John/Revelation Parallels," *Slideplayer* (n.d.), <https://slideplayer.com/slide/13974755/>.

The first tells us that the LORD God formed the woman from the rib of man (**Gen 2:21**). He did this that he might have a helpmate, someone who could carry out dominion with him as an equal. He did this that she might be **formed for her husband**. **Revelation 21:2** tells us that there is another Bride adorned for her husband, Jesus Christ. **The second** tells us that he **brought her** to the man. **Rev 21:9** says, “**Come, I will show you the Bride.**” **The third** tells us that man will be **united to his wife**. Hence, we have a wedding ceremony of Adam and Eve, performed by God himself. In Revelation 21, we now see that the wedding supper from **vs. 19** has resulted in the Bride of the wife of the Lamb.

With such parallels, and given that Jesus is called the Second Adam, what we are to understand here is that **the Bride of Christ is being refashioned** after the pattern of the original woman—pure and innocent in the Garden, fit as a helpmate for Christ, someone perfectly suited for him, someone he might love and cherish, defend and protect. But since Christ is the Greater Adam, we may be sure that **this Bride will not fall as the first did**, with her husband neglecting his duties. As such, the picture is not merely one of restoration, but one of making something better than it was originally.

A Song to Teach the Bride of Christ

Let's try to see why people have fallen in love with Christ's church through this song. Stone's masterpiece that stirred up such strong emotions in the past can do so again. It begins:

*The church's one Foundation
Is Jesus Christ her Lord*

This foundation of the song is the *foundation of the church: Jesus Christ her Lord*. Foundations are things that are out of sight, and yet crucial for the stability of a structure. Without them, disasters are sure to sweep them away. Let's think of these four words.

“**Jesus**” is the Greek equivalent of Joshua. The name means “**Savior**” (Yah saves).⁷ Hence, the angel came of Joseph and told him, “**You shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins**” (**Matt 1:21**). We've seen much of the Joshua typology as Revelation has unfolded its future history for us. “**Christ**” is the Greek equivalent of “**Messiah**”—Anointed. It is not a name but a title. Jesus is the Anointed Savior of the world.

⁷ English from Latin from Greek from Aramaic from Hebrew: “Jesus” is late 12c from the Late Latin *Iesus* (properly pronounced as three syllables), from Greek *Iesous* (Ἰησοῦς), which tries to render into Greek the Aramaic proper name *Jeshua* (Heb. Yeshua, Yoshua).

“Her” is the tipoff that the church is the Bride of Christ, a woman betrothed to Jesus. “Lord” is the word *kurios*. It means master or owner. The Lord is over the church, its head, its leader, its ruler.

Obviously, we could say much more. But remember our context. Our song comes in a book of songs that explicate the Creed and as such has spent much time talking about Christ already. But we haven’t read those songs, so here is the what the Creed tells us about Jesus and a few examples from the songs.

Excerpts from Lyra Fidelium on the Creed		
Doctrine	Line in Creed	Excerpt from Songs
Person and Office	[I believe] in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord	God the Father’s only Son, Yet with Him in glory One, One in wisdom, One in might, Absolute and Infinite: Jesu, I believe in Thee, Thou art LORD and God to me.
Incarnation	Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the virgin Mary	Meekly the Maiden pure believed The great Archangel’s word, And by the Holy Ghost conceived The Savior Christ the Lord
Passion, Death, Burial	Suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried	I watch Thine agonizing hour, I see Thee by Thine own betrayed, Alone in Pilate’s craven power, And scourged and scornfully arrayed, And cry, ‘Was ever grief like Thine Or debt of sin so vast as mine?’

Paradise and Resurrection	He descended into hell: the third day He rose again from the dead	Yet not there His Soul remaineth Nor His Body in the tomb: Lo! What sudden glory gaineth Quick dominion o'er the gloom! Yeah, o'er Death and Hell He reigneth Bursting back the gates of doom!
Ascension and Divine Majesty	He ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father, Almighty	Wistful their eyes, but Angels twain Cheer them with glorious words: 'Again One day shall Jesus even so Return, as your have seen Him go.'
Second Coming and Judgment		And we wait an Angel's cry, Piercing earthward from the sky: 'Now, behold your Lord is nigh!" Yet, who shall abide that day, When the judge with dread array Comes for universal sway?

