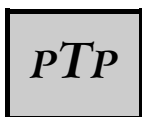


*Present Truth
for
Christian Life,
Worship, and Service*

Present Truth for Christian Life, Worship, and Service is composed of two books.

The first book, *Free Indeed; or, The Only Ground of True Consecration to the Lord and His Service*, contains truth that sets the soul in Christian liberty before God.

The second book, *Aids to Believers*, contains expositions of a number of lines of truth meant to help believers in their Christian walk for God's glory



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NOTE: "Chapter 10: The Coming Christ, A Dialogue Between Two Brothers" has been omitted from this edition. The second book, *Aids to Believers* , chapter 1 is on the subject of Christ's coming.

Also, references and notes in braces { } have been added for this edition.

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Chapter 1

The Precious Blood

“As it is appointed Unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation” (Heb. 9:27, 28).

Let the reader remark, that “without shedding of blood there is no remission”; the declaration that He must often have suffered if He was to offer Himself often, as the High Priest with the blood of others, but that it was once, in the end of the world, He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. “So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many.” Let him turn to Heb. 10, where, in contrast with standing for daily ministrations, “this man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat *down*.” Was the way into the Holiest to be opened? It was through the rent veil; that is to say, His flesh. Indeed, if we examine the value of the death of Christ, what do we find attached to it in Scripture?

Do I need redemption? We have redemption through His blood, an eternal redemption; for “neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by His own blood He entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption” {Heb. 9:12}.

Do I need forgiveness? That redemption which I have through His blood is the forgiveness of sins {Eph. 1:7}; yea, without shedding of blood is no remission (Heb. 9:22}.

Do I need peace? He has made peace through the blood of His cross {Col. 1:20}.

Do I need reconciliation with God? Though we were sinners, yet now hath He reconciled us by the body of His flesh through death, to present us holy, and unblameable, and unreprouable in God’s sight. When we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son.

Do I desire to be dead to sin, and have the flesh crucified with its affections and lusts? I am crucified with Christ {Gal. 2:20}. Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed; for in that He died, He died unto sin once: but in that He liveth, He liveth unto God {Rom. 6:6}. This is my deliverance also from the charge and burden of the law, which has dominion over a man as long as he lives.

Do I feel the need of propitiation? Christ is set forth as a propitiation through faith in His blood. The need of justification? I am justified by His blood.

Would I have a part with Christ? He must die; for except a corn {grain} of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abides alone: if it die, it brings forth much fruit {John 12:24}.

. . . for what indeed has broken down the middle wall of partition, and let in the Gentiles, slaying the enmity, and reconciling Jew and Gentile in one body to God {Eph. 2:13-19}? The cross. How have we boldness to enter into the Holiest? By the blood of Jesus; by that new and living way which He has consecrated for us through the veil -- that is, His flesh {Heb. 10:19, 20}; for till that was rent the Holy Ghost signified by it that the way into the Holiest was not yet made manifest.

Hence it was a lifted-up Christ that was the attractive point for all. "If I be lifted up from the earth, I will draw all men unto me" {John 12:32}.

In the power of what was the great Shepherd of the sheep brought again from the dead? Through the blood of the everlasting covenant {Heb. 13:20}.

How was the curse of the law taken away from those who were under it? By Christ's being made a curse for them: as it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree {Gal. 3:13}.

How are we washed from our sins? He has loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood {Rev. 1:5}; for His blood cleanseth from all sin {1 John 1:7}.

If I would be delivered from the world, it is by the cross, by which the world is crucified to me, and I unto the world {Gal. 6:14}.

If the love of Christ constrains me towards men in the thought of the terror of the Lord, how is it so? Because I thus judge: If one died for all, then were all dead; and they that live should live not to themselves, but to Him who died for them and rose again. Hence the apostle knew no man after the flesh; no, not even Christ. All was a new creation {2 Cor. 5:14-17}. If I would live in divine power, it is always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus may be manifested in my mortal body {2 Cor. 4:10}. If He would institute a special remembrance to call Him to mind, it was a broken body and a shed blood. It is not less a lamb, as it were, slain that is found in the throne {Rev. 5}.

All was love, no doubt; but do I want to learn it? Hereby we know it, that He laid down His life for us, and that even of God, in that He loved us, and gave His Son as a propitiation for our sins {1 John 4:10}. It is to the sprinkling of that precious blood of Christ that we are sanctified unto obedience; and through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once {1 Pet. 1:2} (contrasted with the many

Jewish sacrifices) sanctified and perfected for ever; so that there is no more offering for sin; for having offered one sacrifice for sins, He is set down for ever at the right hand of God {Heb. 10:12}. For He should not offer Himself often, as the High Priest entered into the holy place once every year with the blood of others; “for then must He often have suffered since the foundation of the world; but now once in the end of the world hath He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation.”

Do I desire, therefore, my conscience purged? It is through the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God {Heb. 9:14}. For it is by means of death that there is the redemption of the transgressions which were under the first covenant {Heb. 9:15}, and in that view He became mediator. Indeed, a testament could have no force while the testator lived.

Do I seek the destruction of the power of Satan? It is through death that He destroyed [the power of] him that had the power of death {Heb. 2:14}.

What do I find to be the central object of Christ's coming, the groundwork of His glory as man? We see Him made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor; that he by the grace of God might taste death for every man. And even the purifying and reconciling all things in heaven and earth depends on this (Heb. 9:23; Col. 1:20).

Chapter 2

Grace

Read Deut. 21:18-21, and Luke 15:11-32

In looking through the various laws and ordinances of the Old Testament, we cannot fail to observe the intense spirit of holiness which they breathe; the most trifling ordinance, apparently, was calculated to impress Israel with a sense of holiness. God's presence in their midst was ever to be the spring of holiness and separation to His people. Hence we read, in this passage of the book of Deuteronomy, "So shalt thou put away evil from among you." And again, in the ordinance of the manslayer, we read,

Defile not therefore the land which ye shall inherit, wherein I dwell: for I the Lord dwell among the children of Israel (Num. 35:34).

God's dwelling-place must be holy, and "without holiness no man shall see the Lord" {Heb. 12:14}. There can be no alteration in this. Dispensations may change, but God, blessed be His name, can never cease to be "the holy, holy, holy Lord God of Israel"; nor can He ever cease in His effort to make His people like what He is Himself. Whether He speak from amid the thunders of mount Sinai, or in all the gentleness and grace of the blood-sprinkled mercy-seat in the heavens, His object is still the same; viz., to make and keep His people holy.

Very different, however, is the mode of acting in the law from that which we find in the gospel. In the law, God was calling upon man to be what He desired him to be; He set before him a high and holy standard, no doubt, but yet a standard to which man could not attain. Even though he might aspire most ardently after what the law set before him -- yet, from the very fact of what he was, he could not attain to it. All his efforts were based upon the unholiness of a nature which was perfectly irrecoverable. The law was like a mirror let down from heaven, to show to all who would only look honestly into it, that they were, both negatively and positively, the very thing which the law condemned and set aside. The law said, "Do this," and "Thou shalt not do that"; and man's only response, uttered from the very depth of his nature, was, "O wretched man that I am!" {Rom. 7:24}. In short, the law, like a plumb-line, measured the human character, and showed out all its crookedness and imperfection. It was not by any means its province to make the sinner better. No; its province was to reveal his sins, and put him under the curse. "The law entered, that the offence might abound" {Rom. 5:20}. And again, "As many as are of the works of the law are under the curse" {Gal. 3:10}. This is very plain. Have anything to do with the law, and it will prove you to be a poor, helpless sinner, and put you under the curse. It can really do nothing else, so long as God

and man, holiness and sin, continue to be what they are. We may seek to confound law and grace, in our ignorance of the true genius of each; but it will prove in the end to be most thoroughly vain. As well might we seek to cause light and darkness to mingle, as to make law and grace combine. No; they are as distinct as any two things can be. The law can only point out to man the error of his ways, the evil of his nature. It does not make him straight, but only tells him he is crooked; it does not make him clean, but only tells him he is defiled. Nor was the law designed, as is often imagined, to lead sinners to Christ. This idea is founded upon an erroneous quotation of Gal. 3:24. It is not said, "the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ," but "the law was our schoolmaster unto (or until) Christ." The words, "to bring us," are in italics, and do not appear in the original. This is important, as helping my reader to understand the nature, object, and scope of the law. How could the law bring a man to Christ! All it did for him was to shut him up under the curse; his finding his way to Christ was the result of quite another ministry altogether. The law acted the part of a schoolmaster from the time it was given until Christ came, by keeping souls under a restraint from which nothing could deliver, save the spirit of liberty imparted through the gospel of Christ.

However, by a simple comparison of the two scriptures which stand at the head of this paper, we shall have a very striking proof of the difference between the law and the gospel. The case presented in each is that of a son who was well-disposed to do his own will, and enjoy his own way. This is no uncommon case. The prodigal desired to have his portion, and to be away from under the eye of his father. But ah! how soon was he called to learn his folly! "When he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land, and he began to be in want" {Luke 15}. Just so; how else could it be? He had left the only place in which all his need could be supplied, even the father's house. He had made his portion and the father's to be separate things; and hence he was compelled to learn that the former was capable of being exhausted. We can get to the bottom of all human circumstances and resources. There never was a cup of human or earthly happiness, be it ever so deep, ever so abundant in desirable ingredients, which could not be drained to the bottom. There never was a well of human or earthly refreshment, of which it could not be said, "He that drinketh of this water shall thirst again" {John 4:13}. Not so, however, with the cup which redeeming love puts into our hand; not so with the wells of salvation from which the gospel invites us to draw. These are exhaustless, eternal, divine. As the countless ages of eternity roll along, God's cup shall be full, and His wells shall send forth their streams in immortal freshness and purity. My reader, how sweet -- how ineffably sweet -- to partake of these!

But the prodigal "began to be in want." And what then? Did he think of the father? No. So long as he had any other resource, he would not think of returning home. "He went and joined himself to a citizen of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine." This was terrible. Thus does Satan crush the spirits of his votaries. Every one who is not walking in communion with God, and subjection to the gospel of Christ, is thus engaged in the service of Satan.

There is no middle ground. Reader, who are you serving? Are you serving Christ or Satan? If the latter, oh, *remember the end!* Remember, too, the Father's love -- the Father's house. Remember that "God willeth not the death of a sinner, but rather that he should turn from his evil ways and live." This you may learn from the prodigal. The moment his necessities led him to think of returning home, that home was open wide to receive him. And observe, it was simply *his need* that caused him to say, "I will arise and go to my father." It was not any longing desire for the father's company, but merely for the father's bread. Many are vainly looking within for some rising emotions of affectionate desire after God, not knowing that our very necessities, our very miseries, our very sins, render us suited objects for the exercise of divine grace. *Grace suits the miserable*, because the miserable can magnify grace.

And here we have arrived at a point at which we may appreciate the contrast between our scriptures. How would the law have dealt with our prodigal? The answer is simple.

Then shall his father and his mother lay hold on him, bring him out unto the elders of his city, and unto the gate of his place. And they shall say unto the elders of his city, This our son is stubborn and rebellious, he will not obey our voice; he is a glutton and a drunkard. And all the men of his city shall stone him with stones, that he die; so shalt thou put away evil from among you; and all Israel shall hear and fear {Deut. 21: 19, 20}.

The law could speak of nought but judgment and death. Mercy was not within its range, nor at all in accordance with its spirit. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die" {Ezek. 18:4} was its stern language. And again, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them" {Gal. 3:10}. But how does grace deal with its objects? Oh for hearts to adore our God, who is the fountain of grace! "But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him." In short, the mode of treatment is the very opposite. The law said, "Lay hold of him"; the gospel said, Embrace him; the law said, "Stone him"; the gospel said, Kiss him; and yet, be it remembered, we meet the same God in both. The God of Israel speaks both in Deuteronomy and in Luke; and, moreover, we must remember what has already been stated, viz., that we trace the same object in both, which is, to give full deliverance from the power of evil. The stone of judgment and the embrace of love were both designed to put away evil; but, ah! how much more fully was the latter in sympathy with the divine mind than the former! Judgment is truly God's strange work. It was far more congenial to Him to be on the neck of the poor returning prodigal, than to be within the enclosure of mount Sinai. True, the prodigal had nothing to commend him -- he had proved himself to be all that the law condemned -- he had been "a glutton and a drunkard" -- the rags of the far country were upon him, and, were the law but to take its course, instead of the affectionate embrace of love, he would have had to meet the stern grasp of justice; and instead of the father's kiss, he would have had to meet the stone of judgment

from the men of his city, in the presence of the elders. Hence we see the contrast between law and grace -- it is most striking.

But here, let us ask, How could all this be? How can we reconcile the marvelous difference in the principles of acting here set before us? Whither must we turn for a solution of this apparent contradiction? How can God embrace a poor sinner? How can He shield such from the full action of justice and the law? In other words, How can He be “just and the justifier”? How can He pardon the sinner steeped to the lips in iniquity, and yet not “clear the guilty”? How can He, who “cannot look upon sin but with abhorrence,” and “in whose sight the heavens are not clean,” condescend to receive a poor , wretched prodigal? Where, my reader, shall we find an answer to these questions? *On mount calvary*. Yes; there we have a precious, a divine reply to all. The man nailed to the tree settles everything. Jesus bore sin’s tremendous curse upon the cross; He exposed His own bosom to the stroke of justice; He drained to the dregs the cup of Jehovah ’s righteous wrath; “He bore our sins in His own body on the tree” {1 Pet. 2:24}, “He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him” {2 Cor. 5:21}. Was not this a vindication of the law? Did ever the words, “So shalt thou put evil away,” fall with such impressive solemnity upon the ear as when the blessed Son of God cried out from amid the horrors of Golgotha, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? Oh, never, never! All the stones that were ever cast at offending sinners, all the penalties that were ever inflicted, yea, we shall proceed further and say , that the eternal punishment of the wicked in the lake of fire {Rev. 20} could not afford such a solemn proof of God ’s hatred of sin as the scene on the cross. There it was that men and angels might behold God’s thoughts of sin, and God’s thoughts of sinners. His hatred of the former , and His love for the latter . The very same act, which shows out the condemnation of sin, shows out the salvation of the sinner. Hence the cross, while it most fully indicates the holiness and justice of God, opens up a channel through which the copious streams of redeeming love can flow down to the guilty sinner. “Mercy and truth met together; righteousness and peace kissed each other” {Psa. 85:10}, when the Son of God offered up Himself as a sacrifice for sin.

And if it be asked, What proof have we of this? what solid ground of assurance have we of the full forgiveness and perfect acceptance of the believer? the answer is, *Resurrection*. Jesus is now at the right hand of the majesty in the heavens; and there, moreover, on behalf of the believer. “He was delivered for our offences,” and could we go no further than this we might despair; but it is added, “He was raised again for our justification” {Rom. 4:25}. Here we have full peace, full emancipation, full victory. When God raised Jesus from the dead, He declared Himself as “the God of peace” {Phil. 4:9}. Justice was satisfied, and the sinner’s Surety was set down at God’s right hand; and all who, by the operation of the Holy Ghost, believe in His death and resurrection are looked at in Him, and seen to be as free from every charge of sin as He is. Most marvelous grace! Who could have

conceived such a thing? Who could have thought that He, who is “the brightness of God’s glory, and the express image of His person” {Heb. 1:3}, should come down and put Himself in the sinner’s place, and bear all the wrath, curse, and judgment due to sin, in order that the sinner might be set down in the very presence of the holiness of God, without “spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing” {Eph. 5:27}, so that God might be able to say of him, “Thou art all fair; there is no spot in thee” {S. of S. 4:7}? My reader, was ever love like this? Truly we have here love in its fountain, love in its channel, and love in its application. The Father is the eternal fountain, the Son is the channel, and the Holy Ghost is the power of application. What divine completeness! What perfect peace! What a solid resting-place for the sinner! Who can raise a question? God has received His prodigal, has clothed and adorned him, killed the fatted calf for him, and above all, has given utterance to the words, “*It is meet that we should make merry and be glad*” {Luke 15}, words which ought to dispel every shadow of fear and doubt from the heart. If God can say, in virtue of the finished work of Christ, “it is meet,” who can say it is not meet? Satan may accuse; but God’s reply is, “Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?” {Zech. 3:2}. In short, the soul that believes in {the Lord} Jesus is lifted into a perfectly cloudless region, where, it may be truly said, “there is neither enemy nor evil occurrent”; and in that region we can see no one so interested in the divine results of redemption as the blessed God Himself. If the prodigal could possibly have retained a feeling of doubt or reserve, what could have so effectually banished it as the father’s joy in getting him back again? Neither doubts nor fears can live in the light of our Father’s reconciled¹ countenance. If we believe that God rejoices in receiving back a sinner, we cannot harbor suspicion or hesitancy. It is not merely that God *can* receive us, but it is His joy to do so. Hence we not only know that “*grace reigns through righteousness*,” but that all heaven rejoices in one repenting sinner. Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift!

And now one word in conclusion as to the way in which God secures holiness through grace. Is sin made light of? Is it tolerated? Does the blessed God, when He receives a returning prodigal to His bosom, in sovereign grace, without one upbraiding look or expression, lead us to suppose that sin has become a whit less odious or abominable? By no means. We have already seen how the cross has added force and solemnity to every one of the divine statutes against sin. God has proved, by the bruising of His beloved Son, that His hatred of sin was only to be equaled by His love for the sinner. A *crucified Christ* declares God’s hatred of sin; a *risen Christ* declares the triumph of His love for the sinner. The death of Christ vindicates the law; His resurrection emancipates the soul of the believer, while both these together form the basis of all practical holiness, as we learn in the sixth chapter of Romans. “How shall we that are dead to sin live any longer therein?” “We are buried with Him by baptism into death; that, like as Christ was raised

1. {It is *we* that had to be reconciled to God, not He to us (2 Cor. 5:18-20).}

from the dead by the glory of the Father , so we also should walk in newness of life" {Rom. 6:1-4}. "That the body of sin might be destroyed, that we should no longer serve sin" {Rom. 6:6}. When the father received the prodigal, he did so in a way altogether worthy of himself, and of the honor of his house. He could not receive him otherwise. He could not allow him to continue in the rags of the far country, nor in the habits thereof either. The husks and the rioting had all to be laid aside. His dress and habits were now to correspond with his new position {Luke 15}. *Fellowship with the Father* henceforth became his grand characteristic. He was not put under a dry code of rules as a servant, as he himself had sought to be. No; the manner of his reception, the principle on which he was to be dealt with, and the position to be assigned him, were all in the father's power, and being in his power, we can easily see what his will was. He should either be received with a kiss, or not at all; he should either be seated at the table, or not enter the house at all; he should either get the place of a son, or nothing. In short, it was the Father's grace that arranged all for the prodigal, and happy was it for him to have it so. But, oh! how could the prodigal think lightly of sin in the light of such extraordinary grace? Impossible. He was most effectually delivered from the power of sin by the grace which reigned in his reception, and in his position. It was truly such as to set sin before him in the most fearful colors. "Shall we sin because we are not under the law but under grace? God forbid." Yes, God forbid. It cannot, it must not be, my reader. Grace has set us free; free not only from the penalty of sin, but free from its power -- free from its present dominion. Blessed freedom! The law gave sin power over the sinner; grace gives him power over it {over sin}. The law revealed to the sinner his weakness, grace makes him acquainted with the strength of Christ; the law put the sinner under the curse, no matter who or what he was; grace introduces him into all the ineffable blessedness of the Father's house -- the Father's bosom; the law elicited only the cry, "O wretched man that I am!" grace enables him to sing triumphantly, "Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory!" These are important differences, and such as may well lead us into deep thankfulness for the truth that "we are not under the law, but under grace."

If anything was needed to prove that nothing but grace can form the basis of holy service, the spirit and bearing of the elder brother , in our beautiful parable, would most fully prove it. He thought he had ever been a very faithful son, and his heart rebelled against the high position assigned to his younger brother. But, alas! he understood not the father's heart. It was not the cold service of formalism or legalism that was needed, but the service of love -- the service of one who felt he had been for given much -- or rather those deep affections which flow from the sense of redeeming love. All practical Christianity is comprehended in that word of the apostle; viz., "We love Him because He first loved us" {1 John 4:19}. God grant that we may all enter more into the sacred power of these simple but most precious truths.

Chapter 3

Assurance of Salvation

Full assurance of salvation in Christ, and in the things freely given to us of God, is the longing desire of many. It is sad to meet so many children of God groaning under a sense of uncertainty as to whether they are accepted of God or not; and yet the evidence -- the proof that they *are* blessed with *all* spiritual blessings, *are* reconciled to God, *are* accepted in the Beloved, *have* redemption, *have* forgiveness of sins, *have* been made meet to partake of the inheritance of the saints in light, *have* been translated from the kingdom of darkness into that of the Son of God's love (Eph. 1, and Col. 1) -- I say, the ground of the evidence of all this, true of the weakest believer, is in their hands daily -- the word of God which testifies of Christ the Living Word.

We cannot be too distinct and simple in our thoughts as to the ground of assurance. It is not feelings, which ever change as circumstances alter; or experiences, which constantly fluctuate; nor is it a measure of faith. None of these can possibly be a sure ground on which the blessed truth of *full assurance* reposes. I desire that those who seek to rest on such may turn away from all in themselves, to the ever-abiding and changeless Word of God. By it you have been "born again" (1 Pet. 1:23); it is the "seed" of God in you (1 John 3:9); and its statements alone form the divine and settled ground of peace and assurance.

What saints need is to receive Scripture as God has written it. What I think, feel, experience, or realize, is very well in its place; but the troubled soul needs to know what God has *said*; it is assurance in *His* presence -- confidence that all is settled were "the day of judgment" now to set in. It is settled peace divine certainty -- for which many troubled souls are longing. How blessed for such to possess it *now*! God has established His word *in heaven* -- in a scene far beyond the mists and clouds which are ever darkening *our* horizon. There faith has a resting-place; the ground of which is *divine* -- *the* word of God; settled -- it is so in heaven; and *eternal* -- the Word lives and abides for *ever*. The truth of assurance thus rests on ground outside, and altogether independent of our thoughts. The soul which does not possess this assurance may well judge *his* thoughts in the light of the Lord's gracious rebuke to His disciples after His resurrection:

Why are ye troubled? and why do *thoughts* arise in your hearts? Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself" (Luke 24:38, 39).

Thus the Lord Himself puts the evidences of assurance outside the disciples, and gives them to see them in His own blessed person. "I hate thoughts," writes the Holy Spirit (Psa. 119:113). In the simplicity and confidence of faith, then, let each rest without questioning on the sure testimony of God.

The word translated "full assurance" occurs but four times in Scripture. The truth is thus given us briefly and comprehensively.

1. Full assurance of faith (Heb. 10:22). This is "full assurance" entitling the believer to take his place as a worshiper within the veil; but as he cannot be there in his sins, this epistle makes known the wondrous efficacy of the blood of {the Lord} Jesus in so perfectly cleansing the conscience that he can stand in the light without a *spot* -- the conscience purged, the sins forgiven, and the heart at rest in God's presence. Has my beloved reader tasted the joy of knowing on divine, and therefore sure testimony, that he is before God in the enjoyment of full deliverance wrought by Christ? Has he known what it is to pass through the opened heavens -- opened in the power of His blood {Heb. 10:19} -- and worship the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ, without a stain upon the conscience, and the heart set free from itself to ascend in spirit, and worship the Lamb slain? (1 John 1:7).

But, further, the epistle {of Hebrews} unfolds some of the glories and dignities of the ONE who, by the sacrifice of Himself, purged our sins {Heb. 1:3} and guilt. He is the "Great High Priest." Aaron, clad in his robes of glory and beauty, only prefigured the Christ of God. Aaron is styled "High Priest"; but the Holy Ghost, in writing of Jesus, terms Him "Great High Priest" {Heb. 4:14}. On earth He was the "Apostle" {Heb. 3:1} come down from the Father and the throne of God, to make God known. "God is *love*," and "God is *light*" (1 John 4:8; 1:5). On the *cross* He was the sacrifice for our sins.

What glories are these! The Apostle of God, and Revealer of the Father, come down from heaven; the perfect sacrifice on the cross for our sins; and as having ascended -- "The Great High Priest" of our profession.

It is blessed to observe that the "blood" gives me title to stand before the *judge* -- as in Romans; hence justification is the grand theme in that epistle. In the Hebrews the believer can stand before Him as *The Holy One* in the power of the "blood"; hence purification of sins is the great truth treated of.

Are you, then, my reader, a happy worshiper *within* the veil {Heb. 10:19}; or is your place amongst the worshipers *without*? Have you no return of praise to the One who put away your sins, and brought you in peace to God? Is it always prayer with you? Is there no praise? "Blessed are they that *dwell* in Thy house; they will be still praising Thee" (Psa. 84:4); yes, but first you must know

that you have a title to be there.

God has completely put away your sins; you are clean in His sight, and have all *moral* fitness to worship God, so that you have boldness to enter “in,” in “full assurance of faith.”

2. Full assurance of hope (Heb. 6). “We *are* saved in hope,” says the apostle in Rom. 8:24, thus connecting us with God’s glorious future. Let not my reader suppose that there is the slightest uncertainty inferred in these words. Just the opposite. We can anticipate the resurrection, when the poor body will share in the eternal redemption obtained by Christ, even as *now* we have that redemption made good in the soul. It may be well to notice that Scripture uses the word “salvation” in three ways:

(a) As in Eph. 2:8, “For by grace *are* ye saved through faith” -- that is, complete deliverance from guilt and from the *dominion* or reign of sin.

(b) “Work *out* your own salvation,” as in Phil.11:12 -- that is, work out your own deliverance, in the power of God’s *willing and doing* (v. 13) from the numerous difficulties that beset the path of the saint. Work it out into practical result.

(c) “Now is our salvation nearer than when we believed” (Rom. 13:11); soon the poor body will be fully delivered from the effects of the curse, and, ransomed from the grave, will be fashioned like unto the body of His glory (Phil. 3:21).

It is in this latter view of salvation that we are said to be “saved in hope”; it is not a peradventure, but “we *are* saved,” even as to the future. So certain is the truth of a present and future salvation, that in this very chapter (Rom. 8) the apostle says,

But if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by (or rather ‘on account of’) His Spirit that dwelleth in you” (Rom. 8:11).

The hopes which God presents are all certainties, simply because *He* is the Promiser; man’s hopes are all uncertainties, because *He* is the Promiser.

Those Hebrews who had disowned and broken with Judaism, and embraced the Christian profession, are looked at, in the epistle specially addressed to them, as on their way to heaven (Heb. 3:1), to God’s rest (Heb. 4:1), and to Christ glorified (Heb. 3:14); but they are traversing the wilderness, battling with its difficulties, while sustained by priesthood, and corrected and disciplined by the Word of God, (see Heb. 4:12-16). The world is the place where the activities of faith are displayed. Thus “we desire that every one of you do show the same *diligence* to the full assurance of hope unto the end” {Heb. 6:11}. Diligence is urged upon the saints in view of their blessed future, and this is to be maintained till “the end” of the pilgrim path. On the other hand, I am fully assured of the

“blessed hope.” Rest and glory -- the fruition of righteousness (Gal 5:5) -- will be entered upon and enjoyed when *He* comes. His love we have *now*; His glory and inheritance we shall share at His coming.

Have you, my reader, full assurance of this “hope”? If you have failed in apprehending the object of His *first* coming -- namely, to “put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself” -- if you do not know that He has perfectly and forever put away your sins, you cannot anticipate with joy His *second* coming. If I am uncertain as to the settlement of the question of sin, I shall, in consequence, dread His coming. His glory will repel rather than attract me. I have “*full* assurance of hope.” How? Because the One who is coming is loved, and known as the “purger of my sins.”

One cannot suppose that the truth of the coming of the Lord will be welcome to persons who have not broken with the world. Alas! that so many are attempting to do what Jesus says cannot be done: “Ye *cannot* serve God and mammon” (Matt. 6:24). If I am not giving *all* diligence to add to my faith virtue, knowledge, &c. (2 Pet. 1:5-10), I am “blind, and cannot see far off” and have “forgotten” that I “was purged from my old sins”; that is, my condition is practically judged by the *glory* before me, and the *grace* which purged away my sins. These are the two grand tests of all spiritual condition -- the *Cross* and the *Glory*. (See their application in the addresses to the seven churches of Asia, Rev. 2. and 3).

How safe and calm one may be amidst the rough tossing of this world! How blessedly one can ride over its angry billows, sustained through every storm by the anchor which has been cast “within the veil,” and “Hope” which has entered there. Do storms or tempests ever sweep over that scene -- the unclouded presence of God? NEVER! And our “hope” -- the sure and stedfast anchor of the soul -- has entered *there*.

Reader, have you fled for refuge to that hope set before you? Mark, this is not the fleeing of the *sinner* to Christ, but of the *saint*. He it is who has fled from his corrupt nature, from self, from the world, and “laid hold upon the hope set before him” {Heb. 6:18}. Are you seeking to better your condition in the world -- to establish your name and family in the scene of the Savior’s dishonor? Do not His position and aspect towards the world determine yours? Accept, then, the cross as your portion here. All your blessings are spiritual, and you are in Christ in heavenly places (Eph. 1:3).

To “lay hold upon the hope” supposes energy of faith. The joy set before the Lord sustained Him for it He endured the cross, and is now set down at the right hand of the throne of God (Heb. 12:1, 2). If His path is *set* before us, so also His joy -- the hope of glory -- the being with Him and like Him is *set* before us.

But as if it were not enough for God to come into the midst of our sorrows and trials, and sustain our hearts with promises of rest and glory and blessing, He would *establish* our souls in divine certainty by *His promise* and *oath*. His unchangeable purpose to bless us with Christ -- has been confirmed by His *oath*.

The worldly Lot knew nothing of all this. If we would enjoy the blessed communings of his heart -- if we would have the knowledge of his eternal counsels establishing our souls, we *must* be found in the path of practical discipleship.

Thus, then, the ground of “full assurance of hope” is the word and oath of God. In other words, it is not the poor, tried, perplexed heart casting his eye within or around to discover if *he* has this assurance; but God has written it down plainly, so that faith may take it up, and the man go on his way a rejoicing saint.

3. Full assurance of understanding (Col. 2:2). Our only safeguard against *Ritualism* and *Rationalism* is *realized* union with Christ. I do not mean the *doctrine* of union to Christ by the Holy Ghost. I do not believe that the Colossians “gave up” the truth that they had been united to Christ by the Holy Ghost; but practically they were not in the power of it; they had allowed Jewish ordinances, which the apostle styles “*elements* of the world,” better known by us as *Ritualism*; and the philosophical theories of the Gentile mind, known to us as *Rationalism*, to come between them and Christ. The *sense* of their union with Christ was thus enfeebled in the soul. This condition is met by a display of the glories of Christ. There is not a more magnificent unfolding or elevated character of truth throughout the range of Scripture than is found in the first chapter. WHO IS HE with whom the saints are associated? He is the image of the invisible God; First-born of creation as to rank and dignity; Creator of the visible and invisible; all created for Him -- for His glory; before all things as Creator and Son -- not Son *from* eternity, but *in* eternity. Created “by Him” display’s *His power*; created “for Him” displays *His glory*. “By Him all things consist” {Col. 1:16-19}. What we term “Providence” is simply Christ’s power in sustaining the universe; creation in its vast extent subsists through Him. Thus He heads *creation*, *glory*, and *providence*. But this is not all; not only have we His *personal* glories, but we have His *relative* dignities also. His death has opened up other fields, that “in all things He might have the pre-eminence.” “He is the head of the body,” as also head of creation; and “first-born from the dead.” Now in faith I can look up to the right hand of God, and *see* there, by faith, what none ever saw before Stephen -- a *Man* glorified in the place of highest exaltation.

In this wondrous catalogue of the Blessed One’s glories we have, as has been taught elsewhere, two headships -- “creation” and “the body”; two

reconciliations -- things and persons, the former to come, the latter accomplished; two ministries -- the gospel and the church {Col. 2}.

The substantial truth of Christianity is the presence of the Holy Ghost on earth. He is here in a way altogether *new* from anything which has gone before. He always quickened; Spirit of testimony and prophecy; soon as redemption was an accomplished *fact*, and Christ glorified on high, the Holy Ghost came down; the day of Pentecost was fully come {Acts 2:32, 33}; long since prefigured by the "feast of first-fruits" (Lev. 23:15-17.) His action was a twofold one, uniting the saints to Christ exalted as Man, thus forming them "His body" and "one body" {1 Cor. 12:13}, and dwelling with them *for ever*. The Spirit thus gives us the consciousness that we are in Christ up *there*, as also that Christ is in us down *here* -- "the hope of glory" {Col. 1:27}. A more exalted privilege could not be ours; but be it remembered that it involves serious and weighty responsibility.

Now the apostle is in an agony before God that the saints unknown to him might have full understanding of the mystery of God, in order to its practical acknowledgment {Col. 2:2}. But how acknowledge the mystery, if I do not know it? Are you indifferent to God's counsels and thoughts about Christ? Do you say, It is enough for me to know I am saved? Consummate selfishness! What are you saved for? Is it not to reflect the glory of Christ, and shine in His likeness *for ever*? You cannot walk as a "member of the body of Christ" if you know not what that body is. You cannot answer to the responsibilities of your position if you know not what that position is. No wonder that Ritualism, which feeds the imagination with empty shadows and takes away my Lord, and Rationalism, the spinning of the human brain, lands the soul in the dark region of practical scepticism. But if philosophy and traditional religion are thrown aside as worthless, the Holy Ghost would have you *use* the *treasures* of wisdom and knowledge hid in the mystery of God {Col. 2:3}. Full assurance of understanding in the mystery of God is the sure antidote to the speculative mind of the Greek, and the pious flesh of the Jew or so-called Christian.

4. Full assurance of the gospel (1 Thess. 1:5). The word here is the same as in the cases we have been looking at.

The responsibility of the evangelist in making known the full-orbed gospel of the grace of God is very great. It is a solemn consideration, that the state of soul, the walk and place in the glory, are very much determined by the gospel and the manner of its presentation, and the life of the evangelist. "For our gospel," says the apostle, "came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance (*lit.* 'much full assurance'), *as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sakes.* " Paul, in addressing his son Timothy, said:

Take heed unto *thyself* and unto the doctrine; continue in *them*: for in doing this thou shalt both save *thyself* and them that hear thee" (1 Tim. 4:16).

If we would produce conviction of the truth in the minds of our readers or hearers our testimony must be clothed in the power of the Holy Ghost. We cannot lead on souls further than we are ourselves, and if we are not filled ourselves with the unspeakable importance of the divine truths we are communicating -- if these truths have not formed our lives so that we are *living witnesses* of the testimony we proclaim, we shall only damage souls and produce weakness and uncertainty in the minds of others, instead of “full assurance.” We have a fine instance of the spirit in which we ought to preach in the case of the little captive maid in the land of Syria:

Would God my lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria! for he would recover him of his leprosy (2 Kings 5:3).

“Would God!” She was in earnest, and so she communicated her “full assurance” to her mistress and household, and to the king and court of Syria.

The power of God, communion in the Holy Ghost, and full assurance, should *always* be the certain accompaniments of the gospel. It was so with those to whom Paul wrote. They received the gospel, in which is revealed the “righteousness of God,” freely owning the judgment of God upon the flesh. Accepting that judgment upon their state and Adam-standing, they could rejoice in the perfect deliverance wrought for them by Christ. They had full assurance of all this, in that they had a dead, risen, and glorified Christ preached to them. Let the reader distinctly understand, that *life* is not *peace*, and that until the full work of Christ in condemning sin, *root and branch*, be known, there cannot be assurance or peace in the soul. The learning of this is the useful lesson of Rom. 7.

We have thus presented to us the truth of “full assurance” of faith (Heb. 10:22; of hope (Heb. 6:1); of “understanding in the mystery of God” (Col. 2:2); and of heart and mind in the gospel. (1 Thess. 1:5).

May the Lord bless these thoughts for His name’s sake!