This, then, is Jesus Christ her Lord. It is what must be believed if one is to believe in the real Jesus. **History**: God incarnate, assuming human flesh in the womb of the virgin Mary. **Covenant**: Fully obedient to his heavenly Father, even unto death. **Sacrifice**: Death he did not deserve, but death he died for you and me, that we might taste of eternal life, while tasted death upon the tree. **Reality**: He truly suffered, truly died, was truly buried, guarded by Roman soldiers. Three days later, he rose from the dead, showed himself publicly to all, and ascended into heaven. **The**

future: He is coming again to judge the living and the dead. This is Jesus Christ her Lord.

No one can lay any foundation other than this, and this was **the foundation** the Apostles laid for us by their **apostolic proclamation** of the Gospel. They alone have this right because they alone were called by name, knew the Savior in the flesh, and given this task directly by him. Their word becomes **the foundation of the church, with Christ as the chief corner stone** (**Eph 2:20**). We, therefore, simply faithful pass down the **Faith once-for-all delivered** (**Jude 3**) through **the traditions of we have been taught** (**2Thess 2:15**). Far too many fail to understand this basic, fundamental truth and their house is swept away the storms.

*She is his new creation
By water and the Word*

But this is a song about the church. How does the church get here? *She is his new creation*. This is where it gets personal. *Through water and the word*. This is the instrumental means of her creation. Like a baby in the womb, “**Unless a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God**” (**John 3:5**). You must be born again. No one is born

in the church. Just because you go to church each does, it does not make you part of the church. It only makes you someone who visits it. You must be born again. How does a birth happen? We have *physical birth as an analogy*. You do not exist eternally. Things must happen for you to even exist. Then, as you grow in the womb, at some point, you simply come out. The Spirit, the very Breath of God, takes the word, the Seed planted in a cold dark heart. He then waters it, it springs to life, and the church is created. “*You are the Christ, the Son of the living God. Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven*” (John 16:16-17).

*From heav'n he came and sought her
To be his holy bride*

Since ancient times, *the groom would seek out a bride*. It did not work in the reverse. This is part of that Lord-Bride relationship. *From heaven he came and sought her to be his holy bride*. How can those who think otherwise even claim Christ as their Lord? Human marriage becomes the analogy. “*Husbands, love your wives.*” To many wives usurp the God-ordained order. This is the command to the husband.

Perhaps some usurp it because to many husbands have no clue what this means. Scripture tells you, “Even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it. That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word” (Eph 5:25-26). The church did not give itself for Christ; he gave himself for the church. He came down from heaven from his Father to do this in time and space and history.

It began even in the OT. From heaven the Angel of the LORD called to Abram, gave him a new name, gave him a miraculous child. He then took Israel to be his treasured possession. He assembled them together, covenanting with them in the wilderness. Out of the many who were rebels, when Christ incarnated as a human, he chose a remnant to begin his Assembly and upon this Rock he would build his church. This is the sovereign means that she is created—God’s own choosing.

*With his own blood he bought her
And for her life he died*

The incarnation is the key to it all, for it is as a human that the husband takes his bride. It had to be this way. For

humans were in covenant with God; humans broke that covenant; humans deserve the punishment of death for their sin. “*With his own blood he bought her, and for her life he died.*” This speaks of Christ’s *substitutionary death* on the cross as a sacrifice for sin. Sacrifices are clean animals that stand in the place of a person as a substitute. The sacrifice pays the ultimate price that the human life might be spared. Blood for blood. The reference to purchasing comes from **Acts 20:28**, “*The Church of God which he purchased with his Own Blood.*” This seems to be a reference to *the dowry* paid by the groom for the Bride. If he purchased it and the Father gives his blessing, she becomes his.

*Elect from ev'ry nation,
Yet one o'er all the earth,*

Of whom is the bride composed? On one hand, it speaks of the *elect from every nation*. This returns us to God’s sovereign choice. “*You did not choose me, but I chose you*” (**Jn 15:16**). He is the Lord; we are the Bride. Lords choose Brides. People say this is not fair. I’m not sure I understand the objection. What is not fair is that God would choose any, for all have sinned and deserve not a wedding feast but a

funeral. Without his choice, all would perish in their sin. With his choice, many become the very Bride of Christ.

But the verse speaks of something else. They are *elect from every nation, yet one o'er all the earth*. This speaks of what we call the *invisible/visible church* distinction. The invisible church refers to those elect who come to faith in Christ, people of all tribes, tongues, languages, and nations. They exist from Adam to the Eschaton. The visible church refers to the corporate gathering of believers throughout the world at any given time. Though we try hard to keep it pure, today it is composed of sheep and goats, wheat and tares, professing and falsely-professing people.

*Her charter of salvation
One Lord, one faith, one birth;*

Something *binds the church together*. It isn't programs. It isn't a building project. It isn't community outreach. It isn't political agreements. It isn't the latest leftist or right-wing cultural teaching that blows through the air. It is *her charter of salvation*. A charter is a document that original members sign when they enter into covenant with one

another. It could be a charter like the Mayflower Compact or a charter when beginning a new local church.

That charter has the terms of the agreement written on it. Our charter is our common doctrine: *One Lord, one faith, one birth*. We endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, Ephesians says because, “There is one body, and one Spirit, even as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call—one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all” (Eph 4:3-6). Without the common doctrine, there is no unity. One doctrine equals oneness. Doctrine isn’t supposed to divide but unite! It is what we believe, together, that binds us together. If we believe nothing or everything, then our oneness is a shadow and a trick.

*One holy Name she blesses,
Partakes one holy food.
And to one hope she presses,
With ev'ry grace endued.*

Oneness, unity, was one of the last things the Lord prayed for before going to the cross. “That they may be one even as we are one” (John 17:11, 22). This oneness does not mean perfect agreement on everything, for who even agrees

with himself all the time? But it does mean that we agree on these essentials—**One body**: the church. Yes, many expressions, but still just one church. **One Spirit**: the Holy Spirit who gives life. **One hope** of eternal life and the forgiveness of sins. **One Lord**: Jesus Christ, the only name under heaven by which men may be saved (**Acts 4:12**). **One Faith**: not our personal faith, but the Faith once for all delivered that we have spoken about. **One baptism**: the baptism of the Spirit by water which saves us through faith. **One God**: the heavenly Father over all things.

The song adds that *we bless one holy name*. Jesus is the Name above all names. We praise, worship, and adore him together for what he has done for us. It is why we exist—to worship the Lord. We *partake one holy food*. Communion. The Lord's Supper. The body of Christ taken together by the Body of Christ. Our common meal expresses our unity in Christ. The remembrance of his death for us; the hope of a wedding feast together with his church in heaven. “**We are all partakers of that one Bread**” (**1Co 10:17b**) that “**we being many are one Bread and one Body**” (**17a**).

To this *hope we press ever onward*, ever forward with the truth of the Gospel. **What is hope** but that which we firmly believe about that which is not seen? **Who hopes for what**

he already has? There is a future glory that awaits the church that no eye has seen, and no ear has heard. Who can understand what God has prepared for those who love him and have been called according to his purpose? To that end, the Lord has *endued* his bride with “*every grace*” to make it to that banquet hall. It is grace that “*was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ’s gift*” (Eph 4:7). He has not left even a single Christian without both the grace of salvation and the graces of sanctification. He is the perfect giver of gifts; he knows precisely what each one needs; he fits each of us with the exact graces he wants us to have; he ensures that we will together press onward to the end by his Spirit and together with his Bride.

*The church shall never perish!
Her dear Lord to defend,
To guide, sustain and cherish
Is with her to the end;*

This the next line teaches us, “*The church shall never perish! Her dear Lord to defend.*” It is not speaking of us defending the Lord, God forbid! Rather, it is the Lord who will defend his Bride from all attacks—foreign and domestic, as we shall soon see. “*Upon this Rock I will build my Church, and the*

gates of Hell shall not prevail against it” (Matt 16:18) was the text Stone chose here, though he seems to have taken the right idea from the wrong place, for this is not a picture of the defense, but attack! The church will not perish because the Divine Warrior fights for her. He does so because he “*guides, sustains, and cherishes*” his Bride, leading her, nourishing her, loving her always. He cannot help but fight for her. Not only for a moment, but He “*is with her to the end.*” I will never leave or forsake you, my beloved. I am with you always to the very end of the world (Matt 28:20). That is the promise of the True and Faithful.