Chapter 4

The Father's Love

What I want to press on you, my brethren, is the distinct *present* blessing, which it is our privilege to enjoy, resulting from the knowledge of the love wherewith the Father loves the Son. Well might it make the soul stagger, to hear that the love wherewith the saints are loved of God is according to that with which He loves Jesus -- "*as thou hast loved me.*" Our companionship with the Lord in glory will be the *manifestation* of this -- *then*, even the world shall know it; but, without waiting for that day of manifestation, {the Lord} Jesus speaks here of ministering to *us*, by the Spirit, the *present* joy and comfort of it.

How is the love of the *Father* towards us shown, my brethren? In giving *his Son* to be "the propitiation for our sins {1 John 4:10}. Who amongst us does not know this? But it is quite true that we can go on further, and speak of *the Spirit's* enabling us to believe on and prize the Son. Who is there would set so little value on the power of believing in the Son, as to say that it could arise from the human heart? It is not in the capacity that at all belongs to "the spirit of a man" to appreciate that best and blessed gift of God -- "*the Son.*" We little prize as we ought the grace which has led us to believe. But let us go on further still. All of us know that this was not of human origin, that it came from whence {the Lord} Jesus came -- it followed the gift; but are we not accustomed to stop there? I would speak to you of that love of the *Father* to the Son, in which *we* partake *through union* {*oneness*} with the Son. My brethren, let us recollect that the grace which led us to receive the Son has only put us on ground where we have to learn more of the fulness and depth of love. The special love of the *Father* is *ours*. I am not speaking now of Christ being ours, but of that which is Christ's being ours.

Observe John 17:25, 26. Is there not here a love spoken of as resting upon us because we have believed on and love {the Lord} Jesus?

We all acknowledge, of course, that we could not love the Lord Jesus but by the Spirit; but when we have met Him as our Savior, when we see that beauty in Him in which the *Father* can rest with delight and favor -- the heart that rests thus on {the Lord} Jesus meets the full love of the *Father*. My brethren, have you thought of this -- that resting on the Lord Jesus you are to *expect* a fuller

manifestation of the Father's love?

We read (John 16:27):

I say not that I will pray the FATHER for you: for the FATHER Himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and believed that I came out from God.

What is the meaning of this? Is it to take from us the comfort of the intercession of Jesus on our behalf? No; but it is intended to remove from the heart the feeling that the Lord Jesus is the originating cause of the *Father's* love. He has only given liberty to that love -- made the way for it to flow out. It is a most mistaken, a most mischievous notion, that the standing of the Lord Jesus towards us is that of averting the judgment of an angry God. The love of God could not, it is true, flow out fully till the work of the Son was perfected; but the gift of the Son originated in the love of God.

Again --

If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my FATHER will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him {John 14:24}.

Here we see *communion* with the Father and the Son connected with *obedience*; a further joy of the *Father's* love consequent upon obedience. Obedience itself must be the result of love, but, then, it introduces us into a fuller sense of the *Father's* love. Now was not this the particular kind of love in which {the Lord} Jesus Himself dwelt when here? -- as He says, "*I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in His love*" {John 15:10}. What is this but the plainest announcement that we likewise, by virtue of union {oneness²} with Him, may so walk as to enjoy this full *manifestation* of the *Father's* love? But then the question might naturally arise in the mind, what amount of disobedience will hinder? and I would say, that I believe this *manifestation* of the Father and the Son unto our souls will be just in proportion to our obedience. The *realization* of our union {oneness} with {the Lord} Jesus at the right hand of God will work obedience in us.

Then every step that we take, every act of love, every expression of love in intercession for others, makes way for this further *manifestation* of the *Father's* love. The soul, urged forward by love to Him who has loved it with such a love, is introduced into a further enjoyment of love. It is one act of God's grace to *urge forward* the soul to obedience, another act of the same grace to *meet* and *bless* it in obedience.

We see that the whole burden of the commandments of Jesus is, that we should love one another. What then is the character of that love which we are

2. John's subject is oneness of life in the Son as being one plant with Him (John 12:24); while Paul's subject is union of members of one body united to the Head in heaven. }

now to manifest towards one another? -- that of the love of {the Lord} Jesus -- self-denial, self-sacrifice -- becoming poor to enrich others -- forsaking things not merely that are criminal, but, it may be, even those that are in themselves most innocent. The happy, holy course of a Christian, is to forsake anything and everything, if, by the denial of it to himself, he can minister life, or strength, or obedience, or blessing to another; -- this is the course in which alone he can expect that which met *Jesus* (the manifested love of the *Father*) to meet *Him*.

You will not mistake me when I say, that it was here that the blessed Son of God learned what He never could have learned so fully elsewhere -- the love of the *Father*. It was here, in circumstances of weakness, and trial, and suffering, He learned it so, as He never could have done at the right hand of the throne of God. And it is here, too, in the midst of the storm and trial, that *we* are called upon to learn the peculiar character of the *Father's* love. Do you think that a man that is standing alone, who judges the course of the saint to be one merely of uprightness and blamelessness, and not of self-sacrifice, do you think he will be learning the love of the *Father*? No! it was in the death, the sorrow of heart, the self-sacrifice of the Lord Jesus, that He learned this peculiar love of the *Father*; and it is only as we, through grace, are led along in His path that the soul can understand and know experimentally the peculiarity of the love which rested upon Him. It is just so long as we forget ourselves, speak not of ourselves, are willing to be weak that others may be strong, to die for others, to be despised for others, that the way to the deeper understanding of the *Father's* love opens to us.

But how is it possible that our souls can be happy in trial, if not along with Christ in the trial? And do not our trials, beloved, often arise from the lack of that which should result from communion with Christ? If so, they are not those in which we shall be enabled to look up and expect the *Father's* approval of love.

My brethren, the amount of the joy which our souls should crave, is nothing short of the full shining of the *Father's* love which rested upon Christ. (John 17:23.)

Unchanging Love

O Lord, Thy love's unbounded --
So sweet, so full, so free --
My soul is all transported,
Whene'er I think on Thee!
Yet, Lord, alas! what weakness
Within myself I find,
No infant's changing pleasure
Is like my wandering mind.

And yet Thy love's unchanging,
And doth recall my heart
To joy in all its brightness,
The peace its beams impart.
Yet sure, if in Thy presence,
My soul still constant were,
Mine eye would, more familiar,
Its brighter glories bear.
And thus Thy deep perfections
Much better should I know,
And with adoring fervor
In this Thy nature grow.
Still sweet 'tis to discover,
If clouds have dimmed my sight,
When passed, Eternal Lover,
Towards me, as e'er, Thou'rt bright.
O guard my soul then, Jesus,
Abiding still with Thee,
And if I wander, teach me,
Soon back to Thee to flee.
That all Thy gracious favor
May to my soul be known;
And versed in this Thy goodness,
My hopes Thyself shall crown.

Chapter 5

"O Wretched Man that I Am!"

Rom. 7:24

We (which have the firstfruits of the Spirit) do groan within ourselves (Rom. 8:23).

There is nothing so hard for our hearts as to abide in the sense of *grace*, to continue practically conscious that "we are not under *law*, but under *grace*." It is by *grace* that the heart is "established"; but then there is nothing more difficult for us really to comprehend than the fulness of *grace* -- that "*grace of God* wherein we stand," and to walk in the power and consciousness of it.

It is only in the presence of God that we can know it, and there it is our privilege to be. The moment we get away from the presence of God there will always be certain workings of *our own thoughts* within us, and *our own thoughts* can never reach up to the *thoughts of God* about us -- to the "grace of God."

It is quite impossible for us to draw any right conclusion about *grace* until we are settled on the great foundation of *grace* -- God's gift of {the Lord} Jesus. No reasoning of our own hearts could ever reach up to the "*grace of God*," for the very simple reason, that in order to be such it must flow directly and freely from God. What I had any, the smallest possible, *right to expect*, could not be pure, free grace -- could not be this "*grace of God*."

But then, even after we have "tasted that the Lord is *gracious*," it is quite natural for our own thoughts to work as soon as we leave the presence of God; and the moment they do so, whether it be about our sins, or about our graces, or anything else that we are occupied with, we lose the sense of *grace*, and can no longer reckon upon it.

This getting out of God's presence is the source of all our weakness as saints; for in God's strength we can do anything. "If God be for us, who can be against us?" The consciousness of His realized presence with us makes us "more than conquerors." Whether our thoughts be about ourselves, or about circumstances around us, every thing then becomes easy. But it is alone, when in communion with Him, that we are able thus to measure everything according to *grace*.

Are our thoughts about ourselves? When in the presence of God we rest on His *grace*, nothing can trouble us.

Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? (Rom. 8:33)

Who is he that condemneth?

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?

But the moment that we get out of God's presence, we cannot any longer rest on His *grace* as when in communion with Him.

Again: Are they respecting the condition of things around? We may have sorrow of spirit on this account, as conscious of the evil, misery, and ruin in which every thing is (as Jesus -- He "groaned in spirit, and was troubled"); but it is impossible, when we are abiding in the sense of God's presence for any thing, be it what it may, even the state of the Church, to shake us; for we count on God, and then all things become but a sphere and scene for the operation of His *grace*.

Nature never counts upon God's *grace*; it may count upon God's mercy in passing by sin, but only because it imagines either that He is indifferent about it (attributing to Him its own low estimate of sin); or that He has no right to judge it. Grace, when understood by the soul, is seen to be the very opposite of this -- to be founded on a just sense of the tremendous evil of sin, on the part of God. And when we have learnt in our measure to take God's estimate of sin, we are filled with amazement at that *grace* of God which can blot it *all* out -- who has given His own Son to die because of it. What the natural man understands by *mercy* is not this -- God's blotting out sin by the *bloodshedding* of {the Lord} Jesus, but His passing by sin with indifference. This is not *grace*.

When the conscience becomes awakened and there are thoughts of responsibility, without the apprehension of *grace*, the first thing it seeks to do is to put itself under the *law*, it cannot do otherwise and the natural man even often does this; he knows of no other way of pleasing God than obedience to the law -- and this, being ignorant both of God and himself, he thinks he can render

But the having very simple thoughts of what *grace* is, is the true source of our strength as Christians; and the abiding in the sense of *grace* in the presence of God, is all the secret of holiness, peace, and quietness of spirit.

There are two things which may hinder our peace of spirit, and which being frequently confounded and mixed up together, create a difficulty in the minds of the saints. First, a troubled state of conscience respecting acceptance and salvation.

Secondly, a groaning of spirit similar to that mentioned by Paul in Rom. 8:23, because of circumstances around which distress and try us.

But these are quite distinct. The trouble and exercise of spirit which the saint may, and indeed will have, whilst living in this world, because of circumstances around, is altogether an opposite thing to that which is trouble of conscience respecting pardon of sin.

Where there is that (trouble of conscience), love is not in exercise, but self is

the center. But when the trouble is because of the state of things around us, the contrary is the case. How deep the trouble of soul of the Lord Jesus! but it flowed from love, and from a perfect sense of what the *grace* of God was.

When *grace* is fully, that is, simply known, when we are resting upon God as being *for us*, and know that He is *love*, there can be no mistake between these two causes of disquiet; but if we do not understand what *grace* is, we shall be apt immediately to confound them.

If there be in us any anxiety of conscience as to our acceptance, we may be quite sure that we are not thoroughly established in *grace*. It is true there may be the sense of sin in one who is established; but this is a very different thing from distress of conscience as to acceptance. Want of peace may be caused by either of two things -- my never having been fully brought to trust in *grace*, or my having, through carelessness, lost the sense of *grace*, which is easily done. The "*grace of God*" is so unlimited, so full, so perfect, that if we get for a moment out of the presence of God -- we cannot have the true consciousness of it -- we have no strength to apprehend it; and if we attempt to know it out of His presence, we shall only turn it to licentiousness.

If we look at the simple fact of what *grace* is, it has no limit, no bounds. Be we what we may (and we cannot be worse than we are), in spite of all that, what God is towards us is LOVE! Neither our joy nor our peace is dependent on what we are to God, but on what He is to us -- and that is *grace*.

Grace supposes *all* the sin and evil that is in us, and is the blessed revelation, that through {the Lord} Jesus *all* this sin and evil has been put away. A single sin is more horrible to God than a thousand sins, nay, than all the sins in the world are to us; and yet with the fullest consciousness of what we are, all that God is pleased to be towards us is love! It is vain to look to any extent of evil. A person may be (speaking after the manner of men) a great sinner or a little sinner; but that is not the question at all. *Grace* has reference to what God is, and not to what we are, except indeed that the very greatness of our sins does but magnify the extent of the "*grace of God*." At the same time we must remember that the object and necessary effect of *grace* is to bring our souls into communion with God, to sanctify us, by bringing the soul to *know* God and to *love* Him. Therefore the knowledge of *grace* is the true source of sanctification.

If *grace*, then, be what God is toward me, and has nothing at all to do with what I am, the moment I begin to think about myself as though God would judge me because of my sins, it is evident that I am not then consciously standing in *grace*.

The heart naturally has these thoughts, and indeed it is also one of the effects of being awakened; for the conscience then begins directly to reason about what God thinks of it: but this is not *grace*.

The soul that turns back upon itself to learn God's judgment about it, and

what His dealings with it are likely to be, is not leaning upon what *God is*, is not standing in *grace*.

I have said that there are two things which, though quite distinct, are nevertheless frequently confounded in the minds of the saints -- a bad conscience and the "groaning" of the spiritual man because of evil around. The moment we get a little away from the sense of *grace* we shall be in danger of confusing these together. Suppose, for instance, that I, as a saint, am sensible of the terrible weight of evil which is all around me, and groan about it, soon (unless it be guarded against) this will mix itself up with trouble of conscience; I shall lose the sense of God's *love*, and put myself under *law*.

But a saint may "groan" thus without at all losing the consciousness of love, nay, for the very reason that he has it.

When the Lord Jesus "groaned in Himself" and wept at the grave of Lazarus, His deep sense of the sorrow which sin had brought into the world did not affect that of His Father's love. We find Him using at the same time the language of the fullest confidence in that love -- "*Father, I know that thou hearest me always.*" And so a Christian may be sorrowful, but should not on that account feel as though God were not *Love*, or lose the sense of His *grace*.

Love to others, combined with a spiritual perception of evil, will cause us very much sorrow. Jesus felt this infinitely more than we can ever do, because the power of love in His heart made Him so much more deeply sensible of the dreadful weight of evil which was pressing on the hearts of others, He felt the miseries around Him in proportion as He knew the blessedness and love of the Father's presence.

We have "suffering," "groaning," &c. spoken of in Rom. 8 Paul groaned within himself from the consciousness of infirmity, from distress, trials, &c., but this raised no question in his mind about the certainty of God's grace -- quite the contrary. The more conscious we are that "the Spirit dwells in us," the more we shall "groan." The more certain we are of *blessing*, the more we realize *grace*; the more we know of *God's love*, and *the effects of that love*, the more shall we "groan" at all that is at present around us; but not as though these things brought the smallest cloud over divine favor.

Paul is spoken of as "groaning" in spirit and why? He realized the result of the "*grace in which he stood.*" Through the power of faith being made conscious of the blessings which are *his*, he "groans within himself" after them; but never as if there were the slightest doubt respecting his salvation. Delivered he is from all uncertainty as to the *fullness*, the *freeness* of divine favor towards him, and in the consciousness of this he "groans within himself, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of the body" {Rom. 8:23}.

The end of Rom. 7 describes quite another sort of groaning, - though, as before remarked, the two are often confounded together! because as sin is still dwelling

in us, in our flesh, those who are not really established in *grace* do not discern the difference between them.

The whole chapter is full of what people call *experience*; not of that which is (properly speaking) *Christian experience*, but of the thoughts of the mind within and about itself. The state described is that of a person quickened indeed {i.e., having life from God}, but whose whole set of reasonings centers in *himself*: I could not venture to say how many times he says “I” and “me”; the whole chapter is full of it.

Observe the difference of expression in Rom. 7:14: “We know that the law is spiritual”; all Christians know that. But then does he say, “We know that *we* are carnal, sold under sin”? No; “I am carnal, sold under sin!” He turns back immediately to self and to the judgment which, being quickened, he had formed of himself by his own experience as under the law {in his conscience}, and begins to reason about what he is before God, and not about what God is towards him, and the consequence is that he exclaims

O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?”

So it is with us; directly we begin to reason about ourselves, we can only say, “O wretched man that I am!” What shall I do? I hate sin, I wish to please God, I confess that the law is good.; but the more that I see it is so the worse it is for me, the more miserable I am.

Is there a word of *grace* in all this? No, not a word. When he brings in Christ at the close, *then* he is able to thank God: “I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

This chapter is full of a great deal of truth in the experience of the individual mentioned, but it is truth stopping short of *grace*, of the simple fact that whatever be his state, let him be as bad as he may, “*God is Love*,” and only *Love* towards him. Instead of looking at *God*, it is all “*I*,” “*I*,” “*I*” In Rom. 7:15, six times overdoes he speak of himself, his own thoughts; and though some of these were spiritual, yet it is,

What I hate, that do I:

When I would do good, evil is present with me.

All this may be very profitable *experience* to bring us to the conviction of our utter hopelessness in ourselves; still, let us put it in its right place, and remember that it is not, properly speaking, *Christian experience*, but that it only describes the feelings of a soul that has not yet fully and experimentally known the simple fact, that “when we were *without strength*, in due time Christ died for the ungodly”; or else that of one who through the workings of the flesh has slipped back to looking at himself and at what he is, instead of looking at *God*, at *grace*.

Faith produces many effects in our hearts always suitable to the object at which it looks. If, for instance, faith looks at the *law*, it sees its spirituality far

more clearly than *nature* can; and then seeing the flesh too in its real vileness, if it looks no further, but judges of itself according to this spirituality of the law, the effect must be to bring us under condemnation of it (I mean of course as to our feeling), under the consciousness of guilt and weakness. We shall hate and seek to separate from evil; but that will be all; it will leave us crying out, "*O wretched man that I am!*" With increased light there will only be increased misery.

But if faith looks at God as He has revealed Himself in *grace*, it judges accordingly. It never then reasons upon the fruit produced; it rests in the revelation God has given of Himself -- *grace*. The fruits of *grace* are to be looked for, of course; for if there be life in us, "the fruit of the Spirit" will be manifested. The saint, for instance, knows that "peace has been "made through the blood of the cross. The effect is that love flows forth; he feels that he is called unto blessing, and therefore has his feet "shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace"; drinking into his own soul the love of God, he becomes as a river of love flowing forth to others (John 8:38). But though these fruits are produced, faith never reasons on its own fruits; it can alone rest in the revelation God has given of Himself as "the *God of grace*." This is its own and only proper sphere.

The natural heart ever reasons about itself, and in a Christian it is always judging by fruits. This must necessarily bring disquiet, instead of peace. In itself it can see nothing but sin; and as to any fruit I have even been enabled to bear, this is so mixed with imperfection that it can only be a subject for judgment (though it be the Father's judgment). It cannot give me peace; that can only be found in what {the Lord} Jesus has wrought, in "the *grace* that is in Christ Jesus."

What, then, is the position in Rom. 7? First of all the apostle establishes the great principle, that the believer is "*dead* to the law." Then he describes the workings of a quickened soul, which, knowing that "the law is spiritual," still feels "under the law," and is therefore compelled to exclaim, "*O wretched man that I am!* who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

Who is he thinking of in all this? Himself. Now, dear friends, let me ask you, "Am *I*, or is my *state*, the object of faith?" No, surely not! Faith never makes what is in my heart its object, but God's revelation of Himself in *grace*. If we stop half way, and see nothing but the *law*, it will just discover to us our condemnation, and prove us to be "without strength." If God allows us to know enough of the *law* and of the *experience* described in this chapter to show us what is our true state, that is just where *grace* meets us.

It is not that the conflict here spoken of will not continue. *Grace* could not be known at all where conflict is not known; the unconverted only are without it. But that which will not continue when *grace* is fully known is that bitterness of spirit in which, while the conflict is going on, the person judges of himself, seeing the law to be "spiritual," but himself "carnal, sold under sin." The love of God is not realized as his own, and therefore this causes him to cry out, "*O wretched man*

that I am!"

It is quite clear, that while there is this experience felt, there is not simple faith in God's grace -- there is not a clear view of what God is towards me in Christ; for when the soul apprehends that, when the faculties of the new man are exercised on their proper object, there is perfect rest. And though there is still conflict, yet the soul is at peace -- "the battle is not ours, but the Lord's."

But how am I to know what is God's mind towards me? Is it by judging of it from what I find in myself? Surely not ! Supposing that I even found good in myself, if I expected God to look at me on that account, would that be *grace*? There may be a measure of truth in this kind of reasoning, for if there be life in my soul, fruit will be apparent; but that is not to give me peace any more than the evil that is in me is to hinder my having peace. That, too, is true reasoning, where the apostle says, "The law is spiritual, but I am carnal: O wretched man that I am!" but there is nothing of *grace* in it.

But does the certainty of *grace* take us out of all trouble? No; I am not at all denying the fact that there is, and while we are in a sinful body, that there ever must be, conflict going on between them and the spirit. But then it is a very different thing to have the conflict going on in the conscious certainty that God is *for me*, because I am "*under grace*," to having it in the fear that He is *against me*, because I am "*under law*."

If I see evil in myself (and this I always shall whilst here, in the root, even if it be not manifested in its fruit), and if I think that God will be *against me* because of it, I shall have no strength for conflict, but be utterly cast down -- groaning as to my acceptance.

But if certain that God is *for me*, the consciousness of this will give me courage and victory, nay, even enable me to say,

Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

In the confidence of the *love* and *grace* of God, I can ask Him to search out *all* my evil, what I otherwise dare not do, lest it should overwhelm me with despair. God is my friend -- for me, *against* my own evil.

The apostle speaks (Rom. 7:8) of the "carnal mind" being "enmity against God," but then God, in the gift of {the Lord} Jesus, has brought out this blessed truth, that when man was at *enmity* against God, God was *love* towards man -- our *enmity* was met by His *love*. The triumph of *grace* is seen in this, that when *man's enmity* had cast out the Lord Jesus from the earth, *God's love* brought in salvation by that very act -- came in to atone for the sin of those who had rejected Him. In the view of the fullest development of *man's sin*, faith sees the fullest manifestation of *God's grace*. Where does faith see the greatest depth of man's sin and hatred of God? IN THE CROSS; and at the same glance it sees the greatest extent of God's triumphant love and mercy to man. The spear of the centurion,

which pierced the side of {the Lord} Jesus, only brought out that which spoke of love and mercy.

The apostle then goes on to show that those once at enmity with God are now become His heirs, and that the knowledge of this is founded on the knowledge of *grace*. “Ye have not received the spirit of bondage again” {Rom. 8:15}, &c. *Grace* first makes us children of God, and then gives us the knowledge of it, and that we are heirs of God.

But what is the extent of this *grace* towards us? It has given us the same portion that the Lord Jesus has? We are heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ. It is not only certain that *grace* has visited us, has found us when we were “in our sins,” but it is also certain that it has set us where Christ is, that we are identified with the Lord Jesus in all but His essential glory as God! The soul is placed thus in the consciousness of God’s perfect love, and therefore, as it is said in Rom. 5, “we joy in God.”

I have got away from *grace* if I have the slightest doubt or hesitation about God’s love. I shall then be saying, “I am unhappy, because I am not what I should like to be.” But, dear friends, that is not the question; the real question is, whether God is what we should like Him to be, whether {the Lord} Jesus is all we could wish. If the consciousness of what we are, of what we find in ourselves, has any other effect than, while it humbles us, to increase our adoration of what God is, we are off the ground of pure *grace*. The immediate effect of such consciousness should be to make our hearts reach out to God and to His *grace* as abounding over it all.

But while *grace* thus gives us perfect peace in our souls, it does not save us from sorrow. Even as the Lord Jesus so perfectly entered into the sorrow and groaning around Him when here, and was therefore a “man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief,” so in his measure ought the saint to take up the sense of the weight of evil that is in the world, and thus become a man of sorrows also. Just as we abide in *grace* shall we have in proportion a sense of the weight of evil that is all around --and groan in sympathy with a groaning and travailing creation -- and not only so, but being ourselves in the body, we shall “groan” likewise “within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of the body” {Rom. 8:23}.

But is there any uncertainty as to our salvation in this “groaning”? No, quite the contrary -- it is the very *certainty* that “all things are ours” which makes us “groan.” Having the certainty and foretaste of glory, every thing here is made the more painful by contrast. That which the saint is entitled to is so very different from all that is actually around him, that the more he knows of the joy of dwelling in the presence of God, the larger understanding he has of God’s love and *grace*, the more he realizes the blessedness of his portion in that glory to which he is predestinated, the more will he “groan”!

How different this from the groaning of an uneasy conscience! Let us not mistake, dear friends; let us not confound the two -- this "groaning" of one perfectly free from the sense of condemnation {as the freedom is} described in Rom. 8, and groaning of conscience, the "O wretched man that I am!" of Rom. 7.

Carelessness of walk, and through it our losing the sense of *grace*, may indeed bring back again him who has once consciously stood in the power of redemption into the latter state of soul {O wretched man that I am}; but this is not, as before remarked, true "*Christian experience*." When the heart is made full with the rich blessing of Christ, it will not turn back to gnaw upon itself.

It is our privilege as saints to know that "there is now no condemnation for them who are in Christ Jesus" -- that "the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus *has made us free from the law of sin and death*" {Rom. 8:1, 2}. But we must not stop simply here; there must be the going on to know what we are as " *sons of God*," "*heirs of God*, and *joint-heirs with Christ*," the Spirit bearing witness to us of it. God hath "*established us in Christ*," "*hath anointed us*," and "*given us the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts*." Having thus the fullest knowledge that God *has* thought about us in love, and predestinated us to be conformed to the image of Jesus, and to share His glory, understanding what His love is *now* about in His dealings with us, and not being yet in the glory but still in the body , and in the midst of evil and "groaning" all around, we shall *therefore* "groan."

Ourselves also, which have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves *groan within ourselves*, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body {Rom. 8:23}.

The very reason of our "groaning" is because of our "having the first-fruits of the Spirit" -- not at all because of a bad conscience -- it is the Spirit of Christ groaning in us.

And then *this* "groaning" is always accompanied by confidence in God. As with {the Lord} Jesus, when "groaning in Spirit and troubled" at the grave of Lazarus, He said, "*I know* that thou hearest me always." So is it given to the saint to have the like confidence. (See 1 John 5:14,15.) Nor should this confidence even fail when we "know not what to pray for as we ought," for it is added, "But we know that all things work together for our good." I may see evil in myself, in another saint, in the Church, and seek to pray about it, but yet not have sufficient intelligence to know what would remedy it -- the Spirit will "help my infirmity," and "groan within me" {Rom. 8:26, 27}. God does not regard my ignorance, but answers according to "the mind of the Spirit," who always "maketh intercession for the saints according to God."

I ought to be so confident of God's directing "all things" as to be able to say, "I am certain *all* shall work together for good." Is a soul in this state, come what may, trouble, sorrow, disappointment, grief, whatever it be -- all is peace, for it is resting upon God, and not (as in Rom. 7) looking at itself.

Our very griefs then flow from the knowledge of God's immense love, and from the consciousness of all that belongs to us in Christ. {The Lord} Jesus fully knew, as none other, what the presence of God was -- what the enjoyment of His favor, and "groaned," because, coming from the presence of God, *He found man out of it*. The life which I now have identifies me, not with responsibility as "under the law," but with Christ who has borne the judgment of a broken law for me. Instead of being wretched and miserable, because looking at myself as under *law*, I enjoy the consciousness of redemption, rest in *grace*, and "rejoice in hope of the glory of God." But the moment we get a glimpse of the glory of Christ as *ours*, this world becomes to us a scene of misery and bondage.

This "groaning" on account of evil always associates itself with *love*. If, for instance, I see a saint sin, it leads me at once to the *love* and *grace* he is sinning against. It is the consciousness of divine favor which I have towards that saint that makes me anxious about him; and while I *grieve* at his sin I *have joy* in God in the midst of my sorrow.

Well, beloved friends, if these things be so -- if this be the place in which *grace* sets us, let me ask, "Is it so with you?" If *God* be pure love -- nothing else than *love* to us -- if there be no mixed feeling in Him, then if you have not full joy, if there is any hesitation in your souls as to your standing before Him -- you cannot be simply resting in His *grace*.

Is there distrust and distress in your minds? See if it be not because you are still saying, "I, I," and losing sight of God's *grace*.

You may indeed have *faith*, but you want simplicity of heart in looking at God's *grace*.

It is better to be thinking of what God is than of what we are. This looking at ourselves at the bottom is really pride, a want of the thorough consciousness that we are *good for nothing*. Till we see this we never look quite away from *self* to *God*. Sometimes perhaps the *looking at our evil* may be a partial instrument in teaching us it, but still even that is not all that is needed. In looking to Christ it is our privilege to forget ourselves. True humility does not so much consist in thinking badly of ourselves, as in *not thinking of ourselves at all*. I am too bad to be worth thinking about; what I want is to forget myself and to look at God, who is indeed worth *all* my thoughts. Is there need of being humbled about ourselves? We may be quite sure that will do it. Beloved, if we can say (as in Rom. 7), that "in me, that is in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing," we have thought quite long enough about ourselves; let us then think about Him who thought about us with "thoughts of good and not of evil" long before we had thought of ourselves at all. Let us see what His thoughts of *grace* about us are, and take up the words of faith:

If God be for us, who can be against us? {Rom. 8:31}.

Chapter 6

How to Get Peace

Must not I accept Christ?

Ah, how “I” gets through the most blessed testimonies of God’s ways toward us in grace! I say, Here is Christ on God’s part for you -- God’s Lamb. You answer -- “*But* must not I?” I am not surprised. It is no reproach I make; it is human nature, my nature in the flesh; but know that in “I” there is no good thing. But tell me, Would you not be glad to have Him?

Surely I should.

Then your real question is not about accepting Him, but whether God has really presented Him to you, and eternal life in Him. A simple soul would say, “Accept! I am only too thankful to have Him!” But as all are not simple, one word on this also. If you have offended some one grievously, and a friend seeks to offer him satisfaction, who is to accept it?

Why, the offended person, of course.

Surely. And who was offended by your sins?

Why, God, of course.

And who must accept the satisfaction?

Why, God must.

That is it. Do you believe He has accepted it?

Undoubtedly, I do.

And is --

Satisfied.

And are not you?

Oh! I see it now. Christ has done the whole work, and God has accepted it, and there can be no more question as to my guilt or righteousness. He is the latter for me before God. It is wonderful! and yet so simple! But why did I not see it? how very stupid!

That is faith in Christ’s work, not our accepting it, gladly as we do, but believing that God has. You have no need to enquire now whether you believe. The object is before your soul, seen by it: what God has revealed is known in seeing it thus by faith. You are assured of that, not of your own state. As you see

the lamp before you, and know it -- not by knowing the state of your eye -- you know the state of your eye by seeing it. But you say, How stupid I was. It is ever so. But allow me to ask you what you were looking for? -- Christ, or holiness in yourself and a better state of soul.

Well, holiness and a better state of soul.

No wonder you did not see Christ then. Now this is what God calls submitting to God's righteousness, finding a righteousness which is neither of nor in ourselves, but finding Christ before God, and the proud will, through grace, submitting to be saved by that which is not of or in ourselves. It is Christ instead of self, instead of our place in the flesh. Had you obtained peace in the way you sought it, you would have been satisfied with whom?

Myself.

Just so. And what would that have been? Nothing real indeed, and shutting out Christ if it were, save as a help, shutting Him out as righteousness and peace. And as an upright soul taught really of God cannot be satisfied with itself, it remains, though confidingly in love if walking with God, yet without peace for years perhaps, till it does submit to God's righteousness. And now note another point: for the soul at peace with God can now contemplate Christ to learn. He has not only borne our sins, and died to sin, and closed the whole history of the old man in death for those who believe, they having been crucified with Him, but He has glorified God in this work (John 12:31, 33; 17:4, 5), and so obtained a place for man in the glory of God, and a place of present positive acceptance, according to the nature and favor of God whom He has glorified; and that is our place before God. It is not only that the old man and his sins are all put out of God's sight, but we are in Christ before God; and thus we have the consciousness of by the Holy Ghost given to us (John 14:20). Accepted in the Beloved {Eph. 1:6}; divine favor resting on us as on Him. And thus, too, He dwells in us; and this leads unto true practical holiness. We are sanctified, set apart to God by His blood; but we are so in possessing His life, or Him as our life {Col. 3:4}, and the Holy Ghost, and these, or, if you please, He Himself becomes the measure of our walk and relationship with God. We are not our own, but bought with a price {1 Cor. 6:19, 20}, and nothing inconsistent with His blood, and the price of it and its power in our hearts, becomes a Christian. This was beautifully expressed in the Old Testament in figures. When a leper was cleansed, besides the sacrifice, the blood was put on the tips of his ear, his thumb, and his great toe. Every thought, every act, all in our walk which cannot pass the test of that blood, is excluded from the Christian's thoughts and walk. And how glad he is to be freed from this world and the body of sin practically, and have that precious blood as the motive, measure, and security for it; that whatever grieves the Holy Spirit of God, by which we are sealed when thus sprinkled, is unsuited to a Christian, seeing He dwells in him. And that precious

blood, and the love Christ showed in shedding it, become the motive, and the Holy Ghost the power of devotedness and love, in walking as Christ walked. If we are in Christ, Christ is in us and we know it by the Comforter given (John 14); and we are the epistle of Christ in this world: the life of Jesus is to be manifested in our mortal body.

But your standard is very high.

It is simply what Scripture gives. “He that saith he abideth in him ought to walk even as he walked” {1 John 2:6}. God Himself is set before us as the model, Christ being the expression of what is divine in a man.

Be ye followers of God as dear children, and walk in love, as Christ has loved us and given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savor {Eph. 5:2}.

Nor is there any limit. Hereby know we love, because he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. “Now are ye light in the Lord, walk as children of light” {Eph. 5:8}. But you may remark here that there is nothing legal, nothing by which we are seeking to make our case good with God. Many would say that complete grace and assurance leaves liberty to do as we like; that if we are completely saved, what are the motives or need of any works? It is a dreadful principle. As if we have no motive but “getting saved” to work by, none but legal bondage and obligations; and if we are saved, all motive is gone. Have the angels no motive? It is an utter blundering mistake, such as we could not make in human things. What should we think of the sense of one who told us that a man’s children were exempt from obligation because they were certainly and always his children? I should say that they were always and certainly under obligation, because they were always and certainly his children; and if they were not, the obligation ceased.

That is clear enough, though I never thought of it. But you do not mean to say that we were under no obligation before we were children of God?

I do not, but we were not under *that* obligation; you cannot be under the obligation of living as a Christian till you are one. We were under the obligation of living as men ought to live, as men in the flesh before God; and of that the law was the perfect measure. But upon that ground we were wholly lost, as we have seen. Now we are completely saved, who through grace believe, and are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. And our duties are the duties of children. Duties always flow, and right affections too, from the relationships we are in, and the consciousness of the relationship is the spring and character of the duty; though our forgetting it does not alter the obligation. And so Scripture always speaks: “Be ye followers of God as dear children.” “Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercy.” Right affections and duties flow from the place we are already in, and are never the means of getting into it. We enjoy it when we walk in it, rather we enjoy the light and favor of

God, communion with Him in it. But note, failure in faithfulness does not lead us to doubt the relationship; but because we are in it, to blame ourselves for inconsistency with it. Here the advocacy of Christ comes in, and other truths, which I cannot enter into now, though most precious in their place. Only remark that that advocacy is not the means of our obtaining righteousness, but is founded on it, and Christ's having made the propitiation for our sins {1 John 1:2}. Nor do we go to Him that He may advocate, but He goes for us because we have sinned. Christ had prayed for Peter before he had even committed the sin, and just for what was needed; not that he might not be sifted; he wanted that; but that his faith might not fail when he was sifted. Ah, if we knew how to trust Him! See how, in the midst of His enemies, He looked at Peter at the very right moment to break his heart!

How simple things are when we take the word; and how it changes all your thoughts of God. One is altogether in a new state!