*Though there be those that hate her,
And false sons in her pale,
Against or foe or traitor
She ever shall prevail.*

But those words mean little if there is not to be trouble in this world, and the next lines tell us about those enemies. “*Though there be those that hate her.*” This refers to the world. “Marvel not if the world hates you” (1Jn 3:13). The church is loathed by many in the world because they envy the Bride of Christ, with her special position and special love that God has for her alone. The Bride is not of the world. “If you were

of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you” (John 15:19).

It is not just the world. “*False sons are in her pale.*” The churches in Galatia had to learn, “false brothers secretly brought in—who slipped in to spy out our freedom that we have in Christ Jesus, so that they might bring us into slavery...” (Gal 2:4). These are the goats, the tares, those who sow discord, create factions, bear fruit of death for the Bride to eat. We shall see how in a moment. But the song does not let us linger here just yet, for a word of hope is needed. “*Against or foe or traitor she ever shall prevail.*” Whether someone is against the church, a foe of the church, or a traitor within the church, the Bride of Christ will prevail. Curiously, of these 37 or so texts cited for this song, only four come from the OT. This is the first. “Rejoice not over me, O my enemy; when I fall, I shall rise; when I sit in darkness, the LORD will be a light to me” (Mic 7:8). Yes, the promises to the church are contained even in the OT.

*Though with a scornful wonder
Men see her sore oppressed,
By schisms rent asunder,
By heresies distressed,*

We return to the enemy without and the enemy within. “*Though with a scornful wonder men see her sore oppressed.*” The oppression can come **from without**: like the CCP or Islam killing Christians. It can come **from within**, like the many sad wars that have taken place between Protestants in days gone by. The scorn comes from the passers-by. Peter says that **false prophets arose among the people of old and are doing so in the churches now, bringing in destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them. This causes many to follow their own sensuality and because of them the way of truth is blasphemed (2Pe 2:1-2).**

Heresy is a word thrown around far too lightly. Not everything is a heresy. There are differences of opinion on “**disputable matters**” that demand weaker and stronger brothers love one another. There are levels of serious but **not fatal error**, things that can really cause the ship to wander off course. “**I hear that there are divisions among you**” (**1Co 11:18**). And then there are **first degree levels** of heresy. These are those things that destroy the Gospel and therefore the means of salvation. In my opinion, these are **attacks on the objective doctrine of God and Christ in the Creeds and attacks on the subjective doctrine of salvation by faith alone**

through grace alone because of Christ alone. All of these things have the tendency to rent the church asunder and to bring the waiting Bride into great distress, but true heresy is the death blow to any local church, for in them there simply is no church.

*Yet saints their watch are keeping,
Their cry goes up, "How long?"
And soon the night of weeping
Shall be the morn of song.*

This in turn causes her to watch and to wonder. “*Yet saints their watch are keeping, Their cry goes up, ‘How long?’*” The virgin awaits the coming of the Master with trimmed wick and oiled lamp. “*Watch unto prayer*” we are reminded (1Pe 4:7). How long must we endure these attacks? How long must we put up with error and heresy that prevents people from being saved or which makes their lives here and now much more difficult than it ought to be? How long must we have infiltrators come into our midst sowing discord? “*Redeem Israel, O God, out of all his troubles*” (Ps 25:22). “*We ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting...*” (Rom 8:23).

The how long is only answered by our hope of the future when that *night of weeping will soon become the morn of song*. “The redeemed of the Lord ... shall come with singing to Zion” (Isa 51:11). Even now it is possible to taste this truth in a local church when God’s word is present and he is there is grace and blessing. Have you experienced it yourself?

*'Mid toil and tribulation,
And tumult of her war,
She waits the consummation
Of peace for evermore;*

All this “*toil and tribulation*” in the church. A curse of sweat and tears. Fiery trials. Christians often do not understand what they are working for. They do not see the end result. Sometimes they don’t even see the fruit of their labor. They often suffer for their work. All this with the tumult—the noisy sound—of a surrounding war. What war? A **supernatural** war, a war with death, a war with sin, a war with Satan. “*We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, and against powers ... in heavenly places*” (Eph 6:12). A war that many humans wage against the church to batter her walls, to break her supply lines, to

crush her spirit, to instill doubt and fear and unbelief. You think Jesus is really still with you? You think he will lead you through all this? Simply by faith in him? “In all these things we are more than conquerors” (Rom 8:37).

In all this, “*she waits the consummation.*” “The God of peace shall soon crush Satan under your feet” (Rom 16:20). Consummation means conclusion, the goal, the end purpose for which she was betrothed. “We know that when he shall appear we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is” (1Jn 3:2). The wedding night, eternal bliss and happiness with her Deliverer, her Savior, her Love. “*Peace for evermore,*” we sing. Peace with God. Peace with ourselves. Peace between one another. The tumultuous noise of war dies down, toil and tribulation cease. The calm waters of life and the beautiful garden take over and God blesses his Bride with Life.

*Till with the vision glorious
Her longing eyes are blest,
And the great church victorious
Shall be the church at rest.*

The next lines tease this out. “*Till with the vision glorious
Her longing eyes are blest, and the great church victorious Shall be*

the church at rest.” He speaks here of the **church militant** and the **church triumphant**. The church militant is an idea a corrupted church wants nothing to do with. It would rather capitulate to the world than fight it. Disobedience is easier than faithfulness. But it is the church militant that is the church “**victorious.**” A victory is only achieved after a fight, a race, a battle.

The battles are not easy. Few want to fight because they cannot see. But we have “*longing eyes*” that perceive “*the vision glorious,*” the heavenly abode, the eternal state, life everlasting. Is that not worth the fight? It is this vision that takes the victorious church to her eternal *rest*. “**There remains therefore a rest for the people of God**” (Heb 4:9). Who needs rest? Those who work tirelessly, fight unceasingly, grow weary to the bone desiring to obey their Master to the end.

*Yet she on earth hath union
With the God the Three in One,
And mystic sweet communion
With those whose rest is won:*

But weariness and exhaustion can overcome even the strongest in faith. Even the greatest warriors need

invigoration before the war is over. This comes again through the truth of the word penetrating into the soul like water into dry bones. The bride of Christ has *union with the God the Three in One*. “Our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ” (1Jn 1:3). We are not alone. Union with Christ, especially through the Holy Spirit who lives in us. “The communion of the Holy Spirit be with you” (2Cor 13:14). It is a *mystical* (spiritual, transcendent, metaphysical) *sweet communion*—fellowship with God himself, a relationship between the Creator and the creature of peace and love. It is a communion that is rooted in the past tense truth that *our rest is already won*, for at the end of the day though with his help we fight battles, Jesus has already won war, taken the punishment of sin, arrested the devil, and conquered death.

*With all her sons and daughters
Who, by the Master's Hand
Led through the deathly waters,
Repose in Eden-land.*

Many think what comes next are “*the happy ones and holy*.” But this is because most hymnals have taken Stone’s fifth and sixth stanzas and combined them into one. There

are several lines that most of us never sing. The first sings of “*all her sons and daughters Who by the Master’s Hand*” are “*led through the deathly waters, Repose in Eden-land.*” Though we are the Bride, we are also sons and daughters of the church. Cyprian long ago said, “No one can have God as Father who does not have the church as Mother.” This is not a one-parent household of Faith.

But changing the metaphor here causes us to think of ourselves as children. The heavenly Father takes our scared little hands and leads us through the waters of death like Israel walking through the Red Sea on dry land. “When you pass through the waters I will be with you” (Isa 43:2). “Today you will be with me in Paradise” (Luke 23:43).

Paradise is that word that takes us back to the Garden of Eden, the site of the original marriage of man and woman. The perfect, safe, guarded, enclosed, pristine home of humanity. “*Reposed*”—reclining, rested, relaxing, refreshed, restored. “You have come to the heavenly Jerusalem and to an innumerable company of angels, and to the general assembly and church of the firstborn ... and to the spirits of just men made perfect” (Heb 12:22-23).