True indeed, and this leads to two other points I wished to advert to. We have looked at Christ's work as satisfying, yea, glorifying God, because we had to see how righteousness was to be had. But we must remember it was God's sovereign love which gave Christ, and the same love in which He offered Himself for us. It is not for *us* righteousness reigns; that will indeed be true hereafter, when judgment returns to righteousness, when God will come and judge the earth. But for *us* grace reigns, sovereign goodness, God Himself, through righteousness, a divine righteousness, as we have seen, which gives us a place in glory in God's presence according to the acceptance of Christ, and like Him. It is sovereign grace which gives a sinner a place with the Son of God, conformed to His image. Yet it is righteous; for His blood and work fully and necessarily claim such a place, as we have seen in John 13 and 17. And now "we joy in God Himself through our Lord Jesus Christ" {Rom. 5:11}. We know Him as love; and this love as the sum of all our joy and blessing; yet in righteousness in Christ; for we are made the righteousness of God in Him. We know God in love, and are reconciled to Him. It is a blessed place, a place of holy affections and peaceful rest. We have communion with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. What is communion?

Why, common thoughts and joys and feelings.

Think of that -- with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.

This is wonderful. I hardly get into that.

Well, we have to seek that Christ may dwell in our hearts by faith {Eph. 3:17}, that being rooted and grounded in love we may comprehend. Yet if the Holy Ghost who dwells in us is the source of our thoughts and joys and feelings, they cannot be discordant, though we may be poor feeble creatures, with those of the Father and the Son. Does not the Christian's heart delight in Christ, in His words, His obedience, His holiness, His sacrifice of Himself to the Father's

will? and does not the Father delight in it? we indeed {do so} most poorly and feebly, He infinitely; but the object is one. He is chosen of God and precious, and to them that believe He is precious {1 Pet. 2:6, 7}. I go no farther than to cite this as an illustration. This is a matter of your daily life and diligence of heart; but you can understand, that what comes from the Holy Ghost must conform to the mind of the Father and the Son.

That is evident, but it is so new to me; I am brought into such a different world! If this be true, where are we all?

I leave you to ponder over this, and to search the word whether these things are so; whether Scripture, which fully recognizes our passing through exercises of soul as coming to it, ever looks at the Christian otherwise than as forgiven, and accepted in the Beloved, and knowing it as one who has

not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father {Rom. 8:15}.

But if I receive this, there is a passage which I don't understand. We are told to "examine ourselves whether we are in the faith," and what you have said, it seems to me, sets this aside.

We are told no such thing. Many a sincere soul is honestly doing it, and we all pass naturally through it.

But it is there in Scripture.

The words are part of a sentence in 2 Cor. 13:3,5. But the beginning of the sentence is this: "Since ye seek a proof of Christ speaking in me ". . . then a parenthesis . . . "Examine yourselves, whether you be in the faith." It is a taunt. The Corinthians had called in question Christ's speaking in Paul, and the reality of his apostleship, as you may see all through both epistles. And he says, as a final argument, "You had better examine yourselves; how came you to be Christians?" for he had been the means of their conversion. Hence he adds, "Know ye not your own selves that Christ dwells in you, except ye be reprobates?" How came He there? He appeals to their certainty to prove his apostleship to their shame; but this is no direction to examine whether one is in the faith. It is all well to examine whether we are walking up to it; but that is a very different thing. A child does right to do that as to his conduct as such: it would be sad work for it to do the other, and examine as if he were not a child. The consciousness, and the never-failing consciousness of a relationship, is a different thing from consistency with it; and we must not confound the two. The loss of the consciousness of the relationship destroys the grounds of duty and the possibility of affections according to it. Look at the passage.

I see it plain enough. There is nothing to complete the passage, "Since ye seek a proof of Christ speaking in me," if we do not connect this with it. And, in any case, the force of the apostle's reasoning is clear, and he appeals to their

certainty -- "Know ye not." This last would have no sense, if they were to examine as a duty if it were so.

Chapter 7

The Walk of Faith

They who fight the Lord's battles must be content to be in no respect accounted of; to be in no respect encouraged by the prospect of *human* praise.

If you make an exception, that the children of God will praise you, whatever the world may say, beware of this, for you may turn them into a world, and find in them a world, and may "sow to the flesh," in sowing to their approbation; and you will neither be benefitted by them, nor they by you, so long as respect for them is your motive. All such motives are poison, and a taking away from you the strength in which you are to give glory to God. It is not the fact that all that see the face of the Lord do see each other. It is not the fact, that the misapprehension of the world is the only misapprehension the Christian must be contented to labor under; he must expect even his brethren to see him through a mist, and to be disappointed of their sympathy and cheers of approbation.

The man of God must walk alone with God; he must be contented that the Lord knoweth -- that God knows. It is such a relief to the natural man within us to fall back upon human countenance {human approval}, thought, and sympathy, that we often deceive ourselves and think it "brotherly love," when we are just resting in the earthly sympathy of some fellow-worm! You are to be followers of Him who was left alone; and, like Him, to rejoice that you are "not alone," because the Father is with you, and you may give glory to God. Oh, I cannot but speak of it! it is such a glory to God to see a soul that has been accessible to the praise of men, surrounded by thousands of his fellow-creatures, every one of whom he knows how to please, and yet that he should be contented, yea, pleased and happy in doing, with a single reference to God, that which he knows they will all misunderstand! Here was the victory of Jesus! There was not a single heart that beat in sympathy with His heart, or entered into His bitter sorrow, or bore His grief in the hour of His bitter grief; but His way was with the Lord -- His judgment was with His God, His Father, who said, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

This was the perfect glory given to the Father by the Son, that in flesh and blood such a trust in God was manifested; and this is what you are called to, and you are not called to it as He was, but you are called to see God in Him. God has

come near to you in Christ, and here you have a human heart -- a perfect sympathy -- the heart of God in your nature, and to this you are ever carried. And if there be any other sympathy with you in the wide universe, whether on the sea of glass, or still on earth, it is only as the pulsation of the blood that flows from Christ to His members that it is to you of any account. Feed upon it, and remember you are thus to walk in the world -- not hanging upon one another.

{Lord} Jesus, Master! take as it were my hands in Thine, and keep me with Thee -- with Thee, walking above the worthless din of human praise or disapproval.

Then shall it be in my ear the empty sound which it is in Thine; and I shall walk in sweet unconsciousness -- too far for some, not far enough for others -- but with Thee; putting my whole weight into that which in Thine eyes is service; no longer offering Thee the blind, the lame, the maimed desires of a spirit dreaming of the great things which it would do, but my waking, rejoicing energies.

Lord, shine upon Thy servant! Say unto me with *power*, "Arise, follow Me!"

A Pilgrim Below

John 17:16

This world is a wilderness wide!

I have nothing to seek or to choose;

I've no thought in the waste to abide;

I've nought to regret nor to lose.

The Lord is Himself gone before;

He has marked out the path that I tread;

It's as sure as the love I adore,

I have nothing to fear nor to dread.

There is but that one in the waste,

Which His footsteps have marked as His own

And I follow in diligent haste

To the seats where He's put on His crown.

For the path where my Savior is gone,

Has led up to His Father and God,

To the place where He's now on the throne,

And His strength shall be mine on the road.

And with Him shall my rest be on high,
When in holiness bright I sit down,
In the joy of His love ever nigh,
In the peace that His presence shall crown.
‘Tis the treasure I’ve found in His love
That has made me a pilgrim below,
And ‘tis there when I reach Him above,
As I’m known, all His fulness I’ll know.
And, Savior, ‘tis Thee from on high
I await till the time Thou shalt come,
To take him Thou hast led by Thine eye
To Thyself in Thy heavenly home.
Till then ‘tis the path Thou hast trod,
My delight and my comfort shall be;
I’m content with Thy staff and Thy rod,
Till with Thee all Thy glory I see.

Chapter 8

Spiritual Worship

We want the reader to open his Bible and read 1 Pet. 2:1-9. In this lovely Scripture he will find three words on which we shall ask him to dwell with us for a little. They are words of weight and power -- words which indicate three great branches of practical Christian truth -- words conveying to our hearts a fact which we cannot too deeply ponder; namely, that Christianity is a living and divine reality. It is not a set of doctrines, however true; a system of ordinances, however imposing; a number of rules and regulations, however important. Christianity is far more than any or all of these things. It is a living, breathing, speaking, active, powerful reality -- something to be seen in the every-day life -- something to be felt in the scenes of personal, domestic history, from hour to hour -- something formative and influential -- a divine and heavenly power introduced into the scenes and circumstances through which we have to move, as men, women, and children, from Sunday morning till Saturday night. It does not consist in holding certain views and opinions.

Christianity is the life of Christ communicated *to* the believer, dwelling *in* him, and flowing out *from* him, in the ten thousand little details which go to make up our daily practical life. It has nothing ascetic, monastic, or sanctimonious about it. It is genial, cordial, lightsome, pure, elevated, holy -- heavenly, divine. Such is the Christianity of the New Testament. It is Christ dwelling in the believer, and reproduced, by the power of the Holy Ghost, in the believer's daily practical career. This is Christianity -- nothing else, nothing less, nothing different.

But let us turn to our three words; and may the eternal Spirit expound and apply their deep and holy meaning to our souls!

And first, then, we have the word "living."

To whom coming as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, ye also, as living stones, are built up {1 Pet. 2:4}.

Here we have what we may call the foundation of Christian priesthood. There is evidently an allusion here to that profoundly interesting scene in Matt. 16 to which we must ask the reader to turn for a moment.

When Jesus was come into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his

disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am? ³ And they said, Some say thou art John the Baptist some, Elias and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets.

There was endless speculation, simply because there was no real heart-work respecting the blessed One. Some said this, some said that; and in result no one cared who or what He was; and hence He turns away from all this heartless speculation, and puts the pointed question to His own, "But whom say ye that I am?" He desired to know what they thought about Him -- what estimate their hearts had formed of Him. "And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the *living* God."

Here we have the true confession. Here lies the solid foundation of the whole edifice of the Church of God and of all true practical Christianity -- "Christ the Son of the *living* God." No more dim shadows, no more powerless forms, no more lifeless ordinances, all must be permeated by this new , this divine, this heavenly life which has come into this world, and is communicated to all who believe in the name of the Son of God.

And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona; for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter; and upon this rock I *will build* my Church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it {Matt. 16:17}.

Now, it is evidently to this magnificent passage that the apostle Peter refers in the second chapter of his first epistle, when he says,

To whom coming, as unto a *living* stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, ye also, as *living* stones [the same words], are built up, &c. {1 Pet. 2:5}.

All who believe in {the Lord} Jesus are partakers of His risen, victorious, *rock* life. The life of Christ, the Son of the living God, flows through all His members, and through each in particular. Thus we have the *living* God, the *living* Stone, and *living* stones. It is all life together -- life flowing down from a living source, through a living channel, and imparting itself to all believers, thus making them living stones.

3. Let the reader note this title, "*Son of man*." It is infinitely precious. It is a title indicating our Lord's rejection as the Messiah, and leading out into that wide, that universal sphere over which He is destined, in the counsels of God, to rule. It far wider than Son of David, or Son of Abraham, and has peculiar charms for us, inasmuch as it places Him before our hearts as the lonely, outcast stranger, and yet as the One who links Himself in perfect grace with us in all our need -- One whose footprints we can trace all across the dreary desert. "The Son of Man hath not where to lay his head." And yet it is as Son of man that He shall by and by exercise that universal dominion reserved for Him according to the eternal counsels of God. (See Dan. 7.)

Now, this life having been tried and tested in every possible way , and having come forth victorious, can never again be called to pass through any process of trial, testing, or judgment whatsoever. It has passed through death and judgment. It has gone down under all the waves and billows of divine wrath, and come forth, at the other side, in resurrection, in divine glory and power -- a life victorious, heavenly, and divine, beyond the reach of all the powers of darkness. There is no power of earth or hell, men or devils, that can possibly touch the life which is possessed by the very smallest and most insignificant stone in Christ's assembly. All believers are built upon the living Stone, Christ; and are thus constituted living stones. He makes them like Himself in every respect, save of course in His incommunicable Deity . Is He a living Stone? They are living stones. Is He a precious Stone? They are precious stones. Is He a rejected Stone? They are rejected stones -- rejected, disallowed of men. They are in every respect identified with Him. Ineffable privilege!

Here then, we repeat, is the solid foundation of the Christian priesthood -- the priesthood of all believers. Before any one can offer up a spiritual sacrifice, he must come to Christ in simple faith, and be built on Him as the foundation of the whole spiritual building.

Wherefore also it is contained in the Scripture (Isa. 28:16), Behold, I lay in Zion a chief corner-stone, elect, precious; and he that believeth in him shall not be confounded {1 Pet. 2:6}.

How precious are these words! God Himself has laid the foundation, and that foundation is Christ; and all who simply believe in Christ, all who give Him the confidence of their hearts, all who rest satisfied with Him, are made partakers of His resurrection life, and thus made living stones.

How blessedly simple is this! We are not asked to assist in laying the foundation. We are not called upon to add the weight of a feather to it. God has laid the foundation, and all we have to do is to believe and rest thereon; and He pledges His faithful word that we shall never be confounded. The very feeblest believer in {the Lord} Jesus has God's own gracious assurance that he shall never be confounded, never be ashamed, never come into judgment {John 5:24}. He is as free from all charge of guilt and every breath of condemnation as that living Rock on whom he is built.

Beloved reader, are you on this foundation? Are you built on Christ? Have you come to Him as God's living stone, and given Him the full confidence of your heart? Are you thoroughly satisfied with God's foundation? or are you seeking to add something of your own -- your own works, your prayers, your ordinances, your vows and resolutions, your religious duties? If so, if you are seeking to add the smallest jot or tittle to God's Christ, you may rest assured you will be confounded. God will not suffer such dishonor to be offered to His tried, elect, precious chief-corner Stone. Think you that He could allow aught, no

matter what, to be placed beside His beloved Son, in order to form, with Him, the foundation of His spiritual edifice? The bare thought were an impious blasphemy. No; it must be Christ alone. He is enough for God, and He may well be enough for us; and nothing is more certain than that all who reject or neglect, turn away from or add to, God's foundation, shall be covered with everlasting confusion.

But, having glanced at the foundation, let us look at the superstructure. This will lead us to the second of our three weighty words.

To whom coming as unto a *living* stone ye also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house, an *holy* priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ {1 Pet. 2:5}.

All true believers are holy priests . . . The apostle does not say, *Ye ought to be* living stones, and, *Ye ought to be* holy priests. He says ye *are* such. No doubt, being such, we are called upon to act accordingly; but we must be in a position before we can discharge the duties belonging to it. We must be in a relationship before we can know the affections which flow out of it. We do not become priests by offering priestly sacrifices. But being, through grace, made priests, we are called upon to present the sacrifice. If we were to live a thousand years twice told, and spend all that time working, we could not work ourselves into the position of holy priests; but the moment we believe in Jesus, the moment we come to Him in simple faith, the moment we give Him the full confidence of our hearts, we are . . . then privileged to draw nigh and offer for the priestly sacrifice. How could any one of old have constituted himself a son of Aaron? Impossible. But being born of Aaron, he was thereby made a member of the priestly house. We speak not now of capacity, but simply of the position. This latter was reached not by effort, but by birth.

And now, let us enquire as to the nature of the sacrifice which, as holy priests, we are privileged to offer. We are "to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." So also in Heb. 13:15, we read,

By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to {confessing} his name.

Here, then, we have the true nature and character of that sacrifice which, as holy priests, we are to offer. It is praise, "praise to God continually." Blessed occupation! Hallowed exercise! Heavenly employment! And this is not to be an occasional thing. It is not merely at some peculiarly favored moment, when all looks bright and smiling around us. It is not to be merely amid the glow and fervor of some specially powerful public meeting, when the current of worship flows deep, wide, and rapid. No; the word is, "praise *continually*." There is no room, no time for complaining and murmuring, fretfulness and discontent, impatience and irritability, lamenting about our surroundings, whatever these may be, complaining about the weather, finding fault with those who are

associated with us whether in public or in private, whether in the congregation, in the business, or in the family circle.

Holy priests should have no time for any of these things. They are brought nigh to God, in holy liberty, peace, and blessing. They breathe the atmosphere, and walk in the sunlight of the divine presence, in the new creation, where there are no materials for a sour and discontented mind to feed upon. We may set it down as a fixed principle, an axiom, that whenever we hear any one pouring out a string of complaints about circumstances and about his neighbors, such an one is not realizing the place of holy priesthood, and, as a consequence, not exhibiting its practical fruits. A holy priest is always happy, always bright, always praising God.⁴ True, he may be tried in a thousand ways; but he brings his trials to God in communion, not to his fellow-man in complaining. “Hallelujah” is the proper utterance of the very feeblest member of the Christian priesthood.

But we must now look, for a moment, at the third and last branch of our present theme. This is presented in that highly expressive word “royal.” The apostle goes on to say,

But ye are a chosen generation, a *royal* priesthood . . . that ye should show forth the virtues [see margin] of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light { 1 Pet. 2:9}.

This completes the lovely picture of the Christian priesthood.⁵ As *holy* priests, we draw nigh to God, and present the sacrifice of praise. As *royal* priests we go forth among our fellow-men, in all the details of practical daily life, to show forth the virtues, the graces, the lovely moral features of Christ. Every movement of a royal priest should emit the fragrance of the grace of Christ.

Mark, again, the apostle does not say, “*Ye ought to be* royal priests.” He says “*ye are*”; and as such we are to show forth the virtues of Christ. Nothing else becomes a member of the royal priesthood. To be occupied with myself; to be taking counsel for my own ease, my own interest, my own enjoyment, to be seeking my own ends, and caring about my own things, is not the act of a royal priest at all. Christ never did so; and I am called to show forth His virtue. He, blessed be His name, grants to His people, in this the time of His absence, to anticipate the day when He shall come forth as a Royal Priest, and sit upon His

4. {A believer is always a holy priest, even when sad. And, a holy priest may not always be acting as one.}

5. The intelligent reader does not need to be told that all believers are priests; and, further, that there is no such thing as a priest upon earth save in the sense in which all true Christians are priests. The idea of a certain set of men calling themselves priests in contrast with the people, a certain *caste* distinguished by title and dress from the body of Christians, is not Christianity at all, but Judaism, or worse. All who read the Bible and how to its authority are thoroughly clear as to these things.

throne {Zecj. 6:13}, and send forth the benign influence of His dominion to the ends of the earth . . .

And let none suppose that the actings of a royal priest are to be confined to the matter of giving. This would be a grave mistake. No doubt a royal priest will give, and give liberally if he has it; but to limit him to the mere matter of communicating would be to rob him of some of the most precious functions of his position. The very man who penned the words on which we are dwelling said on one occasion -- and said it without shame, "Silver and gold have I none"; and yet at that very moment he was acting as a royal priest, by bringing the precious virtue of the name of Jesus to bear on the impotent man (Acts 3). The blessed Master Himself, we may safely affirm, never possessed a penny; but He went about doing good; and so should we nor do we need money to do it. Indeed it very often happens that we do mischief instead of good with our silver and gold. We may take people off the ground on which God has placed them, namely, the ground of honest industry, and make them dependent upon human alms. Moreover, we may often make hypocrites and sycophants of people by our injudicious use of money.

Hence, therefore, let no one imagine that he cannot act as a royal priest without earthly riches. What riches are required to speak a kindly word, to drop the tear of sympathy, to give the soothing genial look? None whatever save the riches of God's grace -- the unsearchable riches of Christ, all of which are laid open to the most obscure member of the Christian priesthood. I may be in rags, without a penny in the world, and yet carry myself blessedly as a royal priest, by diffusing around me the fragrance of the grace of Christ.

But, perhaps, we cannot more suitably close these few remarks on the Christian priesthood, than by giving a very vivid illustration drawn from the inspired page -- the narrative of two beloved servants of Christ who were enabled, under the most distressing circumstances, to acquit themselves as holy and royal priests.

Turn to Acts 16:19-34. Here we have Paul and Silas thrust into the innermost part of the prison at Philippi, their backs covered with stripes, and their feet fast in the stocks, in the darkness of the midnight hour . What were they doing? murmuring and complaining? Ah, no. They had something better and brighter to do. Here were two really "living stones," and nothing that earth or hell could do could hinder the life that was in them expressing itself in its proper accents.

But what, we repeat, were these living stones doing? these partakers of the rock life, the victorious, resurrection life of Christ, how did they employ themselves? Well, then, in the first place, as *holy* priests they offered the sacrifice of praise to God. Yes, "at midnight, Paul and Silas prayed and sang praises to God." How precious is this! How morally glorious! How truly

refreshing! What are stripes or stocks, or prison walls, or gloomy nights, to living stones and holy priests? Nothing more than a dark background to throw out into bright and beauteous relief the living grace that is in them. Talk of circumstances! Ah! it is little any of us know of trying circumstances. Poor things that we are, the petty annoyances of daily life are often more than enough to cause us to lose our mental balance. Paul and Silas were really in trying circumstances; but they were there as living stones and holy priests.

Yes, reader, and they were there as royal priests likewise. How does this appear? Certainly not by scattering silver and gold.

It is not likely the dear men had much of these to scatter. But oh! they had what was better, even “the virtues of Him who had called them out of darkness into His marvelous light.” And where do these virtues shine out? In those touching words addressed to the gaoler {jailor}, “*Do thyself no harm.*” These were the accents of a *royal* priest, just as the song of praise was the voice of a *holy* priest. Thank God for both! The voices of the holy priests went directly up to the throne of God and did their work there; and the words of the royal priests went directly to the gaoler’s hard heart and did their work there. God was glorified and the gaoler saved by two men rightly discharging the functions of “*the Christian priesthood.*”

Chapter 9

True Service for Christ

Heb. 13:17-25

The spirit of obedience is the great secret of all godliness. The spring of all evil from the beginning has been independence of will. Obedience is the only rightful state of the creature, or God would cease to be supreme, would cease to be God. Wherever there is independence, there there is always sin.

This rule, if remembered, would wonderfully help us in guiding our conduct.

There is no case whatever in which we ought to do our own will; for then we have not the capacity, either of judging rightly about our conduct or of bringing it before God. I may be called upon to act independently of the highest authority in the world, but it ought never to be on the principle that I am doing my own will.

The liberty of the saint is not licence to do his own will.⁶ If anything could have taken away the liberty of the Lord Jesus, it would have been the hindering Him in being always obedient to the will of God. All that moves in the sphere of man's will is *sin*. Christianity pronounces the assertion of its exercise to be *the principle of sin*. We are sanctified unto obedience (1 Pet. 1:2). The essence of sanctification is the having no will of our own. If I were as wise (so to speak) as Lucifer, and it ministered to my own will, all my wisdom would come to be folly. True slavery is the being enslaved by our own will; and true liberty consists in our having our own wills entirely set aside. When we are doing our own wills, self is our center.

The Lord Jesus took upon Himself the form of a *servant*, and,

being found in fashion as a man, He humbled himself, and became *obedient* unto death, even the death of the cross (Phil. 2:6-8).

6. An entire self-renunciation (and that goes very far when we know the subtlety of the heart) is the only means of walking with the full blessing that belongs to our happy position of service to God, our brethren, and mankind.

When man became a sinner, he ceased to be a servant, though he is, in sin and rebellion, the slave of a mightier rebel than himself. When we are sanctified, we are brought into the place of servants, as well as that of sons. The spirit of Sonship just manifested itself in {the Lord] Jesus, in coming to do the Father's will. Satan sought to make His Sonship at variance with unqualified obedience to God; but the Lord Jesus would never do any thing, from the beginning to the end of His life, but the Father's will.

In this chapter, the spirit of obedience is enforced towards those who rule in the church --

Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves" (v. 17).

It is for our profit, in everything, to seek after this spirit. "They watch for your souls," says the apostle, "as they that must give account." Those whom the Lord puts into service He makes *responsible to Himself*. That is the real secret of all true service. It should not be right,⁷ that guides, either those who rule, or those who obey. They are servants, and that is their responsibility. Woe unto them if they do not guide, direct, rebuke, &c.; if they do not do it, "*the Lord*" will require it of them. On the other hand, those counseled become directly responsible to "the Lord" for obedience.

The great guardian principle of all conduct in the Church of God is personal responsibility to "the Lord."

No guidance of another can ever come in between an individual's conscience and God. In popery {Romanism}, this individual responsibility to God is taken away.⁸ Those who are spoken of in this chapter, as having the rule in the church, had to "give account" of their own conduct, and not of souls which were committed to them. There is no such thing as giving an account of other people's souls; "every one of us must give an account of himself to God" (Rom. 14:12). Individual responsibility always secures the maintenance of God's authority. If those who watched for their souls had been faithful in their

7. "Right," in the human sense of it, is some title to exercise his own will in man, unimpeded by the interference of another. *Now Christianity entirely sets this aside*. It may be very speciously maintained, by dwelling only on the latter half of the definition, because grace does give a title against the interference of another; *but that title is in, and by virtue of, responsibility to God*. But the light which Christianity sheds on this, is not my meddling with the will of that other, but my obligation to do the will of God at all cost.

8. The authority of the church is confessedly antecedent to the authority of the word in Romanism, and the saints are not, all of them, allowed to be the immediate objects of God's own word, nor act upon it, that is, be subject to it. They are to be subject to the church. Let the church allow it or not, that makes no difference. He who allows can hinder; that is, hinder God's addressing the saints. For this is the true question of Protestantism, not man's title to the Bible merely, but God's title to address man directly by His word; more particularly, to address each of His own servants, or those professedly such.

service, they would not have to give account “with grief” so far as they were concerned but still it might be very “unprofitable” for the others if they acted disobediently.

Wherever the principle of obedience is not in our hearts, all is wrong, there is nothing but sin. The principle which actuates us in our conduct should never be, “I must do what *I* think right”; but, “*I ought to obey God*” (Acts 5:29).⁹

The apostle then says, “Pray for us: for we trust we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly” (v. 18). It is always the snare of those who are occupied with the things of God continually not to have a “good conscience.” No person is so liable to a fall as one who is continually ministering the truth of God, if he be not careful to maintain a “good conscience.” The continually talking about truth, and the being occupied about other people, has a tendency to harden the conscience. The apostle does not say, ‘Pray for us, for we are laboring hard, and the like ’; but that which gives him confidence in asking their prayers is, *that he has a “good conscience.”* We see the same principle spoken of in 1 Tim. 1:19:

Holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck.

Where there is not diligence in seeking to maintain a “good conscience,” Satan comes in and destroys confidence between the soul and God, or we get into false confidence. Where there is the sense of the presence of God, there is the spirit of lowly obedience.¹⁰ The moment that a person is very active in service, or has much knowledge, and is put forward in any way in the church, there is the danger of not having a good conscience.

It is blessed to see the way in which, in vv. 20, 21, the apostle returns, after all his exercise and trial of spirit, to the thought of God’s being “the God of peace.” He was taken from them, and was in bondage and trial himself; he

9. Peter’s answer seems to meet both of two great classes by whom the true principle of obedience is lost sight of and abused -- those who plead obedience, and those who plead liberty. The one plead liberty -- rights -- the title to do, as regards men, what they please. The other claim obedience, and plead frequently the principle; but it is still to men, and not to God. “We ought to obey God,” is the Christian’s answer to both. “We ought to obey,” I say to the man who claims rights: “We ought to obey *God*,” to the man who pleads the principle of obedience in defense of that which rests merely on the authority of man and his ways -- “We ought to obey God, *rather than man*.” How perfect is Scripture in setting in order the ways of men, the narrow path which no other power detects, as revealing the principles of the human mind, and judging them. Self-will is never right. Obedience to man is often wrong -- disobedience to God.

10. The sense of the presence of God will keep every thing in its place. The same Lord has said, “All ye are brethren;” and, “Strengthen thy brethren.” In order truly to strengthen them, some painful experience of self will always be necessary, as in the case of Peter. It is not thus that man would have appointed; but God had so ordered.

enters, moreover, into all the troubles of these saints, and is extremely anxious evidently about them; and yet he is able to turn quietly to God, as “the God of peace.”

We are called unto peace. Paul closes his second epistle to the Thessalonians with, “Now the Lord of peace Himself give you peace always by all means.” There is nothing that the soul of the believer is more brought to feel than that he has “need of patience” (Heb. 10:36); but if he is hindered by any thing from finding God to be “the God of peace,” if sorrow and trial hinder this, there is the *will of the flesh* at work. There cannot be the quiet doing of *God’s will* if the mind be troubled and fluttered. It is completely our privilege to walk and to be settled in peace; to have no uneasiness with God, but to be quietly seeking His will. It is impossible to have holy clearness of mind, unless God be known as “the God of peace.” When every thing was removed out of God’s sight but Christ, God was “the God of *peace*.” Suppose then that I find out that I am an utterly worthless sinner, but see the Lord Jesus standing in the presence of God, I have perfect peace. This sense of peace becomes distracted when we are looking at the difficulties by the way; for, when the charge and care of any thing rests on our minds, God ceases practically to be “the God of peace.”

There are three steps.

1. The knowledge that God has “made peace through the blood of the cross” (Col. 1:20). This gives us “*peace with God*.” (Rom. 5:1).
2. As it regards all our cares and troubles, the promise is, that if we have cast them on God, “*the peace of God*, which passeth all understanding, shall keep our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” (See Phil. 4:6, 7.) God burdens Himself about everything for us, yet He is never disturbed or troubled, and, it is said, that *His* peace shall “keep our hearts and minds.” If {the Lord} Jesus walked on the troubled sea, He was just as much at peace as ever: He was far above the waves and billows.
3. There is a further step; viz., He, who is “the God of peace,” being with us, and working in us to will and to do of His own good pleasure” (see vv. 20, 21). The holy power of God is here described as keeping the soul in those things which are well-pleasing to Him, through Jesus Christ.

There was war -- war with Satan, and in our own consciences. That met its crisis on the cross of the Lord Jesus. The moment that He was raised from the dead, God was made known, fully, as “the God of peace.” He could not leave His Son in the grave; the whole power of the enemy was exercised to its fullest extent; and God brought the Lord Jesus into the place of peace, and us also who believe on Him, and became nothing less than “the God of peace.”

He is “the God of peace,” both as regards our sins, and as regards our circumstances. But it is only in His presence that there is settled peace. The

moment we get into human thoughts and reasonings about circumstances, we get troubled. Not only has peace been made for us by the atonement, but it rests upon the power of Him who raised up Jesus again from the dead; and therefore we know Him as “the God of peace.”

The blessing of the saint does not depend upon the old covenant, to which man was a party, and which might, therefore, fail; but upon that God, who, through all the trouble and the power of Satan, “brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus,” and thus secured “eternal redemption” (Heb. 9:12). All that God Himself had pronounced as to judgment against sin, and all the wicked power of Satan, rested on Jesus, on the cross; and God Himself has raised Him from the dead. Here, then, we have full comfort and confidence of soul. “Nothing can separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord,” argues faith (see Rom. 8:31-39); for when all our sins had been laid upon Jesus, God in mighty power “brought again from the dead that Great Shepherd of the sheep, *through the blood of the everlasting covenant*” {Heb. 13:20}. The blood was as much the proof and witness of the love of God to the sinner as it was of the justice and majesty of God against sin. This covenant is founded on the truth and holiness of the eternal God having been fully met and answered in the cross of the Lord Jesus. His precious blood has met every claim of God. If God be not “the God of *peace*,” He must be asserting the insufficiency of the blood of His dear Son. And this we know is impossible. God rests in it as a sweet savor.

Then, as to the effect of all this on the life of the saint, the knowledge of it produces fellowship with God and delight in doing His will. He “works in us,” as it is said here, “that which is well-pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ.”

The only thing that ought to make any hesitation in the saint’s mind about departing to be with Christ is the doing *God’s will* here. We may suppose such an one thinking of the joy of being with Christ, and then being arrested by the desire of doing God’s will here. (See Phil. 1:20-25.) That assumes confidence in God as “the God of peace,” and confidence in His sustaining power whilst here. If the soul is laboring in the turmoil of its own mind, it cannot have the blessing of knowing God as “the God of peace.”

The flesh is so easily aroused, that there is often the need of the word of exhortation, “I beseech you, brethren, suffer the word of exhortation” (v. 22). The spirit of obedience is the only spirit of holiness.

The Lord give us grace to walk in His ways.

Aids to Believers

Dr. C. J. Davis

A New and Revised Edition

Edited by W. S.

Having been requested by the publisher {London: Alfred Holness} to carefully revise the valuable work of the late Dr. Davis, I have pleasure in doing so.

I know of no work of a similar kind. The subjects treated of cover a wide and interesting circle of truth, and are of commanding interest, while the gracious spirit, so characteristic of the author, pervades the whole book. Dr. Davis possessed in no ordinary degree the faculty of communicating his thoughts, whether in oral or written ministry, with remarkable clearness and unction; and the Christian reader may rest assured that *Aids to Believers* is a book which may be read with much profit to himself and others.

We are glad to see that the Publisher has also issued the work in Five separate papers, which will no doubt be appreciated by many.

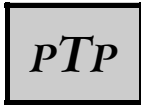
W. S.

Glasgow, 1880.

* * * * *

Note to this Edition

Footnote in brackets ending with -- Ed. [Ed.] are notes added by W. S., above. Some Scripture references, and clarifying words, and footnotes have been added in braces { } for this edition (1999; reprint 2003, 2005).



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Chapter 1

The Personal Return of the Lord Jesus

1 Thess. 4:13-18

Preface

Desiring to be a servant of Jesus Christ to *all* who own a common Savior, I dare not refuse to give in my feeble testimony to the truth respecting the coming of the Lord as that which should be the *proximate hope* of every *believer*.

To many of my readers the theme will be not only *new*, but contrary to former notions. Let me advise such just to "Search the *Scriptures* whether these things are so;" and if so, let the simplicity of faith accept them with gratitude to Him who has borne so long with our ignorance.

As regards many truths we have had to exclaim, "Why did I not see them before!" So if you avoid reasoning and argument -- as children of faith should do -- your proper hope will be made plain to you, and the name of the Lord magnified by you.

The question is one affecting the glory of the person of the Lord Jesus. To have His redeemed with Him in bodies of glory like His own -- to rule this world now in rebellion -- to gather Israel, now scattered and peeled -- to execute judgment on rejecters of His grace -- to swallow up death in victory -- to bind Satan, our common foe -- to judge the wicked dead -- Scripture says HE must do all these. Into these secrets He has led His saints. Do we grudge Him His glory in those things?

Then let us turn from our own thoughts to things concerning *Him*. May He deign to use the following finger-posts as guides for my dear readers to His own truth!

May Himself be abundantly ministered to the souls of all that search His Word, in which to His saints He says,

"Surely I come quickly."

C. J. DAVIS.

The converts at Thessalonica to whom Paul preached “turned to God from idols to serve the living and the true God, and to *wait* for *His Son* from heaven” (1 Thess. 1:9, 10). They looked back at the *past* when they were against God; they believed *at the time* Paul wrote them that they were children of God; and they were looking forward to and hoping to see *Himself* in person who loved them and gave Himself for them.

Having The Blessing, They Longed to See The Blesser

No truth could be more solemnly affecting than this -- solemnly affecting to every one of you, beloved friends, that now listen to me.

If saved *now*, if sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty *now*, what can be more calculated to draw out worship, adoration, and praise than to be reminded that He who *appeared* once to put away sin, and who appears now before God for us, will once more come to take us soul and body, fashioned like His own, to be with Himself for ever! Do we not rejoice in the hope of seeing one we love? (Read Heb. 9:24, 26, 28; and Phil. 3:20, 21). And this *is* our hope.

But if found rejecting Christ, whom God offers for your righteousness, let me ask you how shall you meet those eyes of fire? (Rev. 1:14.) For soon after the saved ones are caught up to be with the Lord forever, the Lord will then be *revealed* in flaming fire to take vengeance on them that know not God and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Thess. 1:7, 8). While I put this blessed theme forward to-night as the hope of believers, and that which should be effective in shaping our walk in the present scene, let us desire earnestly that the Holy Ghost may use it to *allure* to the blessed Lord some that are not saved; and to *alarm* from their supine condition of calm indifference such as are asleep -- it may be just a moment before their execution. Each of us, every man from Adam to the last born in this world *must* -- I say again, *must* -- have to do with *Jesus*, either as those that, knowing He has washed them from their sins in His own blood (Rev. 1:5), can say to Him, “Come, Lord Jesus” (Rev. 22: 20); or *must* be connected with Him, like those that shall say to rocks and mountains, “Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb”(Rev. 6:16), for the word is emphatic.