*O happy ones and holy!
Lord, give us grace that we,
Like them, the meek and lowly,
On high may dwell with thee.*

Now, we are better able to sing, “*O happy ones and holy! Lord, give us grace that we, Like them, the meek and lowly, On high may dwell with thee.*” To know the joys of a Father leading his child through the waters of death itself, safe to Eden’s watery paradise, creates **happy people**. To enter that paradise, they must be **holy people**—people without sin, people without spot or blemish. “**Faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy**” Christ will present us (**Jude 24**).

That holiness is marked by a *lowliness, a meekness* of spirit—*like them the meek and lowly*. There is no room here for a haughty, prideful person if God has taken them to himself. “**Humble yourselves ... that He may exalt you in due time**” (**1Pe 5:6**). Before this Peter had said, “**Let your adorning be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God’s sight is very precious. For this is how the holy women who hoped in God used to adorn themselves, by submitting to their own husbands as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord. And**

you are her children, if you do good and do not fear” (3:4-6). This is a deeply contrary doctrine to the spirit of our age. But it is the meek who inherit the earth. It is the lowly who are lifted up, the one who does not need to be first, does not need to be known, does not need to be powerful, does not need to be the star, the one who does need to usurp. Humble yourself in the sight of the Lord and he will lift you up. Up where? “*On high to dwell with Thee.*”

*There, past the border mountains,
Where in sweet vales the Bride
With Thee by living fountains
For ever shall abide!*

Again, many will think that this dwelling on high is the last word that Stone gives us about this Bride. But this is mistaken. Especially important for our purposes in Revelation is the last stanza almost always left out of the hymnals. “*There, past the border mountains, Where in sweet vales the Bride With Thee by living fountains Forever shall abide.*” Stone takes two of the last three citations for this poem from Revelation 21. “He carried me ... to a great and high mountain, and showed me that great city, the Holy Jerusalem” (Rev 21:10). “The tabernacle of God is with

men, and He will dwell with them” (21:3). The lyric reminds me of the longing hope of Moses, who died in the mountains only able to look upon the Land Flowing with Milk and Honey. But God takes his Bride beyond the high vista, down through the valleys and vales, into the Promised Land, to the place waters of living waters, the waters of life. And forever she will abide here, for “the Lamb ... shall lead them unto the living fountains of waters” (Rev 7:17). This is how Revelation concludes.

I am reminded here, again, of the parallels in John’s Gospel to the Bride of Revelation 19. The first is the wedding at Cana (John 2:1-11). Jesus and his mother and the disciples were in attendance, but the wine ran out. Mary wanted Jesus to do something about it, but he said his time had not yet come. But the Lord wanted to give a sign that people might believe in him, so he turned the water into the best wine of the party by a miracle. Everyone was shocked, because you don’t save the best wine for last. God is saving the best wine for the Wedding Feast of the Lamb. You are invited. Will you come clothed in the righteousness of Christ by faith and attend?

There is also the Samaritan woman. She came to draw water and Jesus asked her about her husband. “I have no

husband” (John 4:17). The Babylonian harlot sits upon the waters and says, “I am not a widow” (Rev 18:7). One is telling the truth. “You have had five husbands, and the one you now have is not your husband” and “Jesus remained there two days” (John 4:18, 40). One is in denial. “Five kings have fallen, and one is, the other has not yet come, when the seventh comes, he shall remain a little while” (Rev 17:10). Do not be in denial, but see the truth.

When the Samaritan woman realized that she was talking to the Messiah, she ran and called for the people to “come” (John 4:29-30). And they came out of the city. It was as if Babylon was emptied at the sight of the Groom. Jesus had offered her living water, but she did not understand (John 4:10, 28-29). The end of Revelation is nearly upon us and at its very end we hear the same call. “Come out of her, My people” (18:4). Come out of Babylon. Come instead to the Bride, the church of Jesus Christ. See what she is truly like, what God has fashioned her to be. Fall in love with the Savior, not as someone lusting from afar, not as someone cheating on another, not as someone secretly hiding a crush, but as the very bride of Christ. Come to love Christ’s church as you have not before. It is perhaps the most urgent need of the hour. You are not

a Christian by yourself. You need the Bride in all her glorious array and gifts and parts of the body. “The Spirit and the Bride say, ‘Come ...’ And let the one who thirsts come ... let the one who will take the water of life without cost” (Rev 22:17).