“Every Eye Shall See Him” (Rev. 1:7)

You see, therefore, how differently the blessed Lord will stand related to men when He rises again from the throne. In the days of Noah eight persons were

calm and peaceful before the flood came, and were so during all the time it lasted; but who can imagine the horror of the shut-out ones when the flood came! "Noah, Noah, open to us," many of the carpenters of the Ark, and others of Noah's neighbors, might cry. But he could not, for God had shut him *in* and them *out*. So if the Lord came now, some would know Him as Savior, some as Judge! Those that are one with Christ in resurrection will go up in their order at His coming. God's plan is

- (1) Christ the first fruits -- that is passed;
- (2) then they that are Christ's at His coming -- of this, our hope, I am speaking now; and
- (3) then the end (1 Cor. 15:23, 24, compare with v. 20).

The saved living ones will be taken away with the raised "dead in Christ" (or the Christian dead), but the world will continue with its business; that wicked one ¹ -- Antichrist -- will then be revealed. Judgments on living nations will be poured out, and so terrible indeed will they be that men will seek death, but death will flee from them (Rev. 9:6). Men shall then be scorched with fire, and shall blaspheme the name of God (Rev. 16:8-11). Shall any of you be among the number, beloved? God forbid! Do come to the *Savior* now, ere He *comes* in judgment to you. The rest of the dead (i.e., the wicked dead) shall not be raised for 1000 ² years (Rev. 20:5), and when raised, it shall be to stand before the great white throne to receive sentence of eternal banishment. The book of life will be opened to show that their names are not in it (Rev. 20:11-15). The saints of God are exhorted to be found "waiting" for the Lord -- "looking for that blessed hope" (Titus 2:13); but to the world, to the ungodly, to the rejecters, He will appear as a thief in the night. He will find them, as in the days of Noah, eating, drinking, marrying, and doing everything that men seek happiness from -- who are not owning Christ, who are rejecting Him and His truth, "as in the days of Noah." I dare say that some of you think that we believers are the biggest fools in Christendom. So did the neighbors of Noah regard him as a madman for building such a huge ship on dry land, and his preaching was laughed at; but the flood overtook them notwithstanding. The fact is solemnly recorded, and I lift up my voice and warn you (Luke 17:26, 27).

The heart of man has not been changed since Noah's time -- men scoff now as men did then. I wish I could so show these truths, as to alarm such as

1. [After the "falling away" or apostasy of Christendom from the faith has taken place (2 Thess. 2:3). Ed.]

2. [That is at the *close* of the kingdom or millennium, the righteous having been raised before its *commencement*. Ed.]

are at ease on the verge of the dispensation of grace. Think of a man being fast asleep at the bottom of a coal pit while the fire was approaching him! A friend wakes him up, and offers to lead him to the “lift,” which is being quickly let down to carry up the poor miners in danger. He says, “Don’t trouble me; leave me alone. I don’t believe you moreover.” His almost broken-hearted friend goes up himself on the “lift,” and just reaches the top as the fumes, rushing up the shaft, declare that the whole of the pit is delivered to the flames which consume one who for the first time then believed -- when it was *too late*.

What say you of such a man? “That he is a fool.” Is this your calm and sober judgment? *Thou* art such a man. Yet I say to you the last gospel lift has not yet left you. You may be saved *now* by believing in Jesus. Another opportunity may never be afforded you. I do, in the stead of Christ, beseech you. “Turn and live” NOW (2 Cor. 5:20-22).

The personal return of the Lord Jesus is necessary too for the bringing into blessing in this earth, *Israel*, the nation now scattered and peeled, and with them the *nations*. Such is God’s counsel. Israel *must* be the first among the nations (Deut. 28:1; Zech. 8; Isa. 2:2; Mal. 3:12), notwithstanding the unbelief of the boasting Gentiles. There shall *come* the Deliverer out of Zion, and all Israel shall then be blessed. (Compare Rom. 11:20 with Isa. 59:20, 60, 61, &c.) Jerusalem is to become a praise in the earth, and over Israel is to reign “the Lord God Omnipotent,” to whose reign all nations shall bow. His kingdom shall be from sea to sea -- from the river to the ends of the earth. Before His reign over the earth commences, those terrible judgments of the Book of Revelation (chs. 6 to 19) are to be poured out, when, I judge, that ploughshares shall be turned into swords, and pruning hooks into spears (Joel 3:10).

Of course THE SAINTS SHALL ALREADY HAVE BEEN CAUGHT UP. In 1 Thess. 4 we read of the catching up of the believers, and in the fifth chapter of the judgments coming upon Israel and upon the nations, as travail upon a woman with child, and they shall not escape.

Again, we find the Lord promising those that have an ear to hear, in Rev. 3:10, that He will keep them (lit., take them away) from the hour of trial which shall come upon all the world. This sweet reminder of the blessed Lord is so very precious given, in the last but one (Philadelphia) of the seven-fold view of the church for testimony in the earth, just before He spues the empty shell-like professing thing (Laodicea) out of His mouth. The word is to us to-day; may our ears be open to hear it. These are the Philadelphian days, and the shadow of Laodicea is already casting. May this word awaken us, and lead us, in much dependence, to Him who is holy, and Him who is true, who hath the key of David. But again, see the order in the book of

Revelation.

1. The Lord is presented as the Judge (Rev. 1) in the midst of the seven churches; and, as such, He now graciously approves of what the individual members do in His name, and will manifest them at His coming. He also marks what has a name to live, but is dead, and what admits Balaam, Jezebel, &c.
2. In Rev. 2 and 3 we see the history of Christendom -- the outward testimony in this world, with the hints "that have ears to hear," from the Apostolic (Ephesus) times to Laodicea, when it shall be wholly removed. In the midst, as I said before, the Lord is Judge.
3. In parenthesis, so to say, the Church is seen up in glory praising in chs. 4 and 5, removed from the judgment which commences in Rev. 6, and continues to Rev. 19. These judgments occupy Daniel's seventieth week -- this is prophecy, and not our hope.
4. Then the Lord is seen reigning a thousand years (Rev. 20).
5. The judgment of the wicked dead, before the white throne, is brought into view; and
6. Lastly, the eternal state {Rev. 21:1-8}.

Believers in the Lord Jesus, who will bow to the authority of His word, notwithstanding all that is taught to the contrary, will see that these terrible judgments are to be executed, *after* the rapture of His saints, by the LORD HIMSELF,³ of whom the Jews said, "His blood be on us, and on our children"; and these blessings to be introduced by Him whom men rejected, but whom the heavens received until -- mark that adverb -- *until* the times of the restitution of all things. For such restitution then He must leave the place He now occupies. And this is just what the Holy Ghost teaches. And would less than this be worthy of Him? Let such as love Him answer.

Let those that refuse to own these truths, and read the blessings in Isaiah, &c. -- as "blessings to the CHURCH" -- continue to covet their neighbor's goods; which (goods) are all for an *earthly* people; while believers in Christ are "blessed with all *spiritual* blessings in the *heavenlies* in Christ" (Eph. 1:3). Believers in Christ, as children of Abraham, get the *heavenly* side of the promise -- "stars of the heavens"; Israel (and with them the nations) get the *earthly* side--"sand of the seashore" (Heb. 11:12).

3. [Providentially, of course. The Lord does not directly appear till (Rev. 19:11) the seal judgments are connected with the Lamb; the trumpet judgments with the angels, while in the vials are filled up the wrath of God; but the judgments executed by the "LORD HIMSELF" are of a distinct order and character from the foregoing . Ed.]

Despite their foolish scepticisms, the Lord will accomplish His purposes, “*as it is written.*”

How persons will be so bold as to spiritualize such a chapter, for example, as Isa. 18, I cannot say. There we read of a people -- the Jews -- scattered and peeled, whose lands are trodden down. This people are to be carried as a present to the Lord of Hosts to Mount Zion. (Mount Zion is as *literal* in Isaiah, as Moab, Assyria, Babylon, &c. If you spiritualize one, you must ALL, and where will you stop?) Swift vessels of bulrushes (literally steamers, such a word the translators had not in 1604) are to be sent to pick them up, and the Jews now found in all climes are to be found in Canaan; and over them is to reign, on the throne of David, “The Lord our Righteousness.” This is what the Holy Ghost declares, and faith need not pry into the *how* or the *when*. It adds its hearty “amen,” and leaves the *manner* and the *time* to Him to whom all power is given in heaven and on earth.

It was necessary; perhaps, that I should, in this introductory manner, help some to see the way in which the personal return of the Lord Jesus is connected

1. with His saints *for* whom He will descend into the air {1 Thess. 4};
2. with rejectors of the Gospel, to whom He will come *with* His saints to execute judgments (Jude 14, 15);
3. with the nations generally, whom He shall rule with a rod of iron, and break in pieces as a potter's vessel (Psa. 2);
4. with Israel, over whom, the judgments being passed, *He* shall reign as king, when the opposite prophecy to that in Joel 3 shall be fulfilled -- when the swords shall be beaten into ploughshares and spears into pruning hooks (Isa. 2:4). And why? Because the Lord is reigning in His holy mountain. “The Lord God Omnipotent reigneth” (Rev. 16:6).

This is the time of grace; now He beseeches, allures, and woos by the Spirit through the preached word; *now* He sympathizes with His loved and oppressed ones, walking with them in their furnaces of trouble and opposition for His name's sake. Because this -- the true place of the believer now in the world -- is not seen, we talk about “sending troops and men-of-war to protect our missionaries.” Has the Lord changed the normal relationship of His saints to the world since He said,

If they have persecuted ME, they will persecute you?

And has the heart of man changed since Paul and other disciples were hunted for their lives, because they preached Jesus? Not a bit of it. Worldly Christians will not understand this. The true followers of the “despised Nazarene” have His sympathy now.

They that will live godly in Christ Jesus must suffer persecution.

But, lo! “*I am with you.*” is comforting. *Then* it will be to exert, to put forth His power, and make all feel it. But please note, “*at His appearing.*”

Those that love Him must truly desire the exhibition of His glory, His power and strength in this scene where He was rejected -- they will “love His appearing” (2 Tim. 4:8). *All* said of Him in Isa. 61:1-3 -- every iota of it -- every jot -- *must* be made true in Himself, by Himself.

Now, when we compare that Scripture with Luke 4:18, 19, we see at once -- at least those must see whom Satan hath not blinded -- that the gospel is preached to the poor; Christ heals the broken-hearted; gives freedom to captive ones; sight to the blind; liberty to the bruised; and declares “the acceptable year of the Lord.”

In a word, all that meets the need of the sinner and saint is brought out most blessedly. And then He closed the book and said to His hearers, “This day is *this Scripture* fulfilled in your ears.” Mark, beloved, “*this Scripture.*” But is that all said of Him in the portion from which He quoted? Look back, and see -- “And the day of vengeance of our God: to comfort them that mourn in Zion,” &c.

In grace He permits a long space to intervene between this Scripture, *so far as He quoted it*, and that which remains to be fulfilled. But though heaven and earth pass away, not one jot or tittle of His word shall, till *all* be fulfilled.

Hence All This Awaits His Personal Return

Moreover, the earth itself is to be blessed by Him; groaning creation -- the animals now subject to man’s vanity -- are to be brought into the liberty which the *glory* introduces. As another has said, “The creature has not part in the liberty of *grace*; it will in that which *glory* gives” (cp. Rom. 8:19-24, and Isa. 41:1-9). But Himself must do this. I am just reminded of a Christian gentleman who saw once, for the first time -- after many years of fruitless attempts to spiritualize all the prophecies about Israel and the earth -- that this Scripture was to be *literally* fulfilled when the Lord Himself reigned King over the earth. He said to me, “I hope that may happen in *my* time, for then it will be pleasant to live in this earth.”

He may not be the only one with such language. Some of you, my beloved hearers, may, like him, wish to be alive when God does this.

But as saints your portion is *heavenly*; you will have already been caught away to be with the Lord, and you shall be with Him -- not *upon* the earth --

when He comes *with* you to do these things.⁴

If not saved, I am pained at the recollection of the judgments through which you shall have to pass in your *bodies*. *This* may happen in your time. There is no prophecy to be fulfilled before the Lord come *for* His saints; and that coming may be NOW. Yes, before I finish this sentence the shout may be heard. His word is “quickly” -- “a little while” (Rev . 22:20, Heb. 10:37). And soon after He comes to the air *for* His saints, He Himself will come *with* His saints; and the seven years of terrible judgments -- the pouring out of the vials -- will commence upon the nations, upon Israel, and upon the false, the spurious, empty, professing Christendom. O do not trifle, my dear hearers. The Lord Himself is a reality; His coming a divine fact soon to be accomplished. Your souls are immortal Do not let this hour pass away , and another find you without the knowledge of Himself as “my Savior , *my* Lord, *my* God, *my* all.”

But the coming, as the *hope* of the believer, is what I desire specially to bring before you that love Him, and to this I now address myself. Let us look to Him that the truth may not be a *subject* merely to add to, or improve our stock of Scripture knowledge; but that which shall practically connect us in every thing we do, say , and plan, with the *object* with whom the truth deals. It is a truth of immense power when allowed to act. No lever so effective for raising us up out of “earthly things” as the knowledge that our commonwealth

is in heaven, whence we look for *the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ* , who shall change our vile bodies {body of *humiliation*} and make them like his own (Phil. 3:20, 21).

No cure of care so mighty as the truth, “I come quickly.”

In the midst of sorrow, with these words, we are to comfort one another.

It must be evident, from all I said before, that there are *various aspects* of the coming, but there is only *one* coming referred to.

When the Lord comes, however, for His saints, He will *halt* so to say, in the air. From that halting place He will shout, and the dead in Christ shall rise first, and those of us that are alive at the time shall be changed, and they and we shall go up together and meet Him in the air to be ever with Him. This is evident from 1 Thess 4:16, 17.

This I shall, for simplicity sake, denominate the *first* or *rapture* aspect, called (in Titus 2:13) “that blessed hope.” This is *for* the saints. Of the other aspect, the *appearing*, with its numerous sub-divisions, I shall say no more

4. [Rather me with Him (Col.3:4). Ed.]

just now, although it may come in occasionally. In Titus 2:13, it is referred to in the words, "appearing of the glory." In Jude 14, it is referred to when we read, "The Lord cometh *with* ten thousand of His saints (previously caught up) to execute judgment."

I am not ignorant of the existence of many who would rob God's people of this their *proper* HOPE. Hence they will twist and turn -- at least they try to do so -- all the Scriptures that teach it. But it is such an integral part of the whole plan of salvation, that the detraction of it is just like the removal of one of the stones of an arch. So interwoven is it with the wondrous fabric wrought by Christ, that the shape, color, and beauty of the whole design are lost, and the adorable Architect robbed of much praise, -- the enemy rejoicing that God's people are left to "mind earthly things," having nothing to look for but that which is common to men, death -- should it be given up.

I shall endeavor, therefore, to be as simple as I can be, that the most illiterate may understand me.

Turn with me to John 14. Let us notice

(1) that it is a *person* speaking. "*I* go," says the Lord to the disciples, "to prepare a place for you" (John 14:2). Can there be any so ignorant, or so presumptuous as to assert that any, beside the Lord in *person*, was addressing the disciples? Surely not. Then this very *person* goes on to say,

(2) "and if *I* go and prepare a place for you, *I* (not *death*) will *come* again (when He does not say) and receive you unto *myself*; that where I am, ye *may* be also." The practical truth, from this, the first announcement of the Lord's return after leaving this earth, is, or ought to be of the most profound moment to us that love Him. It reminds us of that love of Him which does not get its full satisfaction till every blood-bought one is sharing the place He has with the Father "in the Father's house." A place in the mansions {abodes} is prepared for *me*, faith says, and no one shall have that place but *me*; for my Lord says so. But the place is with the FATHER. Quite new was this to Jews that never looked above *Canaan*. But so it is. Cast out by Israel, as the Lord is, grace triumphs, as it always does, and brings out a people for mansions {abodes} with the FATHER -- brings out a *heavenly* people.⁵ Oh, what heart can enter into the amazing love that links up believers thus with the Man at God's right hand, and with His Father!

5. Of course we know that as King of Israel He was already rejected. This Matthew brings out. For in Matt. 16 we find Peter only taught of the Father in heaven, owning Him to be "the Christ, the Son of the living God"; others placing Him on a level only with Jeremiah, John the Baptist, &c. Then we read (v. 20) that the Lord himself lays by the *Messiahship* for the present. The disciples henceforth were not to teach that He was the Christ. But a new thing is brought out. The *Church* was to be built, and for it He must *die* (v. 21).

I need hardly remind you that this is fruit of His *death* and *resurrection*. Incarnation has its place; for it was necessary that as a man He should live in this scene, and declare in it what a man should be for God; while at the same time He manifested God before and unto men, defeating Satan withal. But He Himself declared that He must stand *alone* if He died not (see John 12:23, 24). The corn of wheat must go into the ground and die, that fruit (the ear) might be borne. Only as result of His *death*, and of course the inestimable worth God puts upon it, could He say,

Go and tell my BRETHREN, I ascend to my Father, and to your Father; my God, and your God" (cp. John 20:17 with Psa. 22:21 and 22).

You will, from these remarks, see the blessed connection of these latter chapters in John. In John 12 the Lord announces His *death*, and shows how as a result believers should be united to the *risen* Man. In John 13 He keeps us clean; so that He might always see, us without a spot. The word (water) applied by the Spirit should keep the feet clean of those that are bathed. In John 14, the saved ones, for whom the word is given and by which they are kept clean, are to wait for *Himself*. But while He tarries they are to be His witnesses in a world that cast *Him* out. They should be the branches of the vine (John 15) to hear fruit for His praise, such as would be of sweet savour to Himself, success for which depending on abiding in Him. The Holy Ghost should be the person here, whose very presence should be a reproof to the world for rejecting Jesus (John 14 and 16), and the *power* by which we should be true witnesses to the Lord. And lastly, the desire for the manifest *oneness* of those who are saved is expressed in John 17.

Now, when the Lord told the disciples not to be with troubled hearts, what did He mean? When persons are in sorrow, because of troubles of various kinds coming upon them, how apt are they to take the truth here, "Let not your heart be troubled," as that applicable to their case. Well, beloved, I would be the last to tell them not to get consolation from it. The Holy Ghost can use -- for He is God -- any portion of the Word for the child of faith. To the intelligent soul, however, there is a special word for every special need; but who can question that just a few portions, known to the simple ones, may be *specifics* for *all* their ailments? Souls in affliction or sorrow, therefore, *may* use this scripture as a cordial for their case, although such special truths as 1 Pet. 5:7 are not wanting.

Here, however, the Lord saw some who wept because their Lord was leaving them. They loved *Him*. Surely, beloved brethren, you and I shall be covered with shame at the contrast between the love of those poor disciples and our own. The Holy Ghost, as fruit of the glorification of Jesus, had not yet been given (John 7:39), and hence the fulness of blessing into which you and I are now brought was not yet entered into by them. Indeed, as I said

before, it could not be till the grain of wheat died and rose again {John 12:24}. Yet see the *affection* for the *person* manifested by those dear disciples.

There is a great tendency among us to be engaged with our *blessing*, while *Him* who blessed us we forget. But, as I said on a previous occasion, ours is such a perfect emancipation, complete deliverance from *sin*, *Satan*, and *SELF*, that we are left quite free to enter into God's thoughts about the person of Jesus -- to be, in fact, taken up absolutely with Himself. Bring hither the fatted calf, and let *us* eat. "Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ: *whom* having not seen we love."

A most touching example of attachment to the *person* is seen in (John 20) Mary. "The disciples went away again to their own home" after the Lord was put into the sepulcher. Is loud boasting Peter among those that could find a *home*, while the Lord, whom men rejected, lay in the sepulcher? And is loving John, too, at *home* in the scene without the Lord? Let your cheeks be covered with blushes as you learn that "Mary (only) stood without (outside a *home*) at the sepulcher weeping." She is attached to the *person*. I would fain rebuke her *ignorance* (shown in her question); but I must first question my love. Are there any of us that can desire to be somebodies in this poor , Christ-rejecting world? Do we want a place here without Him? Then to us the portion (in John 14) has no application. But to such as long to see their once-rejected Lord taking His true place, asserting His supremacy, and rejoicing in having His Bride with Him -- to such as for His name's sake are hated and cast out as the Master was -- He says, "Let not your hearts {heart} be troubled." My resurrection is the ground of your *faith* (1 Cor. 15:17), as it also is to be of your *hope* (v. 19), and of your hope you shall never be ashamed (Rom. 5:5). He who by the Spirit leads us now to cry , Abba (Rom. 8:15, 16), assures us that He Himself will "quickly" come, and take every blood-bought one and introduce them, in bodies like His own, to His Father and our Father.

(3) Again, in this portion the Lord challenges our *confidence* in His *truth*: "Ye believe in God" {John 14:1}. You have not seen Him, and yet you cannot doubt Him. Even so, "Believe also in Me." Soon *I* shall to you be invisible, as God is now . Nevertheless, take My word, as you do not doubt His, that *I* will come and take you unto Myself, that where I am ye may be also. This is our *present hope*. Why will you be robbed of it?

(4) Again observe that the Lord does not put the thinnest partition between His coming and our faith. Tell me one passage in Scripture to hinder me expecting Him *now*. You will search in vain for one. Many there are who cannot doubt that the Lord *is* to come at some time, but they are expecting "the fulfillment of certain prophecies first," or , "the conversion of the

world”; others expecting the millennium, or some other such thing first. If any of these were to be *before* our hope was realized, would the Lord have overlooked the present opportunity to put in such ideas? Surely not. Now, He is indeed wiser than all the learned of this earth put together, and faith prefers what *He* says to men’s theories, be the men ever so learned. Prophecies will be fulfilled, as I said before, in *God’s* time and nothing shall hinder them; and there shall be a millennium for this *earth* {Rev. 20:4, etc.}. But the efforts of men to bring about that which awaits the *person* of Christ will be as futile as are all the plans of Satan to rob the Lord Jesus of His glory. Meanwhile such believers, however, are losing the *joy*, and will miss the *reward* of those “that love His appearing” (2 Tim. 4:8). I repeat, therefore, that our proper hope is the Lord’s coming *for* us.⁶ Let each of us ask ourselves, “Am I longing to see, in His *glory*, *Him* whom men -- unrighteous men -- rejected? Am I concerned about His absence, or am I so linked up with *things* in this scene, ay, even *my service*, that I should prefer Him to *delay* His coming to some indefinite period?” This is a solemn *poser*, beloved. But let us not shrink back from the closest scrutiny. Do I want the *Lord* and His *glory*, or am I preferring this world, with its short-lived *pleasures* and its evanescent joys? Do I know I am for *heavenly* mansions {abodes} and *not* for *earth*? The *world* prefers Him not -- it would rather not have *Him*. What sayest thou, O my soul?

Respecting the Lord *Himself*, I may add, and surely this ought mostly to occupy us, He is waiting to display before this world, before heaven, and before everything, what He is as the exalted Son of Man. Fruit of the work on the cross, all power is given unto Him in heaven and earth (Matt. 28:18); and all things ARE PUT in subjection to *Him* (Psa. 8; Col. 1:18-20). But we see not yet all things SUBJECT to Him (Heb. 2:8). Subjection is their normal condition according to God; for every knee *shall* bow to, and tongue confess the Lordship of Jesus (Phil. 2:10, 11, with Isa. 45:23). But we do not *see* it yet, says the apostle. Then is it never to be? Let those that would keep out the Lord *Himself* answer it. In grace He tarries, for He is long-suffering; not willing that any should perish (2 Pet. 3:9). O who can estimate the patience of Him whose desire is to have His Bride with Him in glory? Who has any idea of the long-suffering that can bear with a world whose judgment lingers till He comes? In the full knowledge of His infallible might He waits in grace. He “bides His time,” as we say; for He knows what awaits His rejectors. So the Holy Ghost exhorts us to wait *with* Him (see 2 Thess. 3:5;

6. There will be no millennium without Him. He will produce it after the rapture and after the seven years of judgment. *It* is, remember, for the *earth*; we with the Lord shall not be on the earth then; but shall reign *over* it (Rev. 5:10; 20:6).

read the margin, “patience of Christ”). But if any are tired of waiting, and thus exhibiting their unwillingness to have kindred thoughts with their Lord, they are not here rebuked by this loving One. No; He cheers and comforts their hearts by renewing the old promise, which He does not forget, and which *quickly* He will fulfil, “Let not your heart be troubled.” O thrice happy are those to whom these words are applicable! Yea, blessed are those hearts which, in the unclouded communion which is theirs to enjoy with the Father and the Son, can even now have mansions within them for the abode of the Father and Son by the Spirit; till in soul and body they enter the mansion prepared for them above. And, indeed, beloved, such *is* unquestionably the portion to-day of those that love Him and keep His words. “If a man love *me* he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and *we will come* unto him and make our abode with him” -- or make a mansion of him (John 14:23). What words could be more salutary? In glory we cannot desire more than the communion of the Father and the Son. Of course, in glorified bodies we shall *fully* understand them and enjoy them. But, may I ask, what is it that is to occupy us at that time? The overpowering sight (I speak after the manner of men) of the millions of glorified saints? Will it be the gates of brass and streets of gold? ⁷ Will it be the holy angels, the ministers of His that do His pleasure? Will it be the crown worn by the Lamb who was slain? No, beloved, it will be *Himself* none less than *Himself*. Can any need more?

Not on the crown He weareth, but on His pierced hand:
The Lamb is all the glory in Emmanuel’s land.

The person who shall engage us *then*, is the one that should be uppermost in our affections *now*. Is it so, beloved friends? Is His glory so concerning us as to lead us to desire His entering upon it? Into it all, I need hardly remind you, we shall be brought; for He graciously makes us His joint-heirs (Rom. 7:17). That is, He will not assume that glory without *us*. Oh, how does the soul bend under such inimitable love! To Him now be praise, and for ever. Amen.

A view of the person of {the Lord} Jesus, in His glory, is given us in Matt. 17:1-9. Let us glance at it for a minute or two. Note, that in the previous chapter the Lord was speaking of His *rejection*. He was to go to Jerusalem to suffer and to die for the Church which He would build on the rock (Himself), owned and confessed by Peter. Well, this is very precious; for it reminds me that He who can touch the Rock of Ages can shake the steadfastness of the soul that is perched thereon. But who can? Surely not the gates of Hades; nor all the powers of hell marshaled under Satan, their much experienced chief. I say no one can, in the least, damage your security, when for once, by faith, you entrust your all to Him who gave His all for you.

7. [Scripture speaks of gates of “pearl.” not “brass.” and “street” of gold, not streets. Ed.]

Thus seated, O, my dove, let *thy* chirps be the sweetest; *thy* songs the loudest; *thy* notes the earliest; *thy* tunes the latest; *thy* praises the most constant that heaven e'er could hear. It pleases Him who placed thee there to hear His blessed name sung. Indeed, for what did He nestle thee but to hear thy voice mingling with the millions that sing

Jesus is worthy!

So much for what I get as the fruit of His sufferings.

But is the Blessed One not to have His full reward for glorifying God in this earth? Refuse to own His coming, beloved, and you deny Him that which you are persuaded He merits. Now, in this chapter we get a picture of the *Son of Man* in His glory. Moses is there representing the raised "dead in Christ" *out from among* the general dead. The living saints who, at His coming in the clouds, shall be changed in a moment *without tasting death*, are figured by Elijah; while Israel, and others with them, to be blessed *on the earth*, are represented in Peter, James, and John. But note, dear brethren, that the faces of all that occupy these concentric circles are turned towards the exalted center. He only will attract. How soon? Quickly. All in the glory there shall shine, but with the light *of the* glorious sun; but for whom darkness -- yea, the very blackness or eternal despair -- would be the lot of all. The bride, His body, shall lead the praises, in which all the glorified shall join. Angels shall not withhold their song. Israel, on earth, shall magnify their King, and nations all shall own His sway; the earth, His inheritance, too, shall rejoice and be glad. Not one opposer shall be found in all His vast domain. But for all this He waits in patience, and much is His heart gladdened as you and I are, even in this scene, praising and adoring Him, in a measure, as then most fully, and perfectly, we shall. But more than this; He looks to see those that love His appearing. Owning these truths, beloved, can our hearts not say to Him

"EVEN SO; COME, LORD JESUS"?

I shall now glance at other *Scriptures* that refer to this truth, either as the hope of the believer, or as the subject of prophecy.

After the Lord's resurrection, the, truth of His personal return is again presented to the disciples, as we find in Acts 1.

The restoration of the kingdom still occupied the hearts of the disciples. Hence their question (Acts 1:6). Well, we would be astonished at their ignorance if we did not remember that in many things *we* do not exhibit more intelligence, although the Holy Ghost (v. 8), whom they had not yet, is now freely given to us (1 John 2:20). Had not the Lord spoken of His going away to the Father, and of His coming again from thence to take them up to the Father? (John 14) Yet we see where their thoughts are. The "earthly things." instead of Christ and the heavenly -- Christ and His thoughts -- are apt to

occupy *us* too. And nothing delivers us from them but an entire engagement of the soul with CHRIST and HIS thoughts. To be somebodies in this scene; to be “great men” and “honorable” where the Lord was and is rejected, will be the insatiable longing of everyone, till “*My will*” and “*My thoughts*” are wholly swallowed up in “*His will*” and “*His word.*” *He* and *His must be first*; *I* and *mine* nowhere. This is the secret of happiness and of successful testimony for Him. Only thus may we expect a “well done” at His coming. The Lord intimates without scolding -- oh, what a patient teacher! -- that the Holy Ghost would give them power to be martyrs -- “witnesses” -- for the rejected One in the very sphere where *they* preferred to *rule* with Him.

LET THE TRUTH BE DISTINCTLY LEARNT THAT THE REDEEMED OF THE LORD ARE NOW APPREHENDED BY THE HOLY GHOST, AND ENDUED WITH HIS POWER TO BE *SUFFERERS IN*, AND *NOT* THE RULERS *OF*, THE WORLD THAT CAST OUT THE TRUE KING. The reigning time *with Him* -- not *without Him* -- is future. Saints are to *judge* the world in *future* (1 Cor. 6:1-8). Hence *now* they are to *suffer wrong*, but not to go to law. But while we are here for Him, He has His hands up in blessing, and is Himself before God for us -- succoring us in our troubles. And this was the last look which the disciples had of Him (cp. Luke 24:50-53). Our highest privilege is to *suffer* here in the path of faithful witnessing to Himself. Those of us that prefer *confederacy* with His enemies, and for ease are in league with His foes, those, I say, that know not practically what it is to “go forth to Him without the camp *bearing His reproach*” (Heb. 13:13), must lose the blessing of those uplifted hands. But need the Daniels shrink back from the lions that oppose their path of devotion? Shall the Shadrachs, Meshachs, and Abednegos be tempted for once to shun the furnace *with* the Son of God for the approbation of a world *without* Christ? These are trying questions. Let them cast us upon Him whose love, like His patience, tires not.

But are the days of trouble never to end? Is my Lord always to be rejected? Let the word in Acts 1:11 answer: “THIS SAME JESUS . . . SHALL SO COME.” He who *went* to the Father then, despite the ignorance of the disciples in A.D. 33, shall so *come* (the year He gives not, but “quickly” is the word), the unbelief and selfishness of Christians of the 19th century notwithstanding. And blessed are they that wait for Him.

I must not dwell on every phase of this blessed truth as presented in the different epistles; but for the sake of any one that has lost sight of such a gem, covered up as it has been for 1700 years by not a few strata of *men's* rubbish, I must just point to the many spots over which it is scattered in rich profusion and for various purposes.

(Rom. 5:3-5). The partakers of grace shall share the glory; of their

“hope” they shall not be disappointed, for the Holy Ghost, now shed abroad in their hearts, retains them for the day of glory.

And lest the hope should be dimmed -- lest saints should settle down in this scene -- they must go through the school of tribulation, which will work for them patience; and this endurance -- will being broken -- gives experience concerning Him whose grace is perfected in our weakness. Need I say that this school is practically unknown to those of us who are “Hail fellow, well met” with a world -- *pagan* or *religious* -- that hates HIM “who was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification.” Well, such a path leads onwards to *Him* who trod it -- to Him who now succors the travelers on it, and those on it are in fellowship with the despised One, who is coming for them. Cheer up, you that are scoffed for the name of Jesus. Don’t forget that it was the most *religious*, the *loudest* professors, the most sanctimonious, who, once enemies, became friends, and formed a conspiracy for killing the Prince of Life, whom God raised from the dead. And think you that a distinct and clear, unmixed standing forth for HIM will not evoke today for the poor and feeble confessors of the despised Nazarene the same hate from the same world! O, but what an exchange when He comes -- a crown for a cross!

In Rom. 8:18-25, groaning creation is to partake of the liberty which glory shall introduce.

(1 Cor. 15). The resurrection from among the dead of the bodies of those that are Christ’s at His coming is here treated. This truth the gathering at Corinth had lost through the philosophy of some of their teachers, and the result was the evil ways which this epistle was sent to correct. Note that all are not to sleep (to die). People say all must die; the Holy Ghost says not (1 Cor. 15:51). We shall not all sleep, but be changed in a moment at the last trump. This is consistent with 1 Thess. 4, “We that are alive and remain.” Even Paul puts himself among those in whose day such an event might have occurred. So does the Holy Ghost present the truth of Christ’s coming now, that not the faintest shadow should intervene between our hope and its fulfilment. Yes, and if we sleep ere its accomplishment -- I say, suppose that we do die -- shall death cause us to relinquish our hope? I ask, shall anything hinder the Lord from having His redeemed with Him in the glory, and from occupying His rightful place in connection with Israel, the nations, and the earth, as I before showed? Certainly not. Then, should I be called away through death, I shall only have had my “waiting-room” exchanged. “Present with the Lord” though “absent from the body.” I shall wait with Him for His glory, of which I am co-heir -- a joint-heir (Rom. 8:17). He will not assume His without us. Paul, and others who were waiting 1800 years ago, are in the *upper waiting-room*, waiters still. But though He tarry, the truth remains, and

shall soon be verified -- "The dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we who are alive shall be changed" (1 Cor. 15:52). The thought about a "general resurrection" is not found in this chapter. Indeed, persons may go begging to every verse in the Bible, but will not succeed in obtaining one contribution to such a dogma of *clever* men. I may here remark that the expression "Resurrection of the dead" should in every case be "Resurrection *out of*, or *from among*, the dead." At His coming they that are Christ's "shall be raised," but the rest of the dead shall not be for 1000 years after.

(2 Cor. 4:14). Here the hope so occupies the Apostle, as in 2 Cor. 1:9, that though persecutions should end in death, he fears not. He looks forward to resurrection *by Jesus*, and to being *with* the Corinthian saints when all are presented by the Lord, as *God*, to Himself (cp. Gen. 2:22, and Eph. 5:37) as Son of Man. Was it not for this hope, today, beloved, many who are evil spoken of for the sake of Christ, and are treated as the off-scouring of all things, would be of all men the most miserable (1 Cor. 15:19). Here, then, the *hope* cheers the martyrs (witnesses) for the rejected Jesus. They will take care of His honor *here*, assured that five minutes in the glory into which He will soon introduce them will more than repay "the sufferings of the little while." But to be in bodies of glory like unto His FOREVER, yes, for ever, who with this prospect would shun the troubles for Him in the brief fleeting space of eighty years or so? To walk in the path He trod before us, to have Him in the path with us, who will have us to share His everlasting glories by and bye. Is this enough, beloved? It *is* more than enough. Then let us bid farewell to sloth; let us seek devotees elsewhere; let the worldly have the world; but may the interests of Christ be our concern, as ours have been and are His still. To suffer, and even to die for Him, is truly nothing when contrasted with the glory that awaits us at His coming.