Appendix

“The Church’s One Foundation” with Scripture Proofs

The church's one Foundation
Is Jesus Christ her Lord;
She is his new creation
By water and the Word:
From heav'n he came and
sought her
To be his holy bride;
With his own blood he bought
her,
And for her life he died.
Elect from ev'ry nation,
Yet one o'er all the earth,
Her charter of salvation
One Lord, one faith, one birth;
One holy Name she blesses,
Partakes one holy food.
And to one hope she presses,
With ev'ry grace endued.

"OTHER foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is JESUS Christ." (1Co 3:11)
"Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." (John 3:5)
"Even as Christ also loved the Church and gave Himself for it, that He might sanctify and cleanse it." (Eph 5:25-26)
"The Church of God which He purchased with His Own Blood." (Acts 20:28)
"Out of every kindred and tongue and people and nation." (Rev 5:9)
"We being many are one Bread and one Body." (1Co 10:17)
"One Lord, one Faith, one Baptism." (Eph 4:5)
"There is none other Name under Heaven...whereby we must be saved." (Acts 4:12)

The church shall never perish!
Her dear Lord to defend,
To guide, sustain and cherish
Is with her to the end;
Though there be those that hate
her,
And false sons in her pale,
Against or foe or traitor
She ever shall prevail.

Though with a scornful wonder
Men see her sore oppressed,
By schisms rent asunder,
By heresies distressed,
Yet saints their watch are
keeping,
Their cry goes up, "How long?"
And soon the night of weeping
Shall be the morn of song.

'Mid toil and tribulation,
And tumult of her war,
She waits the consummation
Of peace for evermore;
Till with the vision glorious
Her longing eyes are blest,
And the great church victorious
Shall be the church at rest.

"We all are partakers of that one Bread." (1Co 10:17b)

"Called in one hope of our calling." (Eph 4:4)

"...grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ." (Eph 4:7)

"Upon this Rock will I build my Church, and the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it." (Matt 16:18)

"Lo, I am with you always even unto the end of the world." (Matt 28:20)

"Marvel not if the world hate you." (1Jn 3:13)

"False brethren." (Gal 2:4)

"Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy! when I fall I shall arise." (Micah 7:8)

"By reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of." (2Pe 2:2)

"I hear that there be divisions among you." (1Co 11:18)

"Watch unto prayer." (1Pe 4:7)

"Redeem Israel, O God, out of all his troubles." (Ps 25:22)

"Even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting..." (Rom 8:23)

"The redeemed of the Lord...shall come with singing unto Zion." (Isa 51:11)

"We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, and against powers," etc. (Eph 6:12)

"In all these things we are more than conquerors." (Rom 8:37)

"The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly." (Rom 16:20)

"We know that when He shall appear we shall be

Yet she on earth hath union
With the God the Three in One,
And mystic sweet communion
With those whose rest is won:
With all her sons and daughters
Who, by the Master's Hand
Led through the deathly waters,
Repose in Eden-land.

O happy ones and holy!
Lord, give us grace that we,
Like them, the meek and lowly,
On high may dwell with thee.
There, past the border
mountains,
Where in sweet vales the Bride
With Thee by living fountains
For ever shall abide!

like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." (1Jn 3:2)
"There remaineth therefore a rest to the people
of God." (Heb 4:9)
"Our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son
JESUS Christ." (1Jn 1:3)
"...the communion of the Holy Ghost be with
you." (2Co 13:14)
"Ye are come unto the heavenly Jerusalem and
to an innumerable company of angels, and to
the general assembly and Church of the
firstborn...and to the spirits of just men made
perfect." (Heb 12:22-23)
""When thou passeth through the waters I will
be with thee." (Isa 43:2)
"...with Me in Paradise." (Luke 23:43)
"Faultless before the presence of His glory with
exceeding joy." (Jude 24)
"Humble yourselves...that He may exalt you in
due time." (1Pe 5:6)
"He carried me...to a great and high mountain,
and shewed me that great city, the Holy
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"The Lamb...shall lead them unto the living
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"The tabernacle of God is with men, and He will
dwell with them." (Rev 21:3)

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