In the epistle to the Galatians nothing is written concerning this blessed truth. And why? Because the converts in Galatia had been removed through Judaizing teachers from Him who had placed them in *grace* to a sort of law-gospel, which the Holy Ghost designates "another gospel." Law and grace are quite opposed; they never go together. The *Law* was given by *Moses*; but coming to Jesus Christ we get *grace* and *truth* (John 1:17). Persons who put themselves under it would have no taste for the truth of the personal return of {the Lord} Jesus; and, indeed, it is so now. Look for the standing of such as refuse this "blessed hope," and you will find them at the base of Sinai, doing their best to keep the law, and just failing every moment. Of course the judgments for its breach they do not like. But can such be at peace? Certainly not. Hence the Holy Ghost cannot engage them with the PERSON coming; they must first learn the value of the WORK He accomplished. "If righteousness come by law, then Christ is *dead* in vain" (Gal. 2:21). This is plain enough for *faith*. *Reasoning* won't get it. If any of you, dear hearers, are

in this position, you must wait for another Christ to *die* to bring you out of it, or you must look for the judgments awaiting transgressors. But, beloved, I am persuaded better things of you though I thus speak. If you know Him, who is full of grace, you may *rejoice* in hope of *glory*.

The Ephesians, on the other hand, needed not to be told this truth respecting the “coming,” for they are viewed as seated in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus (Eph. 2:5-6). So instructed they must have been in that to which all saints in their time looked forward, that the Holy Ghost can occupy them with what their normal state before God is.

The hope, however, must have been very consoling to Paul while he was confined in the prison at Rome, whence he penned the Epistle to the Philippians. Nero, the emperor, might at any moment have given commandment concerning his death. Truly Paul was dying daily. How can you account for such exhortations, then, as “Rejoice in the Lord,” and “Rejoice in the Lord always”? What was it that placed Paul above his difficulties; that raised him superior to his afflictions? Just that, beloved, which should raise us, if we are not scared out of it by philosophy and vain deceit and tradition of men -- viz., the truth about the coming. Those “who mind earthly things,” might well be miserable when their best plans are thwarted, and crosses lie in their way. But the language of such as know their union with a risen Christ, and look forward to being with Him is, “Our conversation -- commonwealth or citizenship -- is in *heaven*; whence we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; who shall change our bodies of humiliation, and transform them to His body of glory, by the power through which He will also subdue all things unto Himself” (Eph. 3).

The Colossians have a hope laid up for them in heaven (Col. 1:5). Of it they had been before instructed in the gospel preached to them. Being risen with Christ, they were to seek HEAVENLY things, and not be as earthly men. In their measure they were to be practically identified while on earth with a risen Christ in heaven, for when He comes again in glory they shall co-appear with Him (Col. 3:1-4).

The catching up or rapture is not brought out directly here; but the *appearing* in bodies of glory *with* Christ, our life, is. For He comes *with*, who has already come *for*, His saints. And that for which they were waiting was so to occupy them that their hearts should be where the treasure was. From the eyes of men Christ is hid. He is linked up with nothing of this vain world. So *our life* with Him is hid. This is not the time to seek to display ourselves. Soon He who is our life shall appear, and that will be the season for our manifestation too. What a truth, beloved! How weaning! Refuse to accept it, and as worldly as the most ungodly the saint will become. The ball, the theater, the concert, or wealth on the one hand; or a worldly religion with all

that pleases fancy, imagination, or *human will*, or that suits the progress of the day on the other, will command its admirers from the ranks of believers. And such are they in this day whom Satan would keep in ignorance of this blessed theme, which, like the magnet, points always to the person of Christ, and consequently detracts from everything beside.

But it is in the first epistle to the Thessalonians that the Holy Ghost develops the truth respecting the COMING, and shows the difference between Christ's coming for His saints and His appearing for judgment to the world.

It is worthy of remark that this subject was placed before the *young converts* of Thessalonica as part of the glad tidings which Paul preached. So you see it is truth for the youngest. It is said of them (1 Thess. 1:9-10) that "they turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son (not *death*) from heaven."

I find then that these late idol worshipers to whom Paul preached eighteen hundred years ago were far in advance of some of the "divines" of the nineteenth century.⁸ Take it as a fact that now as ever these things are hidden from the wise and prudent -- from the learned and self-willed -- and revealed to babes; made known to such as, owning their ignorance, receive in all *simplicity* what God declares.

To enter deeply into that which *every chapter* in both of these Epistles deals with, would be the work of many evenings. Indeed they are so plain that to argue on them would be to darken counsel by a multitude of words. See the plainness of speech as we run over a few passages. In 1 Thess. 2:12, the saints are to walk worthy of the God who had called them to His kingdom and *glory*; v. 19, Paul hopes to see them "in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming," though Satan may hinder his visiting them in the body; and in that he "boasts." The desire of the apostle's heart for them is, that practical holiness may constantly characterize them -- "unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints" (1 Thess. 3:13).

In 1 Thess. 4, the question is answered, "How shall all the saints -- seeing that some die -- be ever with the Lord." Naturally enough the Thessalonians, who had been converted to wait for the Son "from heaven," were sorrowing for such saints as had fallen asleep; presuming that *they*

8. ["Remember ye not that when I was yet with you I told you these things" (2 Thess. 2:5). Much valuable instruction had been communicated by the Apostle upon prophetic and other truths bearing upon the Lord's second coming -- truths now generally regarded as "*advanced truths*," but these beloved saints were taught them, within three weeks of their conversion (Acts 17:2) . Ed.]

would miss ⁹ the Lord at His coming, for which they were waiting. And was it not for their ignorance, we would not be told *how* it is to be brought about, as in this special revelation. But so it is. God uses every occasion of short-coming, whether of *practice*, as at Corinth, or ignorance of *doctrine*, as among the Galatians and here, to unfold more of His mind to us.

A great fact is stated in 1 Thess. 4:14. "If we believe that Jesus died and rose again; *even so* God will, with Him, bring those that fall asleep in Him" (cp. 1 Cor. 15). And here faith reposes in God. He raised from the dead Him who gave His life for us; and He will also raise up those who are forever linked up with Jesus. They shall have bodies of glory like His own (cp. Phil. 3). And not only shall the living ones not hinder (prevent) ¹⁰ the departed; but as regards the order, "the dead *in* CHRIST shall rise first." "The LORD HIMSELF shall descend from heaven with a shout," &c. Note here,

1. THAT DEATH IS NOT THE COMING OF THE LORD. When Stephen was dying, he looked up and saw Jesus at the right hand of God in heaven (Acts 7). But for the *saints* -- not for their spirits as at death, but themselves, bodies and spirits united -- the LORD HIMSELF is to come from heaven. Since His ascension He has been as the exalted Man, *seated* at God's right hand. There He lives to intercede for us, as we pass through this scene of failure. When He rises from the throne, it will be to descend to the *air* for us.
2. From that halting place will go forth "the shout." This expression -- "shout" -- is a military one, used for the sound that summonses not a few but ALL the troops. Understood only by the drilled ones, it suggests that none will *hear* the *gathering* call but the *saints*. The world will soon find that we are gone, and, as did the sons of the prophets in the days of Elijah, go searching for us; but alas for them! blessed for us!!
3. Only the "dead in Christ" are to rise when He comes for the saints. We wait, you see, for a "general resurrection"; but *saints* "in the body" and "out of the body" wait for their LORD; who, having first subdued all things to Himself -- His Saints being *with* Him in the regeneration {i.e., the millennium} -- then the wicked dead are called forth to be judged at the white throne (Rev. 20).

To return. The dead in Christ rise first; then we who are alive, and remain till

9. [Somewhat of the blessedness and glory. Not exactly "the Lord." Ed.]

10. [Rather anticipate or go before; that is, the *living* changed will not take precedence of the *raised* dead, for the latter will rise before the living are changed, but all "*together*" will go to meet the Lord. Ed.]

that event, shall be caught up *together with them* in the clouds to meet, in the halting-place, the LORD in the air.

Note here particularly the expression, “We who are alive,” and tell me can any of us be sure of a *grave*? Is *death* the subject here set before us? Indeed I may challenge any -- Where is it ever put as that for which the saint is to wait? In Matt. 25 the virgins wait for the Bridegroom. Here let me remark, 1, That after Pentecost *all* converts looked for the Lord from heaven. “Went forth to meet the Bridegroom.” For more than 1600 years the truth was lost sight of -- “*all* (wise and foolish) slumbered and slept.” And do all of you know that for more than 1000 years the truth of “justification by faith” was given up, till Luther, in 1517, preached it? Well, it is not more than forty years since the truth of the coming of the Lord (with other precious Church truths, as the oneness of the body, &c.) was revived by a living servant of God {i.e., J. N. Darby}. Notice, 2, that soon after the midnight cry went forth the Bridegroom did come. And so the fact of the revival of this truth reminds us that now the coming of our Lord is nigh (cp. Rom. 13:11, 12). As a fact we are *in* the night. How can it be otherwise while He who is the *light* is absent from the earth? But *we* expect a bright morning. Indeed, faith looks up and sees the twilight of the coming sun. O may the Holy Ghost cause the hope of seeing soon the Lord Himself to be very bright before us all. What a meeting will that be when parent and child, brother and sister, preacher and convert, all in Christ, shall see Him in glorified bodies, and be with Him for ever!

O how it cheers the heart to know, when parting from the friends we love,
 'Tis yet a little while below, and then we meet in clouds above,
 E'en as we weep and think them gone, before the tear drop from the eye,
 Before the heart has time to mourn, the loving breast to heave a sigh,
 The Lord Himself may yet descend, and all our grief at once be o'er,
 When mother, brother, sister, friend, shall meet again to part no more.
 This moment we may feel bereaved, the next *together with them* rise;
 This moment by their absence grieved, and then behold them with our eyes.
 O Christian, weep as though the tear might never from thine eyelid fall;
 Each moment watch intent to hear the welcome “shout,” the gathering call.
 To know the Lord Himself shall come, what cheering hope does this afford;
 And “we in Him,” “with them,” “all one,” SO shall be ever with the Lord.

The Thessalonians had been instructed in the truth, moreover, respecting “the day of the Lord.” (Read carefully Isa. 2:12, 13; Joel 2:31, 3:10-16; Rev. 6, 19) At the time the second Epistle was written they were greatly persecuted, and false teachers led them to suppose that that “day” was come. (The expression in 2 Thess. 2:2, “at hand,” should be “was come,” or “was present.” See the Greek.)

The day of the Lord will surely be a time of terrible trouble (cp. Matt.

24). But the Holy Ghost here unfolds two other wonderful facts, viz., that before that day –

1. The Holy Ghost, with the Church, shall have been removed, according to the 1st Epistle; and
2. Antichrist, the Wilful, or Lawless One, should be known, whom Christ should destroy, not at the shout *for* His saints, but at the *manifestation* of His glory to this world -- “the brightness of His coming.”

The mystery of lawlessness (2 Thess. 2:7) works now, but the personification of it, in the one who, exalting himself above God, will claim and get worship from such as refusing the truth shall be given over to believe a lie -- this I say cannot be as long as the Church, with the Holy Ghost in it, is on the earth. The presence of the Holy Ghost hinders his development. We are now dealing with most startling yet comforting revelations of God in this Scripture. Startling to know that the time will come when rejectors of the Gospel, given over to a strong delusion (2 Thess. 2:10-12), will be found at the feet of Antichrist! Comforting to be told that the catching-up will *precede* this (cp. 1 John; Rev. 3:10).

Lastly, the prayer of the Apostle is, that their hearts may be directed into the love of God (2 Thess. 2:3:5), which surely would keep them from the thought of their having to be in the judgments on the world; -- and “into the patience of Christ.” Rest from suffering for His sake, and glory with Him are ours. He will then display us; but trouble our troublers (2 Thess. 1). But none more desires His Bride to be with Him *than* the Lord Himself. Yet, *patiently* He waits in grace to this poor world. We are to wait *with Him*.

See how the truth is referred to in 1 Tim. 1:11; “Gospel of the glory,” 4:14; 2 Tim. 2:10, 4:1-8, “Love His *appearing*,” &c., &c.

So in the Epistle to Titus (2:11-14), the grace of God that brings salvation to all men hath appeared, and teaches us how to behave ourselves now among men. But that is not all. It puts before us (1), “the blessed hope,” and (2), the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ.

I have only to remind you, that in this pithy sentence you get both aspects of the theme I have been endeavouring to develop, viz. (1), the coming of the Lord (to the air) *for* His saints; and (2), the appearing or Epiphany of the Lord in glory to this earth *with* His saints.

In the Epistle to the Hebrews, Paul writes to converts to Christianity who had once settled down in a religion-Jewish -- which God had sanctioned; but which, upon the rejection of Messiah, was laid aside, and a “heavenly calling” (Heb. 3:1) revealed in its stead by the very God who had previously spoken by the prophets (Heb. 1).

Hence they are told to pass through this scene now as *pilgrims*, looking

forward to a better country, a heavenly (Heb. 11). Quite startling this would be to Jews who had been hoping to settle down in Palestine. Well, as a nation, so they will, for God's word remaineth ever sure. But Christianity, distinct from Judaism, teaches that *now* the Lord is gathering out from Jews and Gentiles "a people for his name." Note this. (See Acts 15:14; Eph. 2:11-16.) *Afterwards* He will *return*, and build again the tabernacle of David which is fallen down. The Holy Ghost speaks of the *Jews*, the *Gentiles*, and the Church of God (1 Cor. 10:32).

Here let me remark, beloved, that till you distinguish between Israel as a (*literally*) *earthly* nation, once great, now scattered, to be again gathered, and the Church of God, composed of believers from both Jew and Gentile, and elected for *heavenly* glory, you can never clearly enter into and enjoy the truth about the *coming*. So these saints from among the Hebrews were to wait now, not for a kingdom of Canaan, but for Christ Himself. Hence we are told (Heb. 9:28) "that to them that *look for* CHRIST [when these words were written *all* saints were taught to "look for Him"; hence it is the normal aspect in which all are viewed. It is not here to be inferred that such as deny the truth of the Coming will be left behind] He shall appear, having nothing to do with sin -- for salvation." That is, He will bring in that which is included in the idea of salvation, viz. -- "the redemption of our BODIES" (cp. Rom. 8:23-25; Phil. 3:21). Lastly, notice how this "blessed hope" is placed before the soul as that which should encourage it in the midst of reproaches and affliction for confessing the name of Jesus (Heb. 10:35-38). "Cast not away, therefore, your confidence, which has great recompense. For you have need of endurance, in order that, having done the will of God, you may receive the promise. "FOR YET A LITTLE WHILE, AND HE THAT SHALL COME WILL COME, and will not tarry. But the just shall live by *faith*." Yes, this truth, like every other, is one for *faith*. The simplicity of the child of God receives it without argument or a question, for "thus saith the Holy Ghost," is, or ought to be, *enough*. It is for a *child*.

James, addressing believers among the tribes of Israel, brings in the coming to *rebuke* the rich, who were laying up their stores as if they belonged to this world, and to *encourage* the poor who were oppressed by them. "Be ye also *patient*, for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh" (James. 5:7).

The Apostle Peter has this blessed truth running like a vein of metal all through his Epistles. (See 1 Pet. 1:3-8, 13; v. 10, &c.) I wish, however, just to call your attention to *two* points of immense importance in the present day. 1. That the *hope* of the believer of which I have been treating is not *prophecy*. Prophecy does point to the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ, *but as that to be on earth*. The truth revealed to us in the New Testament confirms all that

the prophets wrote respecting it, but is to be distinguished from prophecy, in that this deals with what prophecy does not touch. (See 2 Pet. 1:16-21.) The sufferings of Christ the prophets do teach (Isa. 53); the glories of His Kingdom are developed in the law, prophets, and the Psalms (Gen. 49; Num. 24; Isaiah to Malachi; and all the Psalms, specially 2, 8, 9, 19, 45, 48, 68, 72, 76, 93, 100); but the coming *for* the saints, like the truth about the Church, was reserved for the apostles -- Paul especially -- and prophets of the New Testament after the gift of the Holy Ghost upon the glorification of Jesus. It is of the last moment to see this difference. Hence the Apostle says that people should give heed to prophecy as those who would be guided by a *lamp in a dark place*, until -- when? The day dawn {and [the] morning star} arise in our hearts. But, he says, "WE HAVE the {prophetic} word made more sure."¹¹ We *have* what the prophets pointed to, and much more beside. The word "I come quickly," we have heard. The midnight cry we have heeded, and the watchers for the person are anticipating His coming, just as night watchers who see the morning star expect the brilliant sun.

Now, you may weigh this suggestion and avoid the confounding of the hope of the believer to-day, with the word of prophecy for the Jew. With all that concerns Christ you and I are deeply concerned, inasmuch as He associates *us* with Himself; but we are rightly to *divide*, or portion out the word of truth. Let two examples suffice to illustrate my thought -- .

(a) God speaks by Ezekiel (37:19-28) that the divided tribes now scattered are to be united, and are to dwell in the land of Canaan. This is the truth, brought out also in the "Vision of the dry bones," as in all the prophets, in Rom. 11, &c. But what is *our* position who now believe in Jesus? Our treasure is in *heaven*, whence we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ (Phil. 3; Col. 3). Meanwhile we are to be hated by the world, and treated as the offscouring of all things. To be great in the world, and rulers over it now, is *not* our *lot*. It is now the portion of the *Gentiles*, "till the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled." But as the members of Christ we lose *nationality*, and are neither Jews nor Gentiles (Col. 3:1-11). Of course our Father knows our *need*, and will feed us as He does the ravens, and clothe us as He does the lilies. Which do you prefer, beloved? Rejection now with Jesus and hope of glory soon, or a great place in the world without Him? A thick border line, an unmistakable landmark separates the two portions. You must absolutely have the one or the other.

(b) Another striking illustration between the hope of the believer now and the word of prophecy, is seen in the fact that the "morning star" or "day star" {2

11. [That is, the prophetic word was confirmed by the vision of the glory and kingdom vouchsafed to the favored three on the holy mount. Ed.]

Pet. 1:19} of the New Testament is *Christ Himself* as the person we wait for. To our affections He now shines forth. The watchers in the night see Him and enjoy Him by faith in their hearts, till He is seen by their eyes. But the day or morning star (*Lucifer*) of prophecy (Isa. 14) is the king of Assyria ¹² to be destroyed by Jehovah. Observe farther that I am not to be surprised at the scoffers at this truth in this day. The Holy Ghost says there would be such (2 Pet. 3). But that the Lord has not yet come, is not because He is slack concerning His promise. No, rather He is long-suffering to a poor world whose day of grace will close with His coming. O, how gracious are His ways and perfect withal !

Three thoughts from 1 John 3:1-3, I must refer to.

1. All believers *can* say positively we *are* the sons of God *now*. As in Rom. 5 we *begin* with justification, we *start* with the knowledge of “peace with God,” we *go on* in grace, and we *look forward* to glory -- for very precious portions.
2. As to what we shall be, we do *not* know, nor are we careful. We leave that with Him who will not do without us; but we *do know* that when He shall appear we shall be *like* HIM, and that is enough. Some *clever* (?) Grecians used to ask, How can these things be? and because they could not analyze the mode of their accomplishment they denied *the* truth altogether. Like the clever (?) little boy who denounced the theory of the revolution of the earth round the sun as being “stupid,” because, said he, “I *see* the sun rise, but I do not *see* the earth go round the sun,” the Holy Ghost calls similar reasoners “FOOLS,” reminding them that the whole thing is in the hands of Him who gives a shape to the corn of wheat AS it hath pleased Him. “So also is the resurrection out from among the dead” (1 Cor. 15).
3. Although we are by believing in {the Lord} Jesus made “clean every whit,” yet we are passing through a scene of defilement. But see how the hope affects us (v. 3). We tuck up the garments and glide onwards most warily, lest the smallest speck be found on us at His coming. Call you this only an “advanced idea for a few”? God is wiser than men, and has put the truth before us as that which should practically sanctify us momentarily.

Jude, who wrote, like John, for the last time, exhorts believers to contend

12. [This is not correct. “Lucifer, Son of the Morning,” is applied to the King of Babylon, whose representative in the coming days will be the head of the revived ten-kingdomed Empire of Rome. “The Assyrian,” also named in Isa. 14, is a distinct personage. The representatives of Babylon and Assyria will be opposed and opposing powers in the future. Ed.]

earnestly for the faith (here it is the *thing* itself believed, not the *belief*) once delivered to the saints. Losing such an integral portion of it as the *coming*, called forth the three woes which the godly can see running in parallel lines in the present day (v. 11). Then Enoch's prophecy is quoted (v. 14). Here the Lord comes *with* the saints to judgment on the living wicked and ungodly.

We come now to the last portion of Divine revelation. In the book of the Revelation of Jesus Christ, John is preeminently the one whose ministry should go on *till Christ comes* (John 21:22-23).

Hence the person of Christ is constantly kept before the soul in the book.

In Rev. 1 He is the judge, and the One who shall be the administrator of all things. Now, He is hidden from the eyes of the world. But, "Behold! He cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see HIM."

A general sketch of the book, so far as it regards the subject before us, I gave at the commencement. I would now only remind you –

1. All the judgments (Rev. 6-19) are future, and await the appearing of the Lord Himself. This is *prophecy*, not our proper *hope*.
2. They will be judgments on *living* nations (cp. Matt. 24, Luke 17).
3. The Lord will first have come *for* His saints to keep them out of the hour of *trial* which is about to come upon the whole HABIT ABLE WORLD to try them that DWELL UPON THE EARTH. If Aberdeen should unfortunately be in rebellion against the Queen, she might say to us loyal ones, "I am coming from Balmoral to shell the city; but just before that event I will send a telegram for you to meet me at Banchory." The message received, we await such telegram. Meanwhile we get as many of our friends as we can to lay down their arms, and to side with us for our Queen. Her Majesty hears that our fellow-citizens are killing us loyal ones, and away she starts to fire the city. Think you she would not keep her word, and send first for us? Having met her at Banchory, we then come with her in her train. And this is just a picture of what our Lord says to us (Rev. 3:10, in Greek). Hence the redeemed are seen in glory worshiping (Rev. 4, 5), being previously caught up before the seals are opened in Rev. 6, &c.
4. The last sentence uttered by the Lord to John was, "Surely I come quickly." Ascending to heaven from the Mount of Olives, the truth enunciated, was "This *same Jesus* which is taken from you into heaven, shall so *come* in like manner as you have seen him go into heaven"; and now you and I hear the words from His own blessed lips -- "Surely I come quickly." The moral condition of the watcher (in Luke 12:36) is such that he knows the "knock," and opens " *immediately*." (Luke deals with the *moral* application of the truth, but does not deal with it in the

order of time.) Who would have thought that “quickly” would extend to 1800 years? Yet such is His grace. But who would be so bold as to assert that the shout may not be heard before another sun rises upon this guilty world? Of times and seasons *we* have nothing to do. *We* ARE made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light; and thus ready, ours is to wait and watch. To the unprepared and to the careless, the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night. When they shall say “Peace and safety” then sudden destruction shall overtake them.

Shall any of you be taken by surprise, beloved hearers? Are any sceptics among you? Are any of you going on still in rebellion against God, and refusing to own His Son? Now, tell me honestly, can you think of death, which you know you cannot escape -- can you think of God and be happy? I know, and so do you, that you cannot. Then why will you resist God? He is gracious to you, and now bids me offer a free pardon to each rebel, on one condition only -- viz., owning, like the thief on the cross, that the Son of God, the Lord from heaven, has satisfied God respecting the question of sin. But, to your everlasting shame and misery, you *SHALL* be *condemned* by Him whom now you will not allow to *save* you. O may it please God to awaken you, even though it be by crippling that body of yours, that your soul may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.

And now, dear brethren, let us in the presence of Him whom we love, of Him who bore all our sins away and made us meet companions for Himself, of Him whose Father we address as “our Father,” and who has left us here as His witnesses, let us in His presence apply this blessed truth in a practical way.

I presume that each of us sees --

1. That the coming of the Lord *for* His *saints* is the proper hope put before every believer by the Holy Ghost in the New Testament.
2. That the Scriptures distinctly teach that He will come *with* His saints to judge Christendom; to punish the nations generally, and the Jews particularly; to establish the nation of the Jews in Palestine, thus fulfilling the prophecies; to introduce universal blessing for the earth -- “the millennium” so called; to raise and judge the wicked dead, bind Satan, and then deliver up the kingdom -- all things having been subdued to Himself -- to God the Father, that GOD may be all in all (Rev. 20:21; 1 Cor. 15:28).
3. That respecting *our* hope (the subject of this address) -- the believer’s *proximate* expectation -- no *dates are ever given*; but the word to the simple is “*quickly*,” and there faith rests. Then, I, am I indulging anything in which *He* would not like to find me? A bride expecting her bridegroom does not wait till he comes to adjust her garments. To go on in any

looseness which does not suit my coming Lord, with the knowledge that when He comes "*He* will put things right," only betrays the most untoward condition of *heart*. He can bear with ignorance, and provides a sacrifice for it (Lev. 5:27-32), but can He tolerate INDIFFERENCE?

4. Am I so engaged now and every moment that a "well-done" from His lips will be mine for my last act in this scene?
5. To each of us He has committed some talent {representing a responsibility}, telling us to occupy till He come; and now He adds, "I come QUICKLY." Are we using such as those should, who cannot hope for another moment?
6. When He comes the gospel door shall be shut, and then our unconverted relatives and friends shall be left behind! Are we now so putting Christ before them, and praying for their conversion, as those that hold the coming practically; or are we stumbling them by our walk and untoward ways?
7. Are we minding earthly things, and hoarding up the "corruptible things," the silver and gold of this world; or are we using them to-day if the Lord gives us an opportunity, as those that expect to be called away quickly, *with those* for whom we are laying up? Are there no poor round us to feed? No distressed one to relieve? No cell of gloom to lighten up by the sunbeam of our presence? Are there no heathen here and abroad, to whom we may carry or send a *free* Bible, or a gospel book or tract? If there can be regret in glory will it not be for losing such opportunities of reproducing our Lord in the earth?
8. But again, if I believe this truth which the Holy Ghost has given me, why am I so anxious about what shall I eat, or drink, or do to-morrow . May I not hear the shout before "to-morrow"? And why may I not drink of my cup of joy, while to me is given a sip of one of sorrow? Why is my heart broken at the recollection of the dear departed one? Can I not commit him with myself to my Lord who will bring all of us *with Him* ?
9. Lastly, am I so weaned from everything here -- do I hold them all so loosely, that at any moment of my existence I could joyfully look up and say to {the Lord} Jesus, as the Spirit prompts the Bride, "Come"? (Rev. 22:17).

And now unto Him that is able to keep us from falling, and to present us faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy; to the only wise God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory and majesty , might and authority, both now and ever. Amen.

Chapter 2

A Scriptural Inquiry Respecting the Lord's Supper and the Lord's Table

Read 1 Cor. 10:16, 17; 11:23-34

The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we being many are one *loaf* [it is translated *bread*, but it should be *loaf* 'one loaf'] and one body; for we are all partakers of that one *loaf*.

For I have received of the Lord that which I also delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus, the same night in which he was betrayed, took bread: and when he had given thanks he brake it and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the New Testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come. Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation [it should not be 'damnation' but *judgment* -- 'eateth and drinketh judgment'] to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.

There is nothing in the whole range of scripture, there is nothing that has been revealed in the word of God, which is fraught with deeper or more important lessons -- lessons which the Holy Ghost would have every child of God to learn, every believer to enter into, as the truth about the LORD'S Supper.

I said on a previous occasion, that there was no truth which Christians ought to seek more to understand, than the truth about the *one body*. But with that truth the Lord's Supper is intimately associated -- so closely, indeed, that the Holy Ghost uses the bread, or rather the "one loaf" broken at the supper for the purpose of illustrating the oneness of the body.

For we being many are one loaf.

When I understand that I am a member of that one body -- a member of the

church of which Christ is the head -- then my affections must necessarily go out to Him, with whom I am linked. More than that, my love in Him must go out also to His (my fellow) members, with whom I am connected in Christ: so that my knowledge about the truth of the one body, of which I am a member, brings me into direct association with Christ the Head, and with every member.

And the Supper is the occasion when the family, all the members, get together (at least ought to be *together*, and would be *together* if they were subject to the Lord) and express their corporate communion with the Lord, and consequently with each other. Can you conceive, beloved, of richer love than this? Could any one desire a more effective plan for sustaining the due relationships between the exalted Head and the members? Such is wisdom, and such is love suited to HIM only. Alas! that so few of us enter into it at all. Like many other truths, that about the Lord's Supper as instituted by the Lord Himself, and observed in Pauline days, has been warped and distorted in no small degree. So much so, indeed, that it is now no easy matter for the godly saint to find that which corresponds to the scriptural idea of the *Lord's Table* and the *Lord's Supper*. Popery, that most perfect counterfeit of God's assembly ever issued by Satan, regards the Eucharist as a bloodless sacrifice for the sins of the living and of the dead. The Establishment again, lowering it to a "sacrament," admits *parishioners*, not necessarily *believers*, as partakers. Dissent, not much better, makes its own human regulations for the "sacrament," and celebrates it according to *human expediency*. More than this; in nearly all the Churches, almost every kind of service has a higher rank afforded it than this blessed institution. Indeed, the general idea of most is, that the Lord's day is, pre-eminently, the day for *sermonizing*. A most suitable time it is, indeed, for going forth in service to the unconverted; or for seeking the edification of the saints; inasmuch, as, thank God, it is a day with us of *rest*. But in Pauline days the Christians' primary object on the Lord's day was to break bread. The Lord's Supper, with them, stood in the foreground of their movements on the Lord's day. A departure, then, from this is merely *human*, and to go on with it is surely beneath a godly saint, who sees what the mind of the Lord is. In the midst of such confusion, then, what are we to do? Some may reply, "Of all the evils *choose the least*." To this I rejoin, Through the Lord's mercy, I will choose *neither*. What? Choose the *least evil*? Certainly not. If it be *evil*, may grace be afforded, at all cost, to turn away from it. Another says, "Let us stir *here* and look *there*, or go *anywhere*"; while the advice of a third is, "Give it up *altogether*." Now, beloved in the Lord, some of such counsel might certainly suit, if our blessed Lord had vacated His seat on high, withdrawn the Holy Ghost from us, and left us, *without His word*, to seek our own ways of escaping out of the labyrinth of evils surrounding us. But, ever *blessed* be His name! His care for

His saints to-day is as unchangeably the same as it was when He was upon the earth. His love towards us, and consideration for us, are now precisely what they were in the earliest days of the Church's history. The Holy Ghost, given to "abide with us *for ever*, and to lead us into ALL truth," is present still to direct the simple-hearted. The *word*, the *truth*, preserved in all its preciousness, under the special guardianship of the Holy Ghost, is in our hands to-day as ever. Is this enough for you, beloved? Need you resort to tradition, synods, conferences, creeds, or articles, in the face of incomparably richer mines? Will any of us grieve our dear Lord by questioning His *sufficiency*? Has it indeed come to pass that faith in the all-prevailing and the omnipotent name of the Lord Jesus is lost by the saints? What have we come to? Shall we remain then in such condition? Shall we not betake ourselves, in deep humility, but in all child-like dependence, to Him? May we not look to His word, in the consciousness that light from Himself will shine in upon it? Surely we can. In such a condition of soul, then, let us pursue our inquiry into what is The Lord's Supper.

It may be helpful to arrange our thoughts under the following divisions :
 -- 1. Whom does the Lord invite as worthy partakers of the Supper? 2. Whom does He exclude? 3. What was the Lord's intention respecting the Supper? 4. How often, and till what event, did He desire it to be celebrated?

1. Whom Does the Lord Invite as Worthy Partakers?

The communicants are spoken of in the 20th of Acts as being *disciples* of the Lord Jesus: --

On the first day of the week when the *disciples* were come together to break bread.

Again, in Acts 2, when many souls were converted by the preaching of Peter, you will find that they, the *converts*, they who were *believers*,

continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in BREAKING OF BREAD, and in prayers.

It is very important to notice the four things in which these young believers continued. They continued steadfastly -- first, in the *Apostles' doctrine*; that is the very foundation -- nothing more or less than the *truth* to stand upon. I know nothing more interesting than to observe God's order, even in the arrangement of details. It is not said that they continued steadfastly in prayer, breaking of bread, fellowship, and the Apostles' doctrine. No; saints *must first* know the teaching of the Word of God -- "the doctrine." Other steps follow upon this.

Second, and *fellowship* -- "They all were of one heart and soul." Why should it not be so now? The hindrance, I need hardly say, is not in God; it is in ourselves. Depend upon it that those early saints entered practically into the "doctrine" of the oneness of the body, into which they were that day baptized by the Holy Ghost. Thus they "endeavored with lowliness, meekness, long-suffering, &c., to keep the *unity of the Spirit* in the bond of peace." I am convinced that an energetic adherence to "the doctrine" to-day - - such as God the Holy Ghost gives (I do not say *man's* doctrines, but a cleaving to the *word of God*, respecting the mind of Christ, about the *one body* and the *one Spirit*), would induce most happy "fellowship" one with another: because all would in that way have "fellowship" with the exalted HEAD.

Thirdly, *in breaking of bread*; and fourthly, *in prayers*.

We see, then, from this scripture that those who broke bread who were, in Pentecostal times, partakers of the Lord's Supper, were those who, through the preaching of the word applied to their hearts and consciences by the Holy Ghost, were brought to *know* Christ as their Savior and Lord.

Constituted worthy by Him whose grace invited them, they "kept the feast" -- they were obedient to their Lord. *They* broke bread in *remembrance* of One they knew and loved.

And if we look back to the original institution (Matt. 26), whom do we find gathered to that supper? The *disciples* -- those who were attached to their Lord. They were those whom He had gathered to Himself apart from Judaism and outside of Paganism. At the time Christ came into the world there were two classes of individuals -- Pagans or Gentiles, and Jews. From among the Jews the Lord Jesus had been pleased to gather round himself a handful whom He called *His* disciples. As to nature they were "children of wrath even as others"; but they were brought out of the position in which they stood naturally and religiously, and brought into connection with the Lord Jesus; and such were they whom He brought around Himself on that memorable night, and requested to eat bread and drink wine, then in His presence, and after He had left this world, in *remembrance* of him.

Without referring to any other scriptures, I think you and I must see, that the communicants are *saved souls*; and only such can enter into God's thoughts about the value of Christ. We cannot be engaged with hearing and learning who He is, nor what the value of His work, till we have the knowledge in our souls -- till faith is exercised in His own word -- as to our own security. Hence the *disciples* (assembled with closed doors for fear of the Jews, John 20) were allowed by the Lord to look *at* "His hands and His side." Very touching this! As if He had said, "See the everlasting marks, the unquestionable tokens of my love to you!" But when were they asked to

remember the cross? *After* -- mark this -- after He had pronounced, "Peace be unto you." He had already done that, by which He could eternally link believers with Himself and with His God and Father.

If God, who had Himself dealt with sin, in all its phases, through the innocent One,¹³ who was made sin, that we, the guilty, might become the righteousness of God in him -- I say if such was His God, so was He ours. "My God and your God." His Father now became our Father. "Go and tell my *brethren*, that I ascend to *my Father*, and *your Father*; to *my God*, and *your God*." Can you, beloved friends, listen to such gracious words from the lips of the risen Man, and not have the peace which, dying and rising, He secured? The fact is, that God, so to say, binds Himself now to glorify the Man, who was the only One that ever brought perpetual glory to Him, in the very scene in which man perpetually dishonored Him.

Hence, blessings "*in Christ*," "*through Christ*," and "*with Christ*," are such as God can now impart, "according to the riches of His grace" (Eph. 1), in a manner suited to what is due to Christ. Nothing is now too much to be done to Him, whom God delights to honour. God, before the cross, could bless a nation, "according to the promises made to *Abraham*." The same rebellious nation was saved from imminent judgment for *Moses'* sake. But now, God hath blessed us with all *spiritual* (not earthly) blessings; in the *heavenlies* (not in Canaan); in *Christ* (not in Abraham).

And will any say that the Lord Jesus is not far more worthy than an Abraham or a Moses? The question is not, Are *we* more worthy than Abraham? If that were so, I for one should answer, *certainly not*. What a path of faith was his! What a path of failure ours! But CHRIST is now before God's eye, and we are blessed *in* Him, and *by* Him, and *with* Him.

Now, when the soul learns to look out of wretched, doubting self and to look off unto Jesus, and to accept what God gives through Him, such a soul has *peace*; and such a person is a fit partaker of the Supper of the Lord. His *blood*, not our merits, gives the fitness.

In this day, when Christendom has done its worst to cover up this most blessed institution with all sorts of mysteries and superstition, it is well to see what is taught about it.

First of all, if the Supper were for the putting away of sins, how can it be called a "*bloodless* sacrifice," as the Church of Rome says it is? If it were a *bloodless* sacrifice, it would be a sacrifice worth nothing; for the Scriptures tell us that "without *shedding of blood* there could be no remission" of sins.

13. ["*Holy One*" would be a fuller statement of the truth. -- ED.]

To put away sin, blood must be shed. Therefore this bloodless sacrifice of Popery cannot be a sacrifice for sin. Some who speak strongly against the Church of Rome -- and we cannot speak too strongly against *it*, however much we love the *saints* in it -- but some who speak strongly against it, are not much more enlightened about the Lord's Supper. In the Establishment it is called a "sacrament," and so also in many dissenting associations. Need I tell you that "sacrament" is immediately derived from a Latin word, which means a soldier's oath, and that the idea does not occur once in Scripture? Now, I maintain that the Lord Jesus never called upon His disciples to take any *oath* whatever. The Lord's Supper, of which I am speaking, is not a sacrament; indeed, the Lord never intended it to be. There are some outside the Church of Rome who have come out from her, who teach concerning this institution that it is "a means of grace" -- that we go to the Lord's Supper in order to get blessing. Now, I do not say that it is not a place where God is pleased to bless His saints. On the contrary, there is nothing a saint may do, in faith and obedience, in which he does not get blessing. But this is not a prominent thought at all in the mind of the Lord Jesus in connection with this institution. Those who go to the Supper are really, distinctly, and absolutely, *saved souls*. In other words, those who have been blessed, and those who go to break bread and **SHOW** the Lord's *death*, are those that *know* the value of His death; those that go to *remember* the Lord are those that know Him. We are never asked to *remember* a person we never *knew*; yet at the institution of the Supper, the Lord Jesus said, "This do in *remembrance* of ME." If, then, it was for a remembrance, those who are to remember Him, surely must be those that have **KNOWN** Him. The idea, then, of going to the Lord's Table with the view of being blessed, in getting sins forgiven, or indeed to have anything to do with sin, is against the Scriptural idea of the family feast -- the Lord's Supper. This cannot be laid down too strongly. The Lord's Supper is a supper for *believers*; the communicants are those who are absolutely saved souls; who have come to God through Jesus, and have accepted the gift of God, eternal life in Christ; those whose sins have been put away by the sacrifice of Christ, and who are indwelt by the Holy Ghost; those who can sing --

Jesus has died, and I am clean;
Not a cloud above, not a spot within.

Those who know without any doubt that "my beloved is mine and I am His" -- those who can say with the Apostle John in Revelation, "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 be glory" -- those who are in that position and condition are such as should take the Supper. They are those of whom God says,

I have cast thy sins behind my back"; and again, "I, even I, am He, that

blotteth out thy transgressions, for Mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins.

In other words, the communicants are members of the “one body.” A believer might refuse to take his place as a member of that body, and go on in his own self-will; but he is a member for all that; and he is constituted a communicant, a worthy partaker in the Lord’s mind; and should, as such, claim his place at the Lord’s Table.

2. *Unbelievers Cannot Be Communicants*

If the foregoing be the case, then, it must appear very clear to you that UNBELIEVERS CANNOT BE COMMUNICANTS; and if not, then, that which admits them cannot be the Lord’s Table: though some believers may join with them, they do *not* eat the Lord’s Supper.

Don’t you know of many who venture to approach, outwardly into the place of worshipers, who never passed the altar of burnt-offering? Will it be denied that some are allowed to be in company of those whose privilege it is to eat the “fatted calf,” who never received the pardoning kiss? Is it not known that these things are allowed? A few days ago, when remonstrating with a minister of the gospel about allowing unbelievers to go and take the “sacrament,” his reply was, “How are we to know them?” My heart sank at such an answer as that; I was grieved to hear such a reply. I turned rather sharply, I fear, upon that dear man, and asked him, “When the Apostle wrote, ‘Greet one another with an holy kiss, who were to be greeted? Was the holy kiss to be given to any one?’” “Certainly not,” he replied; “it was to be given to the *believers*.” Well, if so, must they not have been known? The Apostle John says, “We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the *brethren*. He that loveth not his *brother* abideth in death.” Must they not have known the brethren in order to love them? At the time we read of, in Acts 2, when the disciples went from house to house ¹⁴ breaking bread, and praising the Lord with one heart and one mind, did they not know one another? Surely they did! Such an answer as that, given by the Christian brother to whom I have alluded, shows what a perfect revolution has been brought about by Christendom, in its thoughts about this blessed institution of the Lord’s Supper. The Lord’s Supper is *not* for unbelievers; it is for those

14. [Literally it is “breaking bread at home.” Our version would imply that the Lord’s Supper was shifted about from house to house. It is not so. It had then as now a settled character attached to it. -- ED.]

who are the Lord's.¹⁵

Now (because the Holy Ghost is given to each member of the body , to kindle the intensest love to the Lord, and to each other), I should not be backward in speaking of the things of Christ to those I met at the Lord's Supper. But is it true that all who *profess* to eat it know the Lord? Alas, for the answer Just follow some, and speak to them, on the next day about the Lord Jesus; and they will tell you, "This is not the *place*, this is not the *time* for such conversation; the *church* is the place, and *Sunday* is the time to speak about such things." In other words, they have no heart at all for the

15. Some have tried to prove that Judas ate the Lord's Supper with the other disciples, and hence other Judases should be tolerated. I shall try to prove that Judas was not at the Supper. Remember then that on the night the Supper was instituted the Paschal Lamb of the Passover was also eaten. Look

(1) at Mark 15 (In Mark, as in Matthew, we find more attention to the order of events.) Here, from v.7 to 21, the Paschal meal is eaten; then the Lord's Supper in verse 22. Note here, that the conversation as to who should betray Him *preceded* the Eucharist.

(2.) In Matt. 26:17-25, we see again the Paschal feast; and then (verse 26) the Supper. Notice here, also, that the question of the betrayer *preceded* the holy Eucharist, and neither here nor in Mark is it positively said that Judas was present.

(3.) John 13 settles the question. Judas, who had eaten the Passover bread (v. 18), and dipped in the dish (v. 26), "Went out *immediately*." Although John does not add to the account of the Passover that of the Lord's supper, yet he does tell us that the conversation was at the Passover, and that Judas went out *immediately*.

I conclude, therefore, from these Scriptures taken together, that Judas went out *immediately* after the Paschal feast, and *before* the Eucharist was partaken; that is, Judas did not eat the Lord's Supper at all.

Lest Luke 22 should present any difficulty, I may just add that Luke never adheres to chronological order in his gospel. He deals generally with moral events, arranging them with that idea rather than in regard to the order of their sequence; e.g. most accept the *order* of the temptations given by Matthew; but it must have occurred to all that although Luke mentions them, he does so in a different order. Again, as another remarks, Luke gives the Sermon on the Mount, but not in a *connected* manner (chs. 6 and 9). Now in ch. 32 he gives the account of the Passover and of the Supper; but the order, as is his wont, is different. "The table" of v. 21 refers to that of the Passover. I conclude, therefore, that Judas did not partake of the Lord's Supper; because --

(1.) Neither of the Evangelists says that he did;

(2.) The conversation in which he joined, took part, was at the Paschal feast -- before the Lord's Supper.

(3.) John positively avers that after the sop (and therefore *before* the Supper) he "went out immediately."

[I would add that, in my judgment, it is not a point of *real* importance whether Judas ate the Lord's Supper or not. Did the disciples know the traitor? They did not (Matt. 26:22). But the Lord knew. We act, however, upon *our* knowledge of persons and things, not upon the Lord's omniscient knowledge. Is it not so? -- ED.]

Person whom they said they went to remember on the day before. I should like to be shown *one* passage from the New Testament, which teaches or implies that any other than *believers* broke bread worthily or ate the *Lord's* Supper. We know, as a historical fact, that the persecution, which followed believers in early days, who identified themselves with a rejected Lord-persecution frequently unto death -- deterred any but His own from "breaking bread in remembrance of Him."

The table of the Lord, then, is not for *unbelievers*; it is for believers only; the communicants are the members of "the body," baptized into such by the Holy Ghost. Those that go to *remember* the Lord are such as *know* Him; and those who go to *show His death* are those that know the *value of His death*.

3. The Object Which Communicants Have in Coming Together to Break Bread

This object is fourfold --

- (1) the *showing or commemorating the Lord's death*;
- (2) the *remembrance of the Lord Himself*;
- (3) *worship*; and
- (4) *owning the oneness of the body*.

1. Showing the Lord's death. The Apostle Paul, in 1 Cor. 11, says --

As often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till He come.

I do not think that word DEATH is dwelt on enough. I would have put it in the largest letters I could find. Believers gathered to break bread are to *show*, to *announce*, to memorialize the Lord's *death*! And why His *death*? If you look back to the original institution of the Supper in Matt. 26 -- for such a thing did not exist before the Lord instituted it there -- you will find that it was instituted on a very solemn occasion. On what occasion? The apostle in 1 Cor. says it was "the same night." There is not an accidental word in Scripture, brethren; every word is essential; but why is it, that the Holy Ghost takes pains to say that it was "the *same* night?" A thousand precious recollections hang round that night; precious to us now, although the occurrences were deeply sorrowful, and deeply harrowing, at the time, to Him who instituted the Supper. It was the night "in which He was betrayed"; when He was come to give up His soul unto death: when He was about to accomplish that of which He had before said, "I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!" He was about to do that which filled His soul from all eternity. On the night in question *the*

hour was come. Yes, that solemn hour -- an hour to which the eternity that is past, if I may so speak, looked forward; and to which the one that is future will look back with the deepest interest. It was the hour when God was about to deal with sin, in the person of the sinless Substitute; when God was to be glorified, through Christ in *man*, who, in Adam and his posterity, had so thoroughly dishonored God. Man, I say, in Adam and all his descendants had insulted God, and acted shamelessly in this earth. Man, in the person of the Son of Man, God manifest in flesh -- blessed for ever! The Son of Man, I say, on that memorable night, had before His soul the immense barrier of separation between man and God, which He only could remove. Again, Satan was to be bruised; and, further, it was the hour when the Lord Jesus should die to purchase His bride. Christ dearly loved His Church, and gave Himself for it; but the hour in which He did so, was an hour, of all others, deeply sorrowful to Him, yet full of joy withal. He knew what was before Him -- the deep sorrow and the full cup of joy; for He knew that He was doing the will of His Father. He looked forward to the time when He should have, through all eternity, a Church purchased by His blood. He knew, moreover, that the very nation at whose hands He was suffering, should need His sympathy in the hour of their calamity (Isa. 43). Further, as everything entrusted to man was spoiled in the using, so He knew that, for all things to be reconciled to God, it must be "by the blood of His cross" (Col. 1:20). With all this before him, and ten thousand times more than our poor hearts can understand, the Lord Jesus, on the "same night," instituted this Supper.

He also saw His own dear disciples who would forsake Him and flee; and, indeed, with reference to one, He had distinctly warned him, "Simon (Peter), behold Satan hath desired to have you that he might sift you as wheat, but I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not." (The Lord says He has prayed, not that Peter might *not* deny Him, but that He might not be given up to despair after he had denied Him.)

But further, the Lord Jesus looked forward, and knew what wrath awaited Him. Beloved, this is a solemn part of the subject. In the Garden of Gethsemane, under the very shadow of the cross, if I may so speak, the Lord Jesus, on that night, knew all that awaited Him; for although perfect man, He was also perfect God -- wonderful mystery! There, in the shadow of the cross, He says, -- "My soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death." And, indeed, so great was His agony, that His sweat became as great drops of blood falling to the ground. You or I may put on a distressed expression of face, and appear to be in sorrow, although it be *unreal*, but when we read of the Lord Jesus being in an agony, we read what is *true*. He said what He meant; He meant what He said! He, indeed, was in an agony. "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me!" What cup was that? The cup of the wrath of God -- the cup which you and I filled to the very brim -- which He,

the innocent One, was to take for us the guilty ones, and drain to the dregs. He was perfectly innocent ¹⁶ -- He was without sin, neither was guile found in His mouth. (I cannot lay too much stress upon these things, because there are persons, who take their filthy hands, and attempt to tarnish the Person of the spotless Lamb of God.) He it was who took the cup of the wrath of God, and drank it to the dregs. He knew all that He was to do and suffer. He knew that God was to hide His face from Him. He knew that before God could ever look with complacency upon His children, He must hide His face from Christ; that in order that we might be blessed, He must take the curse due unto us; that in order that we might be made righteous in Him, He must take the place of the sinner . In view of all this then the Lord Jesus called the disciples aside, and instituted the Supper.

It was instituted on the night of the Jews' Passover . In Ex. 12 it is called Jehovah's passover. In John 2 it is called the passover of the Jews, and in Matt. 26, the passover, the feast of the *Jews*. Why this difference? The difference is very great. That which Jehovah had instituted to be a very holy and solemn thing, had dwindled down to that which the Jews took into their own hands, lowered, tarnished, and spoiled. That which was to commemorate the deliverance out of Egypt, the Jews made into a feast of their own; they lost sight of its original design; *God was shut out from it*. So the Lord's Supper, the Lord's T able, has been lowered, in many instances, into *man's supper* and man's table. I cannot speak too plainly upon this subject. I do not say at all, that everything I see to-day around me is man's table; for who am I to judge? But I am grieved to say , that in many cases, what the Holy Ghost says (in 1Cor. 10:21, "Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of devils; ye cannot be partakers of the table of the Lord, and of the tables of devils") may be truly applied; substituting "tables of man" for tables of devils. Anything I spread, not on the ground of the one body, and which does not answer to the Lord's own institution, is not the Lord's Supper. If anything be the Lord's Supper, it must be that which answers to His own institution. I must embrace all believers, contemplate them all; take them all in; and we should be in fellowship with it; it must be that which shuts out all unbelievers. It must be that which contemplates all believers, and excludes every unbeliever, as having no part nor lot in the matter.

Now, beloved friends, it was His death He contemplated upon that night. The Jews, at Jehovah's Passover, were to remember the blood sprinkled upon the door-posts in Egypt, to save them from the destroying angel, when the Israelites were being delivered from Pharaoh. And what are we to show in the Lord's Supper? The *death* of the Lord by which we obtained eternal

16. [Blessedly true; but He was more, as to His humanity, that "*holy thing*" (Luke 1:35). -- ED.]

peace. Now, you and I ought to be deeply ashamed and grieved that that which is the remembrancer of the Lord's death has dwindled down to a mere "sacrament," or something else.

With whom are we linked up? We are linked up with a *rejected* Christ. It is not said that we are to show the Lord's resurrection. Surely we know He is risen from the dead, and is set down at God's right hand, to receive the reward of the work He has done. Every believer's life is safe, being as the apostle says, "Hid with Christ in God." Moreover, none can rightly remember Him in His death, who know not, in some degree, the power of His resurrection.

The death of the Lord Jesus is that which cuts us off from this world, and from all which is not of Himself. Hence we are called upon to remember *it* in connection with One who has been rejected -- One whom the world will not own at all; and whose *Lordship* many, alas! of His own blood-bought ones refuse practically to admit. When we rightly understand, beloved, what it is to show His *death*, can *our* wills be allowed to dictate? We break the bread, and what does it whisper into the spiritual ear? The Lord's body once broken {given}. For what? Ay, who can give a full answer? Was it not to gather together in *one* the children of God scattered abroad? Then at the Supper divisions cease; no sects are known; no rivals claim. Was not His death that by which all my sins were for ever washed away? Then *my* sins must have no place *at His* Table. Could greater proof of His love be afforded than in His *death*? Then what so calculated to draw out mine, as to be dwelling upon *His* in His *death*? But think of the *manner* of the love which could institute such a precious Supper, at such a time of sorrow to Himself! Yet again: the Apostle Paul, or rather the Holy Ghost, bids us while at the table not only to look *back* at the *death* of the Lord, but also to look *forward* to His *coming* -- "Show ye the Lord's *death* till He *come*." Hence, at the table, we eat as those who may be in glory with Himself before next Lord's day. How weaning, then, is the feast calculated to be when partaken intelligently!

We must not forget, however, that abundant blessings flow forth to them who, though they have very little intelligence as to these things, nevertheless eat bread and drink wine together in obedience to the word of our departed Lord -- "This do in remembrance of me."

I do not speak here of *privilege*, but of *obedience*. "Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" Is it because He is at present not seen by our eyes, that, therefore, there should be no loyalty of heart? It is amazing how little of true regard is paid by us to the word of our Lord. Truly may He ask us, Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do *not* the things that I say? Thousands of believers, with not a few *excuses*, but with no good *reason* whatever, absent themselves from the table of the Lord. The veriest trifle,

which would have no influence in keeping them away from business, or even from pleasure so-called, is made excuse enough for their remaining "at home." The loving heart hails the first day of the week, and cheerfully the obedient feet move towards the assembly of saints, who are gathered unto the name of Him who says, "This do in remembrance of Me."

In appearing at the table of the Lord once a week, the disciples of the Lord manifest, in His own appointed *way* and *time*, their loyalty to One whom the world cast out. In this, of which the religiousness of the world has been always ashamed, the followers of Jesus, as the despised Nazarite, glory. They remember Him, not in His resurrection, not in His glory, *but* in His *death*.¹⁷ Hence, moreover, the supper of the Lord stands forth as a silent condemnation to all who are not found owning *Him*; and, of course, to such as are ashamed to be identified with those who show His death till He come.

Now the Lord in His death cut Himself off from all that was of the old creation, and from all that was Jewish as to *worship*. Indeed, looking at His death as that in which man was the agent, we may say that natural men and religious men ("Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel") formed a confederacy for killing the Prince of Life, whom God raised from the dead. What depth of grace, beloved, do we behold in Him who has been pleased to call us out of the ranks of His enemies, to show his death! Of course nature and religiousness are opposed to Him still; consequently faithfulness in Him to-day will incur the hatred of His *enemies*. But what of that, my dear brethren? Would it not be our highest privilege even to die for such a One? Surely it would. This, however, He does not ask. O may His grace be afforded us, that we may not be ashamed to confess Him fully; that we may not shrink from taking up our cross and following Him.

In announcing His death, therefore, we are reminded that we too have died out of our "old Adam" condition; that we are in no way linked up with a religiousness that is of man; but that we are one with the Lord, who is risen out of it all.

2. There is another thing that we do in the breaking of bread -- we do it in remembrance of the Lord Himself. We not only show His death, but we remember HIMSELF. Could you have affection more strong and touching than His? A person says to a friend, "I will give you a ring to put on, and when you look at it, think of *me*." Many friends may be very dear to us, and we would almost worship them, so long as we could see them; but when they

17. [The remembrance of Christ is not confined to His death. We are free as led of the Holy Ghost to remember the Blessed One at the Lord's table in all that He was and did in and preceding His death. "In or for a remembrance of *Me*," and "Ye do shew the Lord's death," are distinct, although vitally connected, truths. - ED.]

go away from us, we forget them. Now, the blessed Lord well knew the thousand things that might so attract our hearts as to cause us, in a measure, to forget Him. Hence He designed to institute this feast as a remembrancer of Himself.

Looked at from this point of view, we see no superstitious mysteries attaching to the Lord's Supper; we see no need for any oath-taking (sacrament) process; we behold no barrier in the way of those present being fully engaged in soul, mind, and conscience, with the Person of Christ; and if so, there would be abundance of worship.

I know that the word is applied to meetings such as preaching the gospel, etc.; and I know that the great majority of Christians do so; but, beloved brethren, it is a false humility that accepts ideas, *because large numbers of our forefathers taught them*, when the word of God explicitly teaches the contrary. (Martin Luther was *right* in mooting the long-lost truth of justification by faith. But do we not know that he stood alone with the word of God while hundreds of monks, *with their traditions*, opposed him?)

Now, *worship is the spiritual act of believers, in which, by the power of the Holy Ghost, they offer to God spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to him through Jesus Christ* (1 Peter 2).

Worship is the proper occupation of a saved soul with Christ, and supposes:

(a) The reception of the "gift of God" (John 4:10), "If thou knewest the *gift of God*." Here is no legality at all; no carnal preparations. No; the question is, Do you *know* the *free-giving* of God? Do you *know* Him as the one full of grace and mercy to a poor world, who, for the sake of His beloved Son, *gives* eternal life to all who believe? Have you peace in your own soul with Him? else *you* cannot worship.

(b) "And WHO it is that saith unto thee," etc. Before the Lord could talk to the woman about worship she needed to know God as a *giver*, and further, to know CHRIST.

The worshiper under the Jewish economy had this in type in the altar of burnt-offerings, which was the first object he encountered at the entrance to the holy place. *We* (Christians) have boldness to enter in as worshipers through the blood of *Jesus*. *It* is our security; *His name* our passport. Indeed, the apostle (in Heb. 10) exhorts us to "draw near," because we have "an *high-priest* over the house of God."

The Lord Jesus is that high-priest. And He is such over "the house of God" inhabited by the Holy Ghost, in contrast to *Moses'* house (Heb. 3), where God was never revealed as the "Father," who seeketh *such* (*spiritual worshipers*) to worship Him.

To be a spiritual worshiper, then, I must believe God as to my place and standing before God “*in Christ*” (Eph. 1); that I am “accepted in the beloved, in whom we have redemption through His blood the forgiveness of sins.” Being in Him, I am clean delivered from the law of sin and death (Rom. 8). His preciousness (1 Pet. 2) God counts to me. O may we learn more of what it is to be *in Christ*! I do not wonder that many believers, who are ignorant of the complete salvation wrought out for them by the death of the Lord Jesus, are still beset with doubts and misgivings, and, therefore, are not free to worship.

(c) There is a third qualification for a true worshiper. He must be indwelt by the Holy Ghost. To Him the Lord evidently referred in His conversation with the woman, when He told her about the living water which He would give her. (Compare John 4:10; 7:38, 39.) We find in these three qualifications the diagnostic marks of a *Christian*. I do not say a *saint* -- for such were all believers who lived before Pentecost -- I say a *Christian*. I am aware that to many this is a strange bit of news; but if it be true, its strangeness must lie at our own doors, and not to vagueness of expression in the word of God.

A Christian, then, is one who knows God as the free-giving God; Christ as his peace; and is indwelt by the Holy Ghost; and such is sought by the Father as a *worshiper*.¹⁸

The worshipers are separated people, sanctified to God. They can truly say, “We *know* that we are of *God*, and the whole world lies in the wicked one” (1 John 5:19). It is God who in His rich grace has made the “difference between” that “we” and the “world” (see Ex. 11:7).

A false humility, if not the veriest unbelief, will prefer “not to be quite sure.” Faith’s language is, “We *know*.” And further, “we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding that we may know Him that is true; and we are *in Him*, that is true (even) in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life” (verse 20).

None can worship that cannot adopt such language; all should who can. I said before, that while worship *may* be the occupation of saints very *frequently*, although they only break bread *once a week*, yet that it was a very prominent feature of the feast of the Lord’s Supper. When He instituted the

18. The word *Christian* occurs, as far as I can see, *three* times only in the Bible, and they are all in the *New Testament* (Acts 11:26; 26:28; 1 Pet. 4:16). Now-a-days, many assume the title without any conscience whatever as to union with, and *standing* in, Christ. In the early days of Christianity, i.e., soon after Pentecost, to be a Christian was to be exposed to reproach and shame: yea, even to death; for it expressed identification with Christ, whom the *world* hates.

Supper He “gave thanks” (Matt. 26:26). It is not said that He *blessed* the bread, but He gave thanks (the margin is said to be right). (See Mark 14:22, 23; Luke 20:11, 19; 1 Cor. 11:24.) Many, ignorant of the nature of the Supper, “bless the elements.” But what have not tradition, superstition, and ignorance led to? The Lord is truly very gracious in bearing with us so long and tenderly. May the result of our “inquiry” be to find us in fellowship with Him about His Supper!

To return. The Lord’s Table is a place for solemn, holy, spiritual *joy*. If the design were otherwise, *sorrow* would have filled the assembly on the night that the Lord instituted the Supper.

Who can fathom the depths of grief into which His soul was sunk on that memorable night? Who but Himself knew the bitterness of the cup of wrath which awaited Him?

Did He not know that Peter would deny Him? Think you that it cost Him no pang, when *all* the disciples forsook Him and fled? Was it nothing to the Son of God that His own creatures should as dogs howl at Him, and as bulls of Bashan beset Him round about? (Psa. 22) As to Israel, the nation to whom He came, see how, in their chief priests and rulers, they cast Him out: and say, “Was there ever sorrow like unto His sorrow?”

Above all, He was soon to be forsaken of God (Matt. 27:46).

Yet after the Passover with *His* disciples, on creating this new feast, “He gave thanks.”¹⁹ Yes; there were the unquenchable flames of love within His own bosom, which all the storms of Satan and the malice of wicked men failed to reach: they burned on that occasion without a flicker. High above these strata of sorrow were plateaus of verdure that delighted His heart. He rose superior to His griefs: He unselfishly (dear His name!) looked forward to the blessings to flow from His death. Hence, “for the *joy* that was set before Him, He endured the cross, despising the shame.” He could find a joy even in the sufferings which awaited Him: hence “He gave thanks.”

To bring then, *our* sins, *our* failures, *our* sorrows, *our* cares to the table of the Lord, would be to dishonor Him: through Him the Father can say, “Let us make merry and be glad.” Surely it is to Him that we should carry our sins, failures, &c.; but the time for them is not the Supper-time, nor the place the Lord’s-table. *It* is the time and place for worship, adoration, giving of thanks, and praise.

Indeed, what circumstance is there more calculated to elicit our praises

19. It should be borne in mind that *thanksgiving preceded* the taking of the cup; as well as the breaking of the bread.

as the showing the Lord's *death* -- remembering Him?

Are we then reminded that by His death we live? Then, at the Table, we praise the life-giver. Was it the Father -- *our* Father -- who gave Him to die? Then we bless "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." Is it the Holy Ghost that brings to our souls a vivid remembrance of Him whose love was stronger than death? Then we ascribe praise for the Holy Ghost, who takes of the things of Christ and reveals them unto us.

Of course, much may be done to *favor*, to feed, worship, at the Supper. But all the meeting should tend that way. One brother present, for instance, may *open* the meeting with a portion of the Word or a hymn, &c., relating to the person or work of Christ. *If he be subject* to the Holy Ghost, it will be *the* key-note of the praises of the assembly; and will, therefore, commend itself to all the spiritual.

Another (or the same one) may engage in leading the expressions of praises; while another may read another portion, give out a hymn, and so on (1 Cor. 14); but the tendency, I say, is towards worship -- *giving* of His own, to God and to the Lord Jesus, who supplied that which hearts, bubbling over, return to Himself.

Here let me venture a remark on Ex. 12:8 -- "unleavened bread" and the "bitter herbs."

The paschal lamb, "roasted with fire" -- type of the wrath endured by our Lord -- caused joy to every Israelite; but when eaten it was to be with "unleavened bread and with *bitter* herbs."

So at the Lord's Supper, no leaven (evil) is to be allowed; there is not to be found the least degree of unholiness. Indeed, how could it be, in the presence of that which reminds us of God's righteous judgment on sin? "For Christ, our passover, is *sacrificed* for us." I believe, too, that while a holy, consistent, spiritual walk is essential to the partaking *worthily* of the Lord's Supper, the believer who thus partakes is strengthened for practical holiness. The two are made to react upon each other.

The "unleavened bread," then, suggests *moral* fitness in the believer, and supposes self-judgment. An *Israelite* ate the Passover, and every *believer* may partake of the Supper; but leaven was to be excluded by the one, and every impurity of mind and life is to be judged by the other.

But what do we learn about the "bitter herbs"? -- A very solemn truth.

Herbs with meat are not *food*; but they impart their *savour* to the food. Those taken at the paschal feast were to be "bitter."

Are our spirits *subdued* as we meditate at the table upon the sufferings of Christ?

Do we seek to realize anything of the *cost* to the Lord of our place of blessing?

Do not tell me about the shedding of tears on such an occasion; I ask whether the soul lingers at the scene of suffering, while we remember the Lord as the One that *died*. If not, do meditate upon the significance of the “bitter herbs.”

It is only when these two things are strictly observed, viz., practical holiness daily, and a broken, chastened spirit at the table, that the soul can truly contemplate Christ, and so *truly* worship Him. Many beautiful examples of worship are given in the Word of God: --

(a) In Deut. 26, a man in the land of Canaan is to carry his basket full of first-fruits to God, and *worship* before the Lord his God (vv. 2, 10).

Then we learn respecting worship --

1. It is by one *in Canaan*, not in Egypt. Answering to this is the heavenly position *now* before God in Christ of every true believer (Eph. 1). A Christian worshiper to-day must be a *believer*.

2. *Every one* in the land was to present his basket of first-fruits. Every believer to-day should be a spiritual worshiper.

3. He went as a *giver*; and his was to be a basket *full*. The Lord is pleased to say, Whoso offereth *praise* glorifieth me” (Ps. 1:23). How condescending to place us in the position of *givers*! Such is His grace.

4. The basket was to be a *full* one. For this, I judge, there was a constant gathering up. How blessed it would be if, all the week through, we were so dwelling in the presence of God, so delighting in Himself, so learning of Him from His Word, as to have a *full* (how large?) heart of praise and worship, to offer to God on the first day of the week, as we are gathered to break bread in remembrance of Him [The Lord. -- ED.]

5. It was, moreover, a basket full of *first-fruits*. The *youngest* believer should be an instantaneous worshiper.

(b) Look at the leper (Luke 17:17). When he found that he was healed, he turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God. Gratitude filled his heart. He “gave thanks.”

(c) From John 12 we may learn how much beyond *service* the Lord estimates the adoration of His person. Many of us to-day, alas! reverse this, and indulge the vanity of Judas, rather than the humble, quiet worship of the woman. Am I, by this remark, to be accused of finding fault with service? Nothing is farther from my thoughts. Would to God that all of His dear saints could be less busy with each other’s failures, and with plans of self-indulgence, so as to be freer for His use in various departments! But the fact

is that even our service may revolve around our insignificant selves, and be in the Lord's sight worthless. (I have frequently wondered, if we could carry our memoranda of service with us to the judgment-seat (2 Cor. 5), how many of our jottings would stand.) On the other hand true worship leaves the mind with such an exalted sense of God's majesty that abhorrence of self is the result; and such is just the condition of vessel the Lord can use (Jud. 7:16; 2 Cor. 4:7). The woman was endeavoring to show her admiration of the Lord's blessed person; and when Judas found fault, the Lord said "Let her alone." So, beloved, we may also see here that when by illness we are laid aside and cannot *serve* actively, we may worship and adore One who observes the simplest outflow of affection for Himself. Is there any one in heaven or earth so precious as He?

(d) Have you never been struck with John's conduct in the Isle of Patmos? Just observe him. Turn to Rev. 1. From v. 1 to the middle of v. 5 he is narrating -- "And from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the first begotten of the dead, and the Prince of the kings of the earth."

Properly speaking, the narrative continues in v. 7, "Behold He cometh with clouds," &c. Intermediately there is a parenthesis. Then why the sudden halt in v. 5? We notice the eye turned away from the "seven assemblies" (ἐκκλησίαις) towards "*Him* that loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood."

Why, have you never suddenly stopped on your way to admire an attractive object which unexpectedly presented itself to your gaze? Yes, you have.

Well, the most lovely object of Heaven presented Himself to John's mind at the mention of His name; and straightway he uttered his "Selah." He halted and worshiped -- "To Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen." He could not help himself.

Numerous similar examples are found scattered in Paul's writings (Rom. 11:33-36; Eph. 1:3; 1 Tim. 6:16).

(e) I will cite just one more passage (Rev. 5:12-14) for it is very suggestive. (I may say that the best critics omit the last seven words of v. 14.) Now, we gather from this Scripture that worship may either be attended *with utterance* of the lips, as in v. 12, where the crowned elders said, with a loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb," &c.; or worship may be *silent*, as in v. 14, where, after the "Amen" by the "living creatures," the elders merely "fell down and worshiped."

I have frequently wondered why saints at worship meetings sing as if they were afraid to let their voices be heard. The elders say with a *loud voice*. But I prefer to judge myself, for the very little silent, quiet worship paid by

my soul at such meetings. The quiet pauses at worship meetings are delightful opportunities for (discharging the full baskets. I think I should say that nothing is more indicative of the paucity of worship as when brethren are seen turning over leaves of books, staring about, and acting as if there was no divine power for contemplating the glories of the person of Christ.

Is it not because we are in His presence so little? Is it not because we do not fill our baskets during the week? We must not wait till the Lord's-day to fill our baskets. That must be a poor, barren meeting, as far as *worship* is concerned, when we do so.

There needs, therefore, much self-judgment *while* we sit at the table. It may be nothing but nature desiring to be *heard* that leads me to announce my favorite hymn or chapter, or to indulge "a speech" in public praise. A *natural* disposition, I say, may prompt this. Such is not *spiritual* worship; self is unbridled.

On the other hand, a *natural* timidity or nervousness, or fear of being found fault with, may keep me silent, when the mind of the Holy Ghost was towards my utterance. This, too, is unjudged nature. Yet, again, a false notion to please lookers-on may induce me to break the solemn silence of the worshipers, and so to keep up a sort of excitement. I need to be at Gilgal I require the "bitter herbs." Thus we need to be very much in the presence of God *where alone self is displaced*, ere we can be true spiritual worshipers. (How gracious of our Lord to bear with our failures in this respect.)

Let us not forget that, although He who seeks worshipers is our "Father," yet that "God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him *must* worship Him *in spirit and in truth*." Falseness may escape detection by our brethren; but He looks for "*truth* in the inward parts"; and however much we estimate our own acts, *He* who is sole judge values them according to His estimate.

If the worship be in Christ, such as the Spirit of God prompts, well; else it is only so much *shadow* to Him; and utterly void of substance, is regarded as worthless. (If these suggestions be Scriptural I need hardly say that they stand in wide contrast to much that is called "worship" among the Ritualists, &c., now-a-days.) May nothing short of *spiritual* worship be yielded, henceforth by every one of us, beloved brethren. If any are found identified with what the Word condemns, may grace be afforded us to quit it instantly whatever the cost.

What Christian, who is subject to the Lord, can, in the face of such Divine truth, uttered by God Himself in the person of Christ, sanction by his presence that which is neither purely *Jewish* nor purely Christian? I desire every Christian reader to weigh this question with all humility in the presence of God.

4. Besides celebrating the *death* of the Lord, remembering Himself, and worshipping; do we not find another object in the Supper? Is it not to manifest the *oneness of the body*? I think so. Let us see. In 1 Cor . 10:16, 17, this idea seems to be fairly deduced, as we read, "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we, being many, are one bread (or one *loaf*) and one body; for we are all partakers of that one bread (or *loaf*). We saw on a previous occasion that the Lord always contemplated "one body," "one assembly." And this should be expressed in the one unbroken loaf set upon the table, afterwards broken and divided among the gathered saints.

(1.) A table spread on any other basis than, that of God's assembly is *sectarian*, and therefore has no claims on the godly.

To be more explicit, let us suppose that all of us in this room now , who are believers should agree to break bread to-night, and should spread the table for *ourselves* only, without providing, according to the Scriptures, for *all* the "approved" saints. Then we *might* "break bread"; but it would be *our own*, and not the *Lord's* supper; for the Lord's Supper contemplates all the members of the "one body."

Again, contemplate any society of Christians meeting *as a society* , subject to regulations arranged among themselves, and to which all the members are agreed. Let such meet *as a society* to break bread. Then, I say, from 1 Cor. 10 and 11, they eat a *Society's* supper, and not the *Lord's*, although they attach, with the most pious motives, His name to their feast.

Differently constituted as our several minds are, we cannot be unanimous in accepting plans suggested by each other . Hence, when such plans are forced there must be divisions. And this is just what the apostle tells us in the portion before us. "There must be heresies (a heretic is one with an unsubdued will; this, indulged, leads to schism), that they which are approved may be made manifest" (1 Cor. 11:18, 19).

But let all, with broken wills ("spirit of meekness") be subject to the *same* LORD, be directed by the *same* SPIRIT, from the *same* Divine book, and can you expect schism in such a case?

However, in this day of abundant heresy (self-will which leads to false doctrines and divisions), we need to search diligently for our path.

Beloved brethren, I hesitate not to say that such a search is not very easy. But the very difficulty of it should lead us in all meekness and self-abnegation to Him who can conduct us along "a way which no fowl knoweth, which the vulture's eye hath not seen: the lion's whelps have not trodden it, nor the fierce lion passed by it" (Job 28:7, 8; Psa. 107: 7).

I say nothing here of societies that knowingly admit unbelievers to their communion. I confess to be no little surprised at any *godly saint* being in fellowship with such. The difficulty we have to encounter is with companies of *Christians*, real believers, who themselves endeavor to exclude, as far as they can judge unconverted persons. One of the tests is given in the Scripture before us. I should therefore inquire, Are you gathered on the principle of the *one* body? That is, could *every* true believer, every godly saint, be gathered with you according to the Word of God? Or are you gathered around *a* minister, *a doctrine*, or *a few doctrines*?

(2.) Again, to be an expression of the “one body,” for there to be *communion of the body of Christ*, there needs a oneness of judgment as to the Divine and spotless person of Christ the Head.

“No man, speaking by the Spirit of God, calleth Jesus accursed” (1 Cor . 12:3). Therefore that cannot answer to the manifestation of the “one body,” which allows of evil teaching respecting the Lord Jesus: for it must not be forgotten that it is the presence of the Holy Ghost which constitutes the *one* Body; and He never sanctions anything derogatory to the Lord. But some may ask, Who are to be the judges of the doctrine? To such I reply, Take heed of the spirit which prompted the question. Am I to infer that *any teaching* may be allowed in an assembly without being challenged? The Holy Ghost gives a standard in the text I last quoted, and the godly must compare with it. Has it come to pass that saints of God are to be less careful of what is taught about the person of Christ than they are about doctrines, which, in their opinion, more directly concern *their* safety? How quickly, for instance, would the statement be challenged that if a believer died without partaking of this Holy Eucharist he would be lost? Yet many pass heedlessly on, as if they were perfectly indifferent to any heresy respecting the *person* of the Lord. I say, therefore, that that cannot be the expression of the “one body” of Christ, where evil doctrines as to His Divine person are persistently held and taught.

It is perhaps necessary that I should call special attention to these remarks, for there are not a few assemblies that at first sight seem to be the very “beau ideal” of what answers to an expression of the “one body,” and saints unwittingly have fellowship with them.

But other difficulties present themselves. In the *same* place there may be two or three assemblies, ostensibly gathered on the same ground, and yet not in fellowship with each other. What then! (May the Lord Himself teach us, in all our difficulties, to lean on His unerring wisdom.) Am I to choose that at which there is most *teaching*? Shall that in which most *love* is attract me, or shall I rather identify myself with that which receives every and any one on his own testimony? Respecting the last, let us bear in mind that even Paul the Apostle was not received into the fellowship of the Jerusalem brethren till

Barnabas took him by the hand, till he was introduced (Acts 9:26). If godly care is not thus exercised, who then might not sit at the table? *I should certainly refuse on this principle to break bread with such a gathering.*

As to a second having "very loving and dear saints at it," I rejoice before the Lord when saints love one another. Would that we dwelt more in company of Him whose name is Love, that so we might love each other more! But alas! that that external appearance, very pleasing to nature, should attract so many. In dealing with the things of God I need an exercised *conscience* besides a loving heart. Now, CHRIST, and not "*loving saints*," is God's Divine center for rallying His saints. Hence, if He be not implicitly submitted to, such a gathering has no claims on me, though there were never so much love.

True love must be "in the Spirit," not in the flesh. However, at love I am not to look, nor must I be discouraged if I do not find it. This I believe, that those who love most are least loved (2 Cor. 12:15).

Lastly, beautiful teaching is obtained "at a third gathering." Granted. But I repeat that CHRIST and not *doctrines* is the center of gathering.

Better be in fellowship with a "feeble folk," who are gathered on Divine principles, than be where there is "much teaching" with much human will. Alas! that not a few are merely attached by *teaching*.

Supposing I find some who are gathered in the unity of the Spirit, refusing in every way association with moral and doctrinal evil: then let us thank God for such; and follow righteousness, faith, love, peace *with* them (2 Tim. 2). With such I would break bread by all means. Indeed I would *claim* my place at the Lord's Table with them; and if the saints are godly they would not refuse me -- *if my confession and walk be for Christ*.

Judging from the case of Paul, already referred to, it would seem to be the more godly way that two or more at the table, who know any godly believer desiring to have communion with them at the Lord's Supper, and in whose judgment their brethren had confidence; I say that it seems a happy way for such to commend the believer to the gathering. No test seems Scriptural but the one *confession of the Christ of God*. The gathering, on such recommendation of two or three witnesses, should "receive him to the glory of God."²⁰

If he be *ignorant*, the Holy Ghost can instruct him, and hence his *ignorance* should be no barrier to his reception; on the contrary, *those who*

20. [A person going from one place to another should seek "letters of commendation" to the gathering whither he is going (2 Cor. 3:1 Acts 28:21). This saves very much unpleasantness, both to himself and to those who may not know him. Ed.]

commended him should feel a special care for him, helping him on in divine things in the name of the Lord. In fact, I am not aware of anything, but immoral walk, or a tenacious adherence to heretical doctrines, that should exclude any believer from the Lord's table; ²¹ do you? Then why are you all not at it? If He graciously invite you is it humility to refuse? The contrary is the fact. Let us take care that pride, or selfishness, or a shrinking from cross, is not the hindrance.

THE LORD'S TABLE, THEN, IS LARGE ENOUGH FOR ALL HIS SAINTS, AND IS AN EXPRESSION OF THE ONE BODY; BUT AT ITS NARROW ENTRANCE IS WRITTEN IN LARGE LETTERS, "HOLINESS BECOMETH THINE HOUSE, O LORD, FOR EVER" (Psa. 93:5).

May our spiritual condition correspond daily with our ecclesiastical *position*.

It may be asked, why be so very particular? The reason is on the surface -- IT IS THE TABLE OF THE LORD. "Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I" (Matt. 18:20). Of course I see no occasion with Rome for deducing *transubstantiation*, nor with Luther for *consubstantiation*, from this. I reason not on the statement. It is enough for faith that the Lord is to be owned, as present with His gathered saints, according to His word. And by the power of the Holy Ghost, too, sweet communion -- "a blessed antepast of heaven" is enjoyed by the soul in His presence in a very special way. May we know still more of this; and may large numbers of our dear brethren, who deny themselves the privilege, be drawn to share the joy of such as revel in "fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ."

4. {*How Often and Until What Event?*}

Having endeavored to show who are the partakers of the Lord's Supper, and who are excluded, and what is the design of the feast, -- let us notice, and very briefly, *how often, and till what event, the feast should be commemorated*.

Consistently with the principle of *law*, Jehovah enjoined on *Israel* the keeping of the Passover *once a year*. In keeping with the dealings of God in *grace* with us now, the Lord fixes no definite periods by an enactment in so many words. But let me say, once for all, that a distinct intimation of His

21. [Soundness in the faith and a corresponding godly walk are essential in all who would eat the Lord's Supper. -- ED. {A godly walk includes separation from evil.}]

mind is, or ought to be, quite enough for a child of grace; and respecting the Supper such intimation is not lacking.

There were “yet *many* things” which the Lord would have said to His disciples, if they could bear them (John 16:12). Howbeit the Spirit of truth, given after His ascension, was to guide them into all truth.

It is our wisdom, therefore, to see His will where it is expressed in the Gospels; then to look in the Acts of the Apostles for the *way* it was carried out, as in the Epistles for the interpretation of the Acts.

(A) *How Often?*

(1) Before the Lord's crucifixion, He said to His disciples, “Do this *as often* . . . in remembrance of Me.” The point there, I judge, is, not the *time* but the *object* of the Supper is contemplated.

Yet it would appear, that those who are willing to think of HIM in His *death* would, from this Scripture, see their privilege of celebrating the Supper *frequently*. I say *privilege*, and a blessed privilege it is. And doubtless we would see this the more were we less engaged with ourselves. To be looking in at self, enshrouded with doubts as to our acceptance “in the Beloved,” is a fruitful source of legality respecting the Lord's Supper. So, again, when we habitually permit worldliness, bad tempers, evil thoughts, &c., it becomes us to own them to God. In such case it is occupation with *our* doubts, or with *our* failures; and hence we are not free to be engaged with Christ. I repeat, therefore, that were we less engaged with self, we would be freer to eat the Lord's Supper *more often*.

The Lord, then, before His death did not say how often, but intimated freedom to eat the Supper as *frequently* as the disciples could have communion in spirit with Himself.

(2) Consistently with this, we find the disciples, after the Lord's ascension, and after the descent of the Holy Ghost, “continuing *daily* (or every day) with one accord in the temple, and *breaking bread* from house to house” (or rather *in the house*, at home, not in the *temple*), &c.

It appears, from this Scripture, that the disciples soon after Pentecost broke bread DAILY.

(3) The Lord's-day, or *first* day of the week (our *Sunday*) seems to have been specially honored by the Lord Jesus as *His* resurrection-day. It is called (Rev. 1) “the *Lord's-day* (*κυριακή ἡμέρα*.) The same word, *κυριακον*, 1 Cor. 11:20, is used for the Lord's supper. It is not a *common* day in the one case, nor a *common* meal in the other, but the LORD'S-day and the LORD'S Supper, a very distinct and different day from the *seventh* or the Sabbath (our

Saturday), observed by the Jews. Now it was on this day, the *first* day of the week, the LORD'S-day (our Sunday) that the Lord appeared to the assembled disciples, spoke peace to them, and showed them His hands and His side (John 20). More than this. The day was not only thus honored as the *Lord's*, and therefore full of privilege for His saints, but He positively "broke bread" with two of His disciples (Luke 24:30) on the "first day of the week."

Lastly, we find the special vessel of the Church's testimony -- I mean the Apostle Paul -- in the midst with the disciples, who "came together to break bread" upon the *first day of the week* (Acts 20:7).

I conclude, therefore, that the proper time for celebrating the Lord's Supper is *every* first day of the week -- not once a month nor once a year, but *once a week*, and that on the *Lord's-day*.

I should like to add a remark or two in this place.

(1) The chief aim of saints, when assembled on the Lord's-day, should be to *break bread*. If this be lost sight of, then many will go away disappointed if no word of edification or exhortation be spoken.

I believe that when the object of the meeting is held prominently before the soul there will not be the delaying to break the bread; it will be done at an early portion of the meeting. Of course the laying down of plans might reduce this blessed feast to the merest routine, and quench the action of the Spirit of God. On the other hand, if the mind be not correctly instructed, the merest superstition will be interpreted as the guidance of the Holy Ghost. Spiritual, walk and much self-abnegation are needed for recognizing what is of the Holy Ghost and what is of nature.

(2) There may be, however, if there be present any whom the Holy Ghost can use, a word of edification or exhortation, &c., spoken, as in the case referred to. Paul, a servant of God, present with the disciples, discoursed to them. But the disciples, remember, did *not* assemble to *hear Paul preach*. The word is distinct enough -- "Came together to *break* (or with the object of breaking) *bread*." It seems also, from this passage cited, that the discourse was *subsequent* to the Supper.

Sometimes we have to regret that some intrude their speeches upon us, whom a little more modesty might suggest to be silent; and many are silent whom a little fear hinders from being used; and we ourselves are prejudiced for or against, and thus may be losers. But such are our failures, and do not *touch* the Divine principles which we have been seeking to enunciate.

Let them cast us upon Him, who values the *motives* of honest and sincere hearts, even when our actions are truly humbling. Better go on, however, in the most abject weakness, ay, even with failures, than resort to human expediency, which would be rebellion (read Ex. 32:1; 1 Sam. 8:5).

(B) Till What Event?

How cheering to the loving heart it is to be reminded at the Supper that another first day of the week may find *all* the saints of God together in glory with the Lord! Do you not observe that, in 1 Cor . . . 11:26, not a shadow is allowed to obstruct our proper and proximate hope? Shall we make plans for carrying on *our* cause? No; the Lord is coming. Shall we remain away from the Table on the slightest pretenses for another week? No; for "the Lord is at hand." Need we allow the present ruinous *appearance* (to us) of the Church, to cause faint-heartedness, and thus relax our testimony to His grace? Certainly not; for the same Lord who permits us to look *back* at the cross, while we eat of the bread and drink of the cup, bids us look forward to His coming, -- "Behold, *I* come quickly."

Here saints are shy of each other; here they misunderstand one another; here they are so divided that very few indeed in any one place are gathered together at the Supper. Frequently the godly mourn over it, knowing that they will never in the earth meet in any place *all* the saints. But is there no cheering beam of comfort? Shall we all never meet together? Oh yes! we shall. And not only *we* of this generation, but *all the saints* from Adam. And we shall see, too, the holy apostles, prophets, martyrs, and others who ate of the same Supper 1800 years ago, of which we now partake. Paul will be there, and "the woman of the city," and the Samaritan woman, and John, and all whom now *we* know, and yet so little love. Oh, what a meeting will that be!

But, beloved brethren, we shall see in brightest glory the One who condescends to invite you and me to show His *death*, "till He come." "The Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout . . . the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we which are alive and remain (till the coming) shall be caught up *together with them* in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we be ever with the Lord. Wherefore, comfort one another with these words."

How vast is the field for contemplation, as we, from God's Divine standpoint, gaze upon the Lord's Supper and the Lord's Table!

I trust it will be borne in mind that it *is* a search for truth from the *Scriptures* which has been engaging us, and not a review of men's thoughts nor of men's *acts*. I have been endeavoring not to deduce a system of thoughts from the practice of saints, but, on the contrary , to see that our conduct should be according to the Divine standard.

I trust the Lord will graciously help us to reject whatever I have said that is *not* of Himself; supply to us all which in this inquiry is deficient; and grant special grace to all of us to live out practically, at all costs to ourselves,

whatever we discover to be His mind, for His own glory. Amen.

Synopsis

1. The Lord's Supper is for *all* His saints. *Every believer, spiritual in walk* ²² and *doctrine*, is constituted a worthy partaker by the LORD HIMSELF:
2. That is *not* the Lord's Table which admits persons who are not of the family; known and recognized as such by the godly; nor has that any claim on the Spiritual which is in fellowship, directly or indirectly, with anything derogatory to the spotless person of Christ; or which, as an *independent* meeting, disowns the "one body":
3. Where there is the Table of the Lord in any place, there *all* the godly should be assembled to eat the Lord's Supper; each should *claim* his place at the Table:
4. The design of the Supper is for the saints --
 - (a) To celebrate the Lord's *death*,
 - (b) To remember *Himself*,
 - (c) To worship (as priests),
 - (d) To manifest the "one body":
5. The Scriptural warrant respecting the frequency of the meeting for breaking bread is ONCE A WEEK at least, and that on the *Lord's day* -- the resurrection day:
6. It being a *fact* that the Holy Ghost is now in the assembly to conduct its meeting at the Lord's Supper, saints should, in subjection to Him, and in much self-judgment, assemble for the Supper, however feeble they may be, *without any reference whatever to human pr esidency or carnal arrangements*.
7. The Assembly is to eat the Supper, as waiting for the return of the Lord -- "till He come."

22. {This includes walking in separation from evil.}

Chapter 3

A Scriptural Inquiry As to What Is the Church, Or the Assembly of God

1 Cor. 12, Eph. 4

An Essential Truth

I do not believe, beloved friends, that only some portions of God's word are "essential," and that others are "non-essential." Such terms are of man's introducing. I believe that every portion of God's word is essential for a Christian to know. More than that -- that every portion has its bearing on a Christian's *practice*. And, therefore, when I find a Christian talking to me about non-essential truths, I find a Christian who does not believe God's word as that which is given to us to profit *withal*. And again, if I find a Christian using the expression "non-essential" about any part of God's word, I should like to ask this question, "Non-essential to what?" He might say "Non-essential to my salvation." True, I reply; but have you got no farther than that? If you go to God as a poor sinner and simply accept the truth in the sixteenth verse of the third chapter of John's Gospel, that would be enough for your salvation. (I use the term salvation in the *limited* sense of deliverance from wrath. Of course it means more than that.) As far as salvation is concerned, God has fixed unalterably what is necessary,

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life {John 3:16}.

So that, if you speak about what is non-essential to salvation, you are taking out two or three Scriptures simply as essential -- a small portion only of the Word -- and laying all the rest aside. I do not admit the term non-essential at

all. Every portion is deeply *essential* for you and me to know and practice. Hence Paul, writing to Timothy, says,

ALL Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works (2 Tim. 3:16).

So you see, in order that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works, he must have *all Scripture*. He cannot afford to yield one tittle of *all* the Scriptures. That is the expression used by Paul. It is of the deepest moment to-day.

Now with reference to the Church, which is our subject to-night, I need not tell you that it *is* deeply *essential* that we should know God's whole revealed mind about it; and for the following among many reasons:

1. We should know all that God has revealed, because He has been pleased to *give us the nearness of children*. And so near are we that God has been pleased to speak into our ears and make known to us His counsels. Was it "essential" that the Prodigal Son should know that he was to sit at his father's table and eat the fatted calf? Was it essential that he should eat it? It was not essential that he should eat the fatted calf *to be* a son; but it was essential that he should eat it in order *to have fellowship with his father*. So it is between us and God. It is essential that we should know what He has revealed about His Church to enter into fellowship with Him. And we must know what He has said about the glory of His beloved Son, even as to the near position, which by grace He has afforded us in Christ; and so on. In the first Epistle of John I read,

That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also *may have fellowship with us*; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ.

We must know all these things in order to enter into God's fellowship -- to have His estimate about His Son, our Savior and Lord.

2. I should know these things that I may act *according to my relationships*. I cannot serve my master unless I believe that he is my master. Again, I cannot have my affections flowing out to a man whom I see, unless I know and believe that he is my father. When I have been told that he is my *father*, my affections flow out upon my believing the truth -- as the affections of a child to its father should.

3. But further, ignorance of the truth of what God says about His Church has led many a Christian to act in any way but that which is in accordance with

his relationships as a member of THE Church of God.²³ For instance, I find Christians mixing up the Old Testament teaching with the teaching about the Church of God. They go for directions about the Church of God to the Old Testament. I do not wish to be misunderstood here, beloved brethren. There are truths in the Old Testament deeply practical to us all, and that we should all learn from; there are examples of moral standing that we should all seek to copy. But when we wish to know the specific teaching of the word of God about our relationships in the Church, we do not go to the Old Testament for it -- we get it from the *New* Testament. And I must know all that the New Testament teaches about the Church, in order that I may be able to fulfil my duties in that relationship in which I am placed. When a man is over a house as its head, how is he related to the people in that house? To some he stands in the relation of *master*, to others in the relation of *father*, to one in the relation of *husband*. Although he is the same one man, he stands in a different relationship to all the people in his house. The directions he gives to the servants are certainly not the directions by which the children are to be guided; nor will it do for the servants to intrude into the position of the children; and neither can take the nearness of the wife. Each stands in a different relationship to the same man. So it is necessary that we should be instructed as to our individual and corporate relationships to God, and to each other, in the Church, in order to fulfil our responsibilities in those relationships. Having made these introductory remarks bearing on the importance of having correct ideas regarding the Church of God, and regarding our position in it, I now come to the question, *What is the Church?* To make the subject more clear, I shall try and divide it into various headings.

Not the Jewish Nation

1. And first let me say, the CHURCH AS REVEALED IN THE NEW TESTAMENT -- AND SPECIALLY TO PAUL -- WAS NOT THE JEWISH NATION. It may seem almost preposterous to make this statement, but it is needed by way of removing obstacles out of our path of research. The Church, then, was *not* the *Jewish nation*. When I turn to 1 Cor. 10:32, I find three distinct classes of persons before God's mind. They are not to be confounded -- each is distinct, and they should not be jumbled together. These three classes are respectively the JEWS, the GENTILES, and the CHURCH OF GOD. When we go to other Scriptures we find explanations as to what each class is.

23. [Membership in a church, or even *the* Church, is not Scripture accuracy; membership is applied to the Church viewed as the body of Christ. Ed.]

Who, then, were the JEWS? Turn to Rom. 9:3, 4, and 5,

For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh: who are ISRAELITES; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, *and the giving of the law* (note this), and the service of God, and the promises; whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen.

This is a brief description of what the JEWS were. They were a separated people -- a distinct nation set apart to God. But an *earthly nation* they were. Hence you will find God, speaking of them through the prophets, says --

Jehovah hath chosen *Jacob* unto Himself, and ISRAEL for His peculiar treasure (Psa. 135:4).

And, again,

For JACOB my servant's sake, and ISRAEL mine elect, I have called by name, though thou hast not known me (Isa. 45:4).²⁴

The Lord had set barriers, if I may so say, around them, separating them from all other nations.

Hence, in reading the Old Testament, we must be struck with this, that God told His people that they were not to go in and out amongst other nations. Such a thing as intermarrying was out of the question. (But this separation was soon abused. Pride got into the heart of that nation, and they soon began to look down upon the Gentiles as *dogs*. The distinction between the Jews and the Gentiles was God's; but the looking down upon the Gentiles was their *failure*, was an abuse of God's sovereign grace.) You will now be enabled to understand why the Lord Jesus told the Apostles when He sent them out, as you read in the tenth chapter of Matthew,

Go *not* into the way of the *Gentiles*, and into any city of the *Samaritans* enter ye not; but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of ISRAEL.

God had made Israel a distinct nation, and the Lord Jesus, when He came to the world, would not interfere with such a distinction, *until* the barrier was pulled down in His own death. God had separated them, and the Lord Jesus owned it. This will also help us to see why, in John 4:9, the woman of Samaria, speaking to the Lord Jesus, whom she perceived to be a Jew, said,

How is it that thou, being a *Jew*, askest drink of me who am a woman of *Samaria*? *for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans*.

That is to say, there never was any mingling: Jew and Gentile, or Jew and Samaritan could never come in contact. She deemed this a very

24. And their blessings were *earthly* (cp. Gen. 13, Deut. 26, &c.); *noheavenly* as ours are (Eph. 1).

condescending act in a Jew; and so it was. God had separated them off, and no one could interfere to break that separation but GOD Himself. This will further help us to understand the conduct of Peter in the 10th of Acts. You will find that Peter, with the keys of the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 16), had to go to open the door to the Gentiles. Cornelius had to be let in -- but before Peter would go to Cornelius (remember that Peter was a Jew), the Lord Jesus had to show him, in a vision, that He, having pulled down the barrier in the cross, in His death, had let the Gentiles in. The scene is now changed. "God putteth down one and setteth up another." Peerless wisdom! Hence we have that beautiful vision of the sheet let down by the four corners, full of all manner of four-footed beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air. And there came a voice saying, "Arise, Peter, kill and eat." But Peter said, "Not so, Lord, for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean." But he was told not to call that common which God had cleansed. The result was that Peter had to go to Cornelius. But you will observe how warily, cautiously (and, shall I add? scornfully) Peter proceeds. He thought it a most degrading thing for him, a Jew, to come in contact with a Gentile; because the Jewish nation until that time had been, according to God, a separated nation; and he had not learnt that the barrier was pulled down by the cross. Hence, further, in the 11th of Acts, the brethren who had been Jews called upon Peter to give an account of his conduct in going to the Gentiles. The brethren "pulled him up," as we say, for it. They had not understood that GOD had broken down the middle wall of partition; hence they accused Peter. And this is his answer in the 16th verse --

Then remembered I the word of the Lord, how that he said, John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost. Forasmuch then, as GOD *gave* them the like gifts as He did unto us who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, *what was I that I could withstand* GOD? When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also (mark the word *also*) to the GENTILES granted repentance unto life {Acts 11:16}.

I think from these scriptures I have said sufficient to show you that the Church of God, of which I am speaking, was not the *Jewish nation*.

The Jews were a separated people, but they were *not the church*.

The Gentiles Were Not the Church

The Gentiles were outside altogether. In Eph. 2:11 we read,

Wherefore remember, that ye being in times past *Gentiles* in the flesh who are called *uncircumcision* by that which is called the circumcision in the flesh made by hands; that at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and from the covenants of promise,

having no hope, and without God in the world.

Hence the Gentiles were outside Israel's blessings.

But NOW in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes *were* far off *are made nigh by the blood of Christ*. For *he* is our peace who hath made *both one*, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition

-- what I called the barrier. That barrier was not pulled down until Christ did it -- "Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances, for to make in himself of twain" -- (that is, the Jew and the Gentile) -- "one new man, so making peace" not forming the Jewish nation into the Church, nor constituting the Gentiles His assembly, but taking out of both some parts, and forming them into one new man. The Jews and the Gentiles were not reconciled before. Hence Peter's slowness to go to Cornelius. "And that he might reconcile both unto God in ONE BODY by the cross." When we speak of the cross of the Lord Jesus, we speak then not only of that by which God declared his righteousness in remitting the sins of those that lived *before* the cross -- Abraham, David, &c., through the forbearance of God; nor that by which God declares at *this time* His righteousness in being the just one, while He justifies all that believe in Jesus (Rom. 3:24, 26). But we speak also of the cross as that by which the middle wall of partition between Jew and Gentile is broken down; by which Jew and Gentile, in one body, baptized into such by the Holy Ghost {1 Cor. 12:13}, rejoice in one common Savior and Lord! How truly numerous and soul-stirring are the contemplations, as we sit in the shadow of the cross!²⁵ The cross is not only that by which we get peace to-day, but that by which the sins of those who lived before Christ were remitted, and it is also that which has pulled down the barrier between Jew and Gentile, so that now there is no barrier. The Jew and Gentile both meet God at the same altar of burnt-offering; both present the same one sacrifice, even Christ; and both are there, articulated members of the "one body." Well may we exclaim, What hath God wrought!

I hope you have seen, then, that the Church is a perfectly new thing -- in fact, so new, that the Epistle to the Ephesians tells us that before union with the Head -- and therefore with the members -- could be effected, Christ had

25. I hope no one will imagine that I uphold the idea of the Christian's place "being at the foot of the cross." He has to learn, or rather accept the truth -- that he is *in* Christ (Rom. 8:1; 2 Cor. 5:17; Eph. 1:3-7); that God accepts him according to the value of *Christ*. Indeed, I do not believe that any soul gets real lasting peace till it accepts God's word as to the value of Christ -- His person and His work. And I would say once for all, that those only can contemplate what "Christ and the Church is," who have solid peace in their own souls. To many the subject is most uninteresting -- and why? Because they do not know their *personal* standing before God. They cannot run over in praise as does the Apostle in Eph. 1:3. May every one of my readers know what it is to say, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who *hath* blessed us."

to die and be raised from the dead, and *with* Him we are raised up and made to *sit together* in heavenly places in Him {Eph. 2:6}. Before there could be a body the head must be raised up ²⁶ to sit at God's right hand. In John 11 you find Caiaphas speaking thus:

Ye know nothing at all, nor consider that it is expedient for us that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not. And this spake he not of himself, but, being High Priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation; and not for that nation only, but that also he SHOULD GATHER TOGETHER IN ONE *the children of God* THAT WERE SCATTERED ABROAD.

The death of the Lord Jesus then was necessary in order that the children of God scattered abroad should be gathered together *in one*. So we may see how THE CHURCH IS FORMED UPON THE DEATH AND RESURRECTION AND SESSION AT GOD'S RIGHT HAND OF THE LORD JESUS. May our hearts enter more deeply into the merits of His divine person and work!

Disowning the one body is dishonoring Him who died to "gather in one," &c. In 1 Cor. 12 you are told that it is not the hands and the feet standing separate and unconnected. "The body is not one but *many* members"; and by the Holy Ghost coming down, all the separate members were brought together and articulated into one body, so that there is no such thing as isolated or independent membership. The word of God authorizes no such thing as "an *independent* member" -- one which is not mutually dependent upon the other. I want my finger to clear the dust from my eye, and also my eye to see for my feet; my feet to carry my trunk along, and so on. It is *one body*, and all the members are mutually dependent upon one another; so dependent, indeed, that if one member suffers the whole body suffers {1 Cor. 12:26}. "But now are they many members but ONE BODY" (1 Cor. 12:20). It is indeed a beautiful picture -- comparing the Church to the human body. If I have an abscess on one finger, the whole body sympathizes by a fever; if one part gets diseased, it affects all the rest. So, on the other hand, so long as I can manage to keep all the members in good health and free from injury, the whole body is in a healthy state. You find in 1 Cor. 12 that what affects one member acts upon the whole. There is no such thing as independent membership; there is articulation; the members are mutually dependent one upon another. So says the Holy Ghost; and this is what the cross of Christ has done. It has pulled down the middle wall of partition; and it has done more, it has gathered into one the children of God that were scattered abroad. "And other sheep I have (Gentiles) which are not of this {fold} (the Jewish fold, αὐλή), them also I must bring; and they shall hear my voice; and there shall

26. [Scripture does not speak of the "Head" being raised up, but Christ as man being risen and glorified *is* the Church's glorious Head. Ed.]

be ONE FLOCK (ποιμνη) and one Shepherd (ποιμνη). Blessed oneness! Our entering into His thoughts in this is quite another thing. Oh, may none of us be another day out of fellowship with Him about HIS BODY -- HIS CHURCH -- HIS BRIDE, of which each believer is a constituent part, *draining* or *feeding* the whole. The Church of God, then, was not the Jewish nation, nor the Gentiles, but formed out of both.

2.THE CHURCH OF GOD IS THAT WHICH WAS DEVELOPED AT PENTECOST BY THE BAPTISM OF THE BELIEVERS INTO ONE BODY BY THE HOLY GHOST. I shall show you this presently; but I may say in passing, that although this body, the Church, was not developed till Pentecost, yet at the same time it was in God's mind from all eternity. You will get beautiful figures of it occasionally in the Old Testament. The first one you will find in Gen. 2, *before* the fall. God there put Adam into a deep sleep, and took one of his ribs, and of that rib made He a woman, and brought her unto the man. "And Adam said, 'This is now bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called woman (*Isha*), because she was taken out of man (*Ish*).'" God gave Adam that which was part of himself. It is a very remarkable thing, that in Eph. 5 the Holy Ghost uses the figure for illustrating what the Church is. After speaking about the duty of man and wife, the apostle bursts out in very peculiar language. He says he is not speaking about man and wife merely, but about the great mystery. "I speak concerning Christ and the Church." (The mystery is not *the Church*, but "Christ and the Church.") God, bringing Eve to Adam, drew from the lips of the man the sentence, "Bone of *my* bone, and flesh of *my* flesh." Answering to this is the language of the Holy Ghost respecting the Church -- the Eve -- of Christ.

For we are members of *His* body, of His flesh, and of His bones (Eph. 5: 29, 30).

Faith receives this without reasoning, and the child of faith bows and worships. He leaves reasoning on this sacred truth, which can only be received by the spiritual, to the domain of materialism and sophistry; on the borders of which, alas! not a few saints are drifting. Is it not beautiful to go back and see that, before sin came into the world, Abba's purpose was to have the Church for His own beloved Son -- that "Abba chose the Church in Jesus long before the world began?"²⁷ This is what we get in Eph. 1:3, 4.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ; according as He hath chosen us *in Him before the foundation of the world*, that we should be holy and without blame before HIM in love: having

27. [The choosing and predestinating referred to in Eph. 1 is of saints *individually*; the Church as such is first named in the last two verses of the chapter. Ed.]

predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He hath made us accepted in the Beloved.

God, in order that we might be without blame before HIM in love, chose us *in Christ*; and if I go to God as a poor sinner, God does not see me at all in my filthy rags. He sees me clothed in His robe of righteousness. And what is that robe? It is Christ Jesus -- Christ is our righteousness. "This is the name by which he shall be called, The Lord our Righteousness." What depth of wisdom! What breadth and height of grace divine!

The Church is not so something which today God has thought of and brought out for the first time. That is not the thought. It was in His mind before the world was, but in His matchless grace He now and again let out in olden times some of the secrets hid in Himself. Suppose any of us to have a plan in our minds: it would be premature to let it out until it was time to execute it; it might not be understood ; but sometimes you drop a hint of the secret which may not be observed at the time; but which is understood afterwards. If I mean to adopt a child, for instance, I do not go and tell everybody that that is my intention until I am ready to execute it; but I can indicate my purpose by making frequent references to that child, and showing my affection for it; and it is seen what all this meant when I have taken the child into my adoption. God thus occasionally gave glimpses of His secret in the Old Testament, although the manifestation of it was not till Pentecost, nor the explanations of its detail till Paul developed it. This is clearly shown in Ephesians and Colossians. Previously the mystery -- the secret -- was *hid* in GOD. Mark, it does not say in the word of God; but it was hid in GOD Himself (Eph. 3:9, Col. 1:26, *et passim*). Made known it was by Paul. Ignorance of these simple truths sends men searching into the Old Testament for the Church; and leaves them neither good Jews (being, of course, *uncircumcised*) nor decided PAGANS, as they *read* their Bibles. Clearly, then, the specific truth respecting *God's assembly* was committed to Paul.²⁸

If I had time I would dwell upon the position of Eliezer sent to choose a wife for Isaac. This is another of the types. The Holy Ghost is the heavenly -- the divine -- Eliezer gathering the bride of Christ out of this world to present

28. 1. In the Old Testament figures of the Church are given (Gen. 2, 24).

2. In the Gospels the Lord declared that the time was come for its development (Matt. 16; John 11, 12).

3. In the Acts of the Apostles the expression of the one body is seen.

4. In the Epistles it is addressed as one body, and its positions, relationships, responsibilities, and hopes are fully developed by PAUL.

5. In Revelation a prophetic view is given (Rev. 4, 5, 21) of it as having entered upon its *glorified* and eternal state with the Lord.

her to Christ, who is the heavenly Isaac. It is beautiful to notice some of these symbols. Eliezer tells Rebekah that there is abundance of everything in his master's house, but he only gives her some jewels and precious things, and points to the camels -- earnest such were of what she was to inherit. The Holy Ghost is the "earnest" of what we are to inherit *with* Christ {Eph. 1:14}. And what is He doing now? He is leading the bride across the wilderness world. And to whom is He conducting her? To the *bridegroom*. And just as Rebekah was lifted up and put upon the camel's back, and taken across the wilderness to the man whom she loved before she saw him; so each believer, in the power of the Holy Ghost, now journeys along in the hope of seeing soon One he now loves. And we shall *soon* see Him, beloved brethren, whom here we now love. That is our hope.

These are then some of the pictures by which God let out the secret that was hid in His bosom, but which could not be fully understood till afterwards. If you look to Matt. 16, you will see how the Lord Jesus intimated this truth. You will find Him referring to the secret which was in the Father's bosom, and known to Him from all eternity. You will notice first, that Jesus made a declaration concerning what he was to do *at the time when He was rejected by Israel*. The Jews were God's chosen *nation*, and I may tell you they will be visibly His people yet. The Lord Jesus will bring them into blessing in the earth *AFTER the Church is caught up* (Rom. 11 and Isaiah). But when Christ came to His own, His own received Him not; and when He asked His disciples -- "Whom do men say that I am?" the answer was, "Some say that thou art John the Baptist, some Elias, and others Jeremias, or one of the prophets." What a chilling answer that was! But there was one in the midst who was divinely taught differently. The Lord Jesus asked His disciples "But whom say ye that I am?" Peter, who was taught of the Father -- for he did not know of it himself -- said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." This was the first time the Lord Jesus was owned by human lips to be the "Son of the living God" {Matt. 16:18}. It is very striking. Cheered by that answer, the Lord Jesus utters for the first time that which was filling His breast from all eternity -- "Thou art Peter (πέτρος -- a stone) and upon this rock (πέτρα -- a rock) I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." ²⁹ Notice the circumstances under which the Lord Jesus spoke this -- it was when *He was rejected by Israel*. When Israel gave Him up, He, so to speak, gave them up for the present. From that time forth you will observe that He turned His attention to something else. He wanted to

29. Note, that even at that time the Assembly was not yet formed. It was yet *to be* built. Hence the Lord says I *will* build. Now, after Pentecost, Paul, speaking of the Assembly as built by the Lord and indwelt by the Holy Ghost, says, "and are built" (Eph. 2:20). He says, I *will* build; in the Acts we see it built; in Ephesians Paul says *it is built*.

have His bride -- the Church. That is a beautiful title -- the bride; it shows how near she is to His heart. Nothing is so dear to Him as His Church. What does He say to Peter? -- "Feed my *sheep*," "Feed my *lambs*," -- members of His bride (viewed in this instance, however, as His *flock*). Either title declares how dearly He regards His own. As the *flock*, the sheep are fed. Indeed they are made to "lie down in green pastures" (Psa. 23). Sheep lie down when they are *satisfied*. But green pastures surround them, and not far off are the waters of comfort. What a provident Shepherd! Why are not all found with overflowing cups of praise?

But who can estimate the nearness given to the bride! Who knows of the tender love? And, may I add, beloved -- Who should be indifferent to His jealousy? What condescension to be jealous? But so it is? There is not a dearer object in this world to Him than His sheep -- His lambs: there is nothing that can rival His beloved bride. Oh! that every one of us might have hearts responding to such love! You will find it stated in Eph. 5 that "Christ also loved the CHURCH, and gave Himself for it."

I have traced so far that the secret was in God's heart before the world began, and I arrived further to the letting of it out by the Lord Jesus; and I remarked that in order that Christ should purchase the Church He must die. In John 12, you find that, before there could be union between the head and the members -- between the children of Adam and Christ, the "second man," He must fall into the ground and die. That is the figure which He uses in John 12:24,

Except a corn {a grain} of wheat fall into the ground and die, it *abideth alone*; but, if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.

When did the Lord Jesus utter this? It was at the time certain Greeks (outsiders, Eph. 2) had come to Philip and asked to be allowed to see Jesus. The Lord Jesus, willing to die for His Church, said, "The hour is come that the Son of Man should be glorified." As if He said, "I can wait no longer, I must have my bride, I must die to gather together in one," etc.

Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.

Of course there is far deeper teaching involved in our Lord's statement here. As "Son of Man," He shall be glorified, not only in His Church; but as the results of His death -- glory shall be His, in blessings which He shall bring to the Jews and to the Gentiles at a future day.

It is important to keep both these truths before the soul.

(1.) As an individual believer, I am indwelt by the Holy Ghost; who seals me, as God's till the day of redemption (Eph. 1:14).

(2.) All believers are together built for "an habitation of God through the Spirit" (Eph. 2:21, 22). This, however, was *subsequent* to the work

of redemption.

It is well to remember that God's action in creation was by the Spirit -- in that act, indeed, all the persons of the Trinity are active (the Elohim). So the prophets of the Old Testament wrote and spoke by the Holy Ghost; so every godly saint of Old Testament times was operated on by the Holy Ghost. Moreover, the Jewish remnant in the last days after the rapture of the Church will be brought to accept Messiah by the Holy Ghost. But it must be apparent to every diligent student of the New Testament, especially of the Acts and the Epistles, that a *new* line of action was begun by the Spirit at Pentecost, such as was suited to be an expression of the value God placed upon the work of the Lord Jesus. Believers began then to be, as they are now, *indwelt* by the Holy Ghost, and by Him also united into "one body."

You will get a figure of this in Ex. 15. After the children of Israel got beyond the Red Sea, God put it into the mouths of some of them to speak of His habitation. There was no word of God's habitation while Israel was in the land of Egypt; but after the redemption had been accomplished, seen in the blood-besprinkled door-posts,³⁰ then it was that God could put it into their mouths, to speak about preparing for Him a habitation. So the Holy Ghost could not come and dwell in believers until the Lord Jesus had been glorified, redemption by blood being fully accomplished. Hence John 7:38,

He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive; for the Holy Ghost was not yet given, *because that Jesus was not yet glorified* {John 7:39}.

At Pentecost the Holy Ghost did descend, and according to 1 Cor. 12 He baptized all believers "into one body." Therefore you get that expression in Acts 2:47 -- an expression which could not be true unless there was this baptism into one body.

And the Lord *added* to the Church daily such as should be saved.

I read that 500 disciples saw the Lord after His resurrection at one time; again 120 are referred to in Acts, and at Peter's preaching 3000 were converted; but until the Holy Ghost baptized them into one body and constituted that body, there was not *the* assembly to add them to. But after the believers had been made into one body, then the Lord *added* to that body such as should be saved.

I would here make a remark about the word Church -- "the Lord added to the Church daily." Now, I am incapable of being a classical critic, I do not

30. {Actually it was after crossing the Red Sea, type of Christ's death and resurrection for us. Passover typifies *safety from judgment* by the blood; crossing the Red Sea typifies redemption and deliverance. Cp. Ex. 14:13 as light on the type.}

know enough of the Greek. But I do know enough to see that there is no reason why the word Church should be so translated. The word is the Greek, ἐκκλησία. The same word is translated Church in the 7th of Acts. Thus,

He who was with the church in the wilderness:

it should be *Congregation* there.³¹ The same word is correctly translated *Assembly* in the last verse of Acts 19. There was an Ephesian mob which the Town-Clerk dismissed, but it is the same word, ἐκκλησία. (Why not translate *it* church?) Then, in the 2nd of Acts, it was the assembly *of God*. In other words, Eph. 1 makes the matter very simple --

And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to *the Church* (ἐκκλησία) which is *his body*, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.

And such an assembly was known in Pauline days, and recognized as that of God. Outside of it were *Judaism* and *Paganism*.

3. The third statement about the Church which I make is, THAT THE CHURCH WAS THEN, AS IT IS NOW, ONE BODY. This you will get in Eph. 4. Paul, writing there, says, "Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, there *is* one body." And please note in connection with this, that the Holy Ghost is not exhorting to keep the unity of the *Church*, but the unity of the *Spirit*: "for there *is* one body" (or one Assembly). There are here two distinct things -- the unity of the Spirit, which we are to *endeavor* to keep, and the oneness of the body, *which faith must own*. This is a truth which, when laid hold of, gives immense freedom to souls. Today what do we find? Roman Catholicism -- full of the most deadly errors conceivable -- attempting to bring about the oneness of the Church. Hence letters have been issued to different parts of Christendom seeking to unite the so-called churches together, and thus endeavor to secure and maintain oneness of the *Church*. (Of course its idea of the Church is not God's.) But it is another thing that is spoken of in Eph. 4. We are to endeavor to keep the unity of the SPIRIT. To keep the unity of the Spirit means walking in the Spirit's mind. Suppose I endeavor to get the Church together -- suppose I drew up certain regulations and endeavor to get Christians to conform to *them*, with a view of securing the oneness of the *Church*; in such case, I would be disowning that it *is* one already; and I would be adopting a *human* expediency instead of having faith in God's oneness; it would be refusing to be led by the Holy Ghost according to the WORD of God. Now the very first step in the way of the Spirit towards maintaining His unity, is to "Cease to do evil"; secondly, "Learn to do well." If I do this, I am in the Spirit's unity.

31. Of ISRAEL, of course. We have already seen that the nation of the Israelites was not the "body of Christ," the Assembly of God (1 Cor. 1:2; Eph. 1:22, 23), which we are inquiring into.

An army is *one* army, whether the soldiers own it or not; but to keep the unity of the army each must obey ONE Commander. Again, if the army should mutiny and be divided, as it should not be, under various usurping colonels, what is the path open to the loyal? "Cease to do evil." Refuse to be identified with any, however great or gallant he may be. "Learn to do well." Find out what the Commander's regulations are; seek for the flag and rally around it. If only ten men of the army did this, they would be acting in the unity of the Commander, they would be on the ground of the one army, while all the others would be plainly wrong -- rebellious indeed.

Now, the Church of God *is* one body. Nevertheless we find to-day 1300 sects and parties. Which am I to join? But surely it must be *evil* to be a fellow-worker in supporting *parties*. Then I will join NONE: for God says there is ONE body. And if I *was* in one of the sects, I must straightway "go out," "go forth," "separate," "depart." And do what? "Endeavor to keep the unity of the SPIRIT." He gathers to the name of the *Lord Jesus and to none other*. He gathers *believers* and none other. He ministers *truth* and not error. I walk in His unity then, if I am thus gathered, and if I thus walk. Immense truth this! Difficulties vanish, and my path is then as the just, shining brighter and brighter to the perfect day; whereas, outside such leading, the very opposite obtains.

The way of the Holy Ghost to gather, then, is to the name of the Lord Jesus {Matt. 18:20} -- His way to keep them is by the name of the Lord Jesus. And is there not immense power in that name? Can any need more? Should any have less? The Holy Ghost makes a statement, not that there *will be*, nor that there *was*, but "there is *one* body." But if I look around in any place, shall I see it, or if I go to any part of the world, shall I discover it? If I were to go to Perth and ask, Will you show me where *the* Church is? people would stare at me. The Church, as God reveals it, is not seen by us now. The Scriptures tell me of only one Church -- the Holy Ghost speaks of one body, and every believer is a member of it. Membership of *a* Church the Holy Ghost never sanctions. Such is man's invention; but each believer is a member of *the* Church,³² and wherever he goes he is a member of that Church. Look at Acts 2, before the Church-making system was known, and see how manifestly *one* the disciples were. See the nucleus in John 20, among whom the Lord appeared after his resurrection. O what an age then of golden days! But we must hang down our heads in shame when we see that things are so far from being in the state in which they were in Ephesus, Corinth, Troas, or Jerusalem, when there was *one assembly of Christians, and one only*. Outside that assembly everybody was in the world. In 1 Cor. 5:12, we read,

32. [The human body, with its many parts yet constituting one whole, is the chosen figure to which membership is applied (1 Cor. 12). Ed.]

For what have I to do to judge them also that are *without*? Do not ye judge them that are *within*?

We have there a contrast between them that are “without,” and those “within.” But when I compare things to-day with that statement, I find them perfectly at variance with it. When Paul wrote to the Corinthians, there was a “within” and a “without”; if any one was put out of the assembly for moral or doctrinal evil, he was really *without* in the world. If any person should today be immoral, and should be put out of any assembly, is he “without” in the world? No; he goes away and joins himself to what he calls *another* Church, and says he is “within.” When we look around at Christendom, we are -- at least ought to be -- humbled at the state of things which has been brought about. The Church, indeed, is now comparable to a great house,

in which there not only are vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and earth; and some to honour and some to dishonor {2 Tim. 2:20}.

The Apostle says to the godly to purge himself from these, and to be a vessel unto honour, sanctified and meet for the Master’s use, and prepared unto every good work {2 Tim. 2:23}.

If we compare things now with things as they were in the time of the Apostle, we find that Satan has effected a perfect revolution. The believers then “had all things in common,” “continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favor with all the people” (Acts 3:46).

If you were then to enter a believer’s house, he would have nothing to talk about but the glory of the Lord Jesus; he would never talk about being a member of Mr. So-and-so’s Church, or of this or that congregation. They were all members of *the* Church, and had all things in common. “O, what an age of golden days!” we may all well exclaim. But when we look around today, well may we cry, O, how hath the fine gold become dim! how hath the enemy spoiled it!

But you ask me whether there were not *different* churches when Paul wrote? Yes, I say, there might have been as many assemblies as there were cities; but not different *kinds* of assemblies. Let this truth lay hold of each one of you; you will never know what it is to be settled before God ecclesiastically, until you lay hold of these divine facts. To give you an example, if a man went from the assembly at Jerusalem to Ephesus, he was as a matter of fact a member of the assembly at Ephesus; ³³ and if he went to Troas, he was also *de facto* a member of the assembly at Troas. And to put

33. {The reader should keep in mind that membership is not local; membership is in one body, though that is expressed locally.

an extreme case, if all the Christians at Cenchrea started off and visited Ephesus, there would be no church at Cenchrea at all while they were absent. They would all sit down with the brethren at Ephesus. They would not need to ask a question, such as where is Mr. So-and-so's church, but where is THE assembly? and having found it, they would be in it at once. This is plain enough. To deny this from the Scriptures will, I avow, be impossible for any. To admit reasoning I refuse -- to give expediency a hearing, will be beneath the exalted dignity of any who know what it is to bow to the authority of the Lord Jesus. To continue with men-made Christ-dishonoring sects -- to be equally yoked together with unbelievers -- to refuse to obey the command, "Come out from among them and be separate," will be a sin for which each believer must account to Him who will deal with every man "according to his works." Such then is the scriptural idea of the "one body." Such was it at *Pentecost*, so it was seen and known when Paul wrote to the assembly of God at Corinth, Ephesus, Philippi, &c. Intimated in the Gospels (Matt. 16, &c.), developed at Pentecost (Acts 2:1 1 Cor. 12:13), written to in the Epistles, it was manifestly -- all saw it to be -- *one* assembly. And the child of faith owns still that "there is *one* body." By the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, all believers everywhere formed the one body, while, in each place where they were gathered, they represented the same "one body." They were the *facsimile* of it.³⁴

At what period, then, did things begin to get wrong? In the very days of Paul. What has God ever entrusted to man that man has not spoiled? The Israelites received the pure worship of God, and every privilege of God's chosen people, but they were down before the golden calf worshiping it before very long. The Church began almost immediately after Pentecost to leave her first love.

Paul, writing in 2 Tim. 1:15, says, "This thou knowest, that all they which are in Asia, be turned away from me." And he says, "The time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers having itching ears." They will not bear the truth; grievous wolves will come in and spoil the flock; there will arise perverse men, speaking perverse things to draw disciples after them. The Apostle has to write to Corinth to this effect, "For while one saith I am of

34. We speak to-day of *the* British nation. There is no other nation of that name. And every one who owns the authority of the Queen forms a unit of that *one* nation. So every believer in the Lord Jesus forms a member of the *one* body. Likewise in these days, when many saints have proved faithless to the original and all-abiding principle of the *one body*, they that cleave energetically to it are the feeble *expression* of the Assembly. "EXPRESSION," I say, *of* -- but *they* are not THE BODY -- nor, thank God, THE Assembly of God in any place. They are on the ground -- they are gathered on the principle of it -- but are not *it*. We cannot be too explicit on such differences, and in having clear ideas about them.

Paul, and another I am of Apollos, are ye not carnal? Who then is Paul and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every one?" The evil was begun at that time. Even in our day what do we get to our shame? Instead of the manifestation of that blessed thing -- the one body -- I find 1300 sects covering the face of the earth! The Lord Jesus, in John 17, says to His Father that He wills His disciples to be one, so manifestly one indeed that all "the world may believe that thou hast sent me."

It is a solemn thing that in every place today the saints should be cut up into so many sects. It was never the mind of the Lord Jesus that they should be so.

Here the question may be raised, What are we to do in such days of confusion? The answer is plain, "I commend you to God and the word of His grace." You see that it is God's mind that there should be no sects; you see that it is an evil; and that is the answer to the faithful. Wesley asked Whitfield why a man of his power and popularity did not found a sect. What was that dear man's answer? It is an answer which I desire that the godly should give from their hearts now.

Let sects, and names, and parties fall,
And Christ alone be Lord of all.

It will not do today to seek to reform things; we cannot do it. The Holy Ghost tells us they will get worse and worse. In all simplicity then, owning our weakness, let us take what God gives us. We have a blessed resource in Matt. 18:20:

Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there AM I in the midst.

That is a wonderful resource. It is not reformation that we are to try; nor to set up a new sect. We must not do that; we must go back to what is the oldest of everything -- God's principle of gathering His saints. The ground the disciples took is the ground for believers to take in all ages. And will He not sustain His own feeble ones, who, Elijah-like, stand apart from all that is not of God, and own what is of Himself? I ask, Has not the saint all He needs in the name of the Lord Jesus? "Are gathered {together} in MY NAME." What a name!

Alas! very few will trust that name. They are afraid of the scorn of the high and mighty; they shrink from the contumely of the religious; they fear to lose a worldly position. May such as see what the unity of the Spirit is endeavor energetically to maintain it! The Lord for your encouragement says, "Fear not, LITTLE FLOCK"; and again, "You have *little* strength." But what are we to do, if we see that it is contrary to God's mind to go on with these sects and parties if we see that there is one body, one Church -- that the members are articulated into one body, mutually dependent on each other? Surely for the honor of the Lord Jesus, our blessed Head, we are to CEASE

to do evil, and then learn to do well. I trust, beloved brethren, I have said enough to lead you to go and search the word of God respecting these things. If you are willing to be taught, the Holy Ghost is willing and able to guide you into all truth, for the glory of the name of our once rejected, now risen, Lord.

PERSONS GATHERED ON THE GROUND OF GOD'S ASSEMBLY

1. Consist of believers only (1 Cor. 1:2); ³⁵
2. Permit the free action of the Holy Ghost when gathered as *an assembly* (1 Cor. 14). This would certainly be *impossible* if an individual or any number of individuals presided there;
3. Are gathered on the Lord's day to *break bread*, thus showing "the Lord's death till He come"; remembering *Him* and manifesting the ONENESS *of the body* in the *one unbroken* loaf (1 Cor. 11:23-26, 10:16, 17; Acts 20:7; John 20:19; Luke 24);
4. Are guided by the word of God only;
5. Are gathered {together} to the *name* of the Lord Jesus, as they would be to His person if He were in the world (Matt. 18:20);
6. They exclude most carefully *moral* evil (as 1 Cor. 5), and doctrinal evils (as 1 Cor. 12:3; 1 John 4; 2 John). They own God's "within and without," but they never imagine themselves to be THE body to the exclusion of other believers;
7. Mourn over the present ruinous condition of the Church testimony, with large-heartedness towards *all Christians*, but stand apart from what the word condemns.
8. *Own* God's ministry (in evangelists, pastors, and teachers) raised up by GOD, and approving themselves as such (Eph. 4; Acts 20:28).

As a synopsis of what is gone before, I have added the foregoing table, which contains the gist of some of the leading points in the "Inquiry." Placing things in this clear light, I trust I shall give offence to none of the Lord's dear saints, while I earnestly hope it will help every godly one to detect his true ecclesiastical position in the Scriptures.

35. To refer to the parable of the wheat and tares (Matt. 13), as some do, as an excuse for receiving unbelievers, is to set aside altogether the teachings in the Epistles, which are addressed to believers only. Moreover, the Lord, explaining the parable, said distinctly that the *field* was the *world* -- not the *Church*. Now, neither the "world," nor the kingdom of heaven, through which believers are *passing*, is the Church in which they are set.

Chapter 4

Christian Ministry: Its Source, Object, Relationship, And Directorship Read Ephesians 4:1-16

God is a God of order; and that saint is unwise who refuses it. If we attempt to substitute our own it simply amounts to *disorder*. If we refuse His, it is *rebellion*. Now, in this fourth of Ephesians, you will find the order in which God brings truth before us. In the 1st verse the apostle beseeches the saints at Ephesus (and is it not for us also?) to walk worthy of the calling wherewith they are called (*vocation* means calling).

The calling is given in the earlier part of the epistle. Let us glance at it.

1. In Eph. 1, for instance, you will see the *individual* standing of every believer intimated; and hence the apostle, in the 3rd verse, blesses

the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places *in* CHRIST.

Mark that; it is not only the thought that God is *willing* to bless, neither is it God meeting man's need merely. God, as meeting *man's* need, is shown us in the epistle to the Romans, but in Ephesians God meets His own need, if with reverence I may so say. That need of God is to have a people for the praise and glory of His grace; and this is what He *has done*. Now, in order thereto, He takes up poor, ruined, undone ones, and sets them in the heavenlies *in Christ Jesus* {Eph. 2:6}. The apostle Paul knows no questioning as to who every believer is. From each of such goes the language; "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who *hath blessed*," &c. So in this portion you see that the individual standing of every believer is in the new creation *in Christ Jesus*. Indeed, how could the God of divine holiness look upon such vile good-for-nothings as we, and speak of us as being "holy and without blame before Him," if He had not

“chosen us IN CHRIST”?

Just leave out the expression “in Christ,” and you charge God with unholiness in speaking thus of us. Let the mind grasp the fulness of the value of Christ, and let faith accept God’s statements, that HE sees the believer according to God’s estimate of the BLESSED ONE, and at once the soul has peace with and joy *in* God; and only from such can God the Father derive worship and praise. We, then, are the object of God’s choice; and we have been chosen *in Christ*, in order that God -- His eyes on Christ -- might see us holy and without blame before Him. Such is our standing. Let me remind you that *we* are not here represented as *blameless in ourselves*. The contrary is the case, as shown in the word. Whatever my blessing may be, my bad nature remains unchangeably the same. Nevertheless, by the death of Christ not only were our *sins* put away, but ourselves also from before God; as truly the *stock* as the branches. God condemned *sin* in the flesh {Rom. 8:3}. Hence Paul declares,

I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless *I* live: yet not *I*, but Christ liveth in me (Gal. 2:20).

Our *old man* is crucified with Him (Rom. 6:6).

Now, if God must have sons adopted unto Himself, such sons must be in His sight “without blame.” Hence, He wisely and graciously chooses us *in Christ*.

There is therefore now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 8:1).

How long, dear brethren, would our peace last if it depended on what we were in our own sight? How would it be with the most devout if *feelings* were criteria of our acceptance with God? Ever blessed be His name! He has placed us in a higher atmosphere than doubts can touch -- encircled us with defenses through which no enemy can break. *He* sees us *in* Christ. We are “accepted in the beloved.” There may our faith rest; responsive to such a position, may our walk and deportment be. The first constituent in my vocation, then, is to know, by the Holy Ghost, my personal or individual relationship to God. He is *my* Father, He is *my* God (John 20:17). This knowledge, accepted by the soul as a divine *fact*, must precede every inquiry respecting ministry, for such is God’s order.

2. But although such *personal* standing be owned, a believer might act very independently, as we say, if he were still ignorant of another item in the revelation regarding his vocation.

Now, I am deeply convinced that either unbelief as to this, or self-will in not acting upon the divine fact, is a very important element in the Church’s failure to-day. Has nothing new happened *since* Pentecost? Is

there nothing that specially marks God's honor for His beloved Son? Most decidedly. "The church, which is His (Christ's) body," has been formed by the baptism of the Holy Ghost {1 Cor. 12:13}; and we being in it, and of it, are mutually related to *each other* in a way never previously known.

If a *body* has been formed, then

- (a) there must be a *head*; and such Christ became in His resurrection ³⁶ (Eph. 1:19-23);
- (b) There needs *provision for its unity*, and this is just what the *presence in it of the HOLY GHOST* implies (1 Cor. 12:13);
- (c) It will require nutritive organs for the growth and maintenance of its several members; and *ministry* for this has been provided;
- (d) *One* body will have only *one* system of organs for the whole; then the members suffer where the oneness is not acted upon practically; moreover, the ministers belong to the "one body";
- (e) But unless all such organs (the ministers) are responsive to impressions from *one* center, one head, there must be *necessarily* much inco-ordination of movements and no little confusion. Hence the necessity of knowing the *corporate* relationship in which we stand to each other; that thus, by the power of the Holy Ghost, we might honestly endeavor to "walk worthy of our vocation." And it is futile to engage the thoughts with *ministry* until such divine facts -- I do not say *doctrines* -- are acknowledged by the saints.

It is perfectly true that the servant is responsible to Christ as his Lord and Master; and hence he is not to be trammelled in any way by the church. This we shall see by and by. But I do think that he is to be pitied who cannot observe, in God's order, in developing the truth, the mutual relationships of the members of the body, the gifts included.

(3) Observe, further, that the truth about the body, as God's habitation through the Spirit (Eph. 2:22), precedes the teaching as to ministry. If the Spirit dwells in the body (here it is not the individual, but the *whole* church, the "holy temple"),

- (a) The saints should accept it as a FACT, as much so as when the Lord Himself was upon earth; as truly so as if they *saw* the Holy Ghost, and they should depend upon Him for all they need.

Can He not (as God) qualify any member to whom the Lord gives the grace? Can He not use whom He will for edifying the assembly?

36. [Rather as glorified at God's right hand Ed.]

Many wonder, what are we to do if there be no ministry in any one place? Here is the answer -- Depend upon the presence of the Holy Ghost. Is He certainly in the temple? Then He is sufficient for ordering it. Of course the truth regarding ministry comes out afterwards; but the Holy Ghost, at the very threshold, challenges our reliance on Himself before permitting us to see the *ministers*. Splendid order this is, beloved friends! Do you admire it? Can your souls worship God for it? Or would you prefer to have the ministers first, the Holy Ghost supplying their deficiencies? Let us be honest and truthful to God. We cannot deceive Him. Is the presence of the Holy Ghost enough?

(b) Let the soul be well instructed regarding the directorship of the Holy Ghost, and then the ministers will exercise their gift "unto edification" in absolute subjection to Him. But *He* directs for the good of the *whole body*, therefore every minister acting in subjection to the Holy Ghost is a servant of Christ to ALL. He knows nothing of *sectarianism*. Our pattern man, Paul, knew well the "one body" and the "one Spirit," and his conduct respected the one as his service was in subjection to the other.

(4) In Eph. 3 also we find another preliminary to the disclosure of the truth respecting the ministry. I allude to the prayer of the apostle, that we may know the love of Christ which surpasseth knowledge. Mark well, it is not to know love *to*, but the love *of* Christ; it is to understand *His* love. Now, do you remember one prominent characteristic of His love, one which no one else before, nor since, has evinced? It was *unselfishness*. You see it in ten thousand shades if you possess the divine power for perceiving it. He is disturbed in His repose by the fearful unbelief of His disciples, and is taunted with not caring for them (Mark 4:37-40). Does He chide? Oh no; "He arose and rebuked the *wind* and the *sea*," which was enough to prick tender consciences, but He did not chide with the *disciples*. He sits by the well of Sychar, and is wearied after a long journey, and fatigued by a scorching tropical sun. Will He command a quiet resting-place and retire from service? Not as long as there was a poor despised Samaritan woman to bless. "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work." O may every servant of His imitate such a master! But what shall we say of the love which could lead Him to set aside His glory, to come to earth at all, and then to go to the cross? To *serve* others during His brief sojourn on earth, and to *give* His life a ransom for many -- "*To serve and to give*" were the objects of His life. Was ever love like His?

I suppose it will be admitted that we learn more by imitation than by reading, and in a most insensible manner too. A child speaks what it hears its preceptors say, and applies terms to certain objects as it finds its parents

use them. Now, the custom of many now-a-days is, to say to every new-born soul in Christ, "Go and *work* for the Lord." Hence, we hear no small amount of "preaching," but we may well say, in innumerable cases,

They desire to be teachers, . . . understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm (1 Tim. 1:7).

The fact is that the Holy Ghost detains every one in the anteroom, so to say, and engages Him with the person of Christ.

To talk about Him from what others *say* is to misrepresent Him, and to damage the soul of the speaker; to *trade* with what others write is dishonesty; to take the place of an "ambassador," without being long in HIS company, is to be false to the One you assume to represent.

I would, beloved brethren, that the field of harvest to our blessed Lord were filled with reapers. Does He not deserve every soul in this country? Is He not worthy of ten thousand times ten thousand more than such as now His grace receive? He is indeed! But has He given up His right to use what and whom He will? Does He not bless His own truth *read* even in the midst of the most revolting superstition? Who can say that, even in the Vatican, souls are not led to Himself by so much of His word as is read? But the *end* {objective} of an act does not justify the wrong *motive* which prompted it, nor the bad *manner* in which it was done. God is sovereign, and can use what is of Himself for blessing to others. He speaks well of Rahab's *faith*, but did He approve her *lie*? He overruled the wrath of the sons of Jacob, and preserved to them a savior for a time of dearth, but who will be bold enough to excuse the envy of Joseph's brethren? I say, therefore, that the Lord as Sovereign does overrule much ignorance and self-will and get praise to Himself in His own gracious way, but this is no mitigation of the rashness of any who intrude themselves into so sacred a place as the ministry, who have not known Christ's love, which passeth knowledge -- to be filled into the fulness of God. Is this part of the vocation? Certainly it is. We are not only called to *know* where God has been pleased to set us; but our spiritual capacity has to be enlarged to learn Christ. Hence, in the previous part of the prayer, the apostle desires for us that we may be able to comprehend, with all saints, lengths, depths, breadths, and heights; of what? He does not say. The fact is that, in Ephesians, we get a vast expanse of God's grace put before us, to scan which is our privilege, but for which we need something far beyond mere *intellect*. The Holy Ghost must expand the mind and enlarge the heart.

Now, before one word is said respecting ministry, these soul-stirring truths are given for our acceptance. They are truths, you perceive, that concern the glory of the Lord Jesus -- of far higher moment to each

believer than the *doctrine* as to ministry. Not that I would derogate the latter, beloved; God forbid! But I would press on you all, as on myself, the divine fact that the person of Christ, as a living man in heaven (of course, God withal, blessed for ever!) for saints to love, to learn, and to be *obedient unto* -- is of far greater moment than the mere learning of *doctrines* as "articles of our belief." Moreover, the submission to Christ as LORD is considerably more precious to God than all the service performed without reference to His glory. Until God's order is observed -- until believers can speak of the "excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, my Lord" (Phil. 3:8), as Paul could -- it is vain to deal with the doctrine of ministry; it is "running before they are sent" to assume the position of ministers of Christ. We must, therefore, *know* the calling in order to walk worthy of it.

(5) There is another idea which I would suggest as preliminary to the development of ministry. I allude to the *manner* in which we should walk. It should be "with all lowliness, and meekness, and long-suffering"; qualifications these are, not the less needed by the ministers than by those ministered unto.

This exhortation comes to us with no small degree of force from "Paul the aged" -- "the prisoner of the Lord." It is said that from the same prison (at Rome) he penned the epistle to the Philippians and to Philemon, in which such exquisite exemplifications of the attributes here alluded to shine out. It is one thing to *talk* about these things, or to *preach* them; but do we *live* them? Placed in the trying circumstances for their test, do they manifest themselves?

Let it be our sincere desire, beloved, to *aim* high, though lower we may *shoot*. The knowledge of our high calling may excite spiritual pride in any believer; much more in one that ministers from such a height. What is the antidote? Lowliness. Does that mean that we are to *take* the low place? No; but to *own that naturally we are in it*. This supposes *death* as to the "old man" (Rom. 6), and a walking in the Spirit" (Gal. 5).

He that is down needs fear no fall;

He that is low no pride.

The first Adam sought to attain to a higher place than God put him into; and he fell. Born of him, we are in ourselves low good-for-nothings, despite what the devil teaches us to the contrary; we are to walk "with all *lowliness*."

"But how can I put up with the eccentricities of this brother and of that? Do what I may, he opposes me." Well, you must seek divine grace, which will leave nothing of "me" to be grieved. Dead men don't feel

blows. It is your unbroken will -- the opposite of meekness -- that makes you *feel* the uncouth conduct of your brother. Thus Moses (remarkable usually for his meekness) lost his temper at Meribah. Let self be narrowly judged, and walk “with all *meekness*.”

“I can bear with that for a day or two; but such persistent naughtiness on the part of those among whom I live, and to whom I minister, exhausts my patience.” Indeed? Are you sure you are not the naughty one? Nevertheless, you are to walk with all *long-suffering*. But again, you are not so much to expect from, as to give to, another. Each is to forbear (or yield to) another in love. The *servant* of the Lord, above all others, needs this exhortation. His fervent zeal for the glory of the Lord Jesus may begin in the *Spirit* and end in the *flesh*. Lowliness, practical humility, *not thinking of self at all*, are some results of the operation of the Holy Ghost in us; and will effectually displace *proud self*. If in personal, quiet communion with Christ, the soul feeds upon Himself, zeal will surely be tempered by *lowliness*. Mere doctrine, as to position and gift, away from Christ, will only inflate a naturally vain nature, and so render the most fervent zeal a fruitful source of dishonor to the name of Christ. Again; the very knowledge of personal responsibility to the *Lord*, and to no one else -- as we hope to see by and by -- may induce an over-bearing and naughtiness which would not only damage the spirit of the servant himself, but also render him repulsive to others, and this may creep on very insidiously; the spirit of meekness and gentleness is therefore to be cultivated. “The servant of God must not strive; but be gentle towards all.” In that way he will be “apt to teach,” being also “patient” (2 Tim. 2:24).

Further; the servant, in his place of responsibility, cannot tolerate what he believes to be evil, according to the word of God. He deals with it; and, in doing so, *he* is assailed by his brethren, and is evil spoken of. Then he needs -- in addition to lowliness and meekness -- long-suffering and forbearance in love.

All these divine traits (yes, *divine*, because they are such as are only produced by the Holy Ghost in us) were most perfectly exhibited in the Lord Jesus. Hence, to have Him always before us, as our pattern, is the sure way, and only true way, of success in walking worthy of our vocation.

Looking to the Lord for guidance, and for simplicity in the understanding of His truth, let us, for a while, seek to lay aside all our former notions of ministry; and let us endeavor to see “what saith the Lord” respecting it. In this way, perhaps, we shall the better be enabled to reject whatever we find the truth condemns, and to lay hold of what is of God.

I think it may be more easy for our minds to dispose of what we receive from the Scriptures on the subject before us, under a few propositions. I shall suggest the following plan:

1 -- What Is The Source of Ministry?

The answer to this is in Eph. 4:11, "He gave." Who is the *He*? -- The person who ascended and took His seat at God's right hand. And the Holy Ghost, before telling us that He gave apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers, turns aside to tell us who this person is --

He who ascended is the same also that descended into the lower parts of the earth, that he might fill all things.

Before touching the question of ministry, our eyes are led to rest upon this person in some of the aspects of His divine, of His moral, glory. He must fill all things.

If anything among men is valued according to our estimate of the *giver*, may we not turn aside for a little while to see who "*He*" is from whom the "gifts unto men" proceed?

You must have observed, in reading the epistle to the Hebrews, how you are pleasingly detained at the very first page of the letter, with a sketch of the "Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus." The very God who had been speaking before by the prophets, now speaks through (i.e., in or by) the Son; and lest you should despise the teaching, your mind must be impressed with the majesty of the *Teacher*; for He is the brightness of glory, the express image of God's person, the upholder of all things by the word of His power.

So in Ephesians in connection with ministry. Lest any should make light of the gifts He imparts, or others should mimic so sacred a calling; or lest any one, or company of persons, should dare to meddle with a function which is His only, we are reminded of His superlative excellence, and of His transcendent glory.

God has determined that all things shall be put in subjection under His feet. Things in heaven, things in the earth, and things under the earth, must, by Jehovah's decree, be subject to Him who came down and became a man in this world {Phil. 2}.

But, beloved friends, who are they that can come down? Persons can come *down* who were previously *up*. In other words, it were presumptuous in us to speak of going down, because as a matter of fact we are *down* already as *men*. The Lord Jesus, who was God from all eternity, co-equal

and coeternal with the Father, He alone could come *down*, and this He did. You will get this statement in Eph. 4:9, 10, in which the various spheres of the glory of the Lord Jesus are alluded to -- heavenly, filling all things above; down on the earth, filling all things below. Wherever He is, He fills all things, and under His feet all things are put in subjection. Less than this would not become a holy and righteous God, whose glory was the sole aim of the Son of Man.

Adam the first sought *his* good; in so doing he dishonored God. The second {last} Adam -- the Lord from heaven -- came not to do His own, but the will of Him that sent Him. Adam the first had therefore to be humbled; the Lord Jesus has been exalted; a name has been given Him above every name; to (or in virtue of) it every knee shall bow, of things in heaven, things in earth, and things under the earth; and every tongue shall confess His Lordship to the glory of God the Father (Phil. 2:1-11).

After rising from the grave, the Lord, just before His ascension, declares, "*All* power is given to me, in heaven and in earth" (Matt. 28:18). In Eph. 1 He is spoken of as raised from the dead, and set far above all principalities, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come; and all things are put under His feet, and He is made Lord over all things. Again, in Col. 1, He is referred to as "the first-born of every creature," the head of the body, the church -- among all He has the pre-eminence. He is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords (1 Tim. 6:15). Quoting the eighth Psalm, the Holy Ghost tells us (Heb. 2) that He is as a *Man* set over the works of God's hands; and, lastly, all who have read the book of the Revelation must have paused to do homage to "the Son of Man" (Rev. 1:13), who is supreme all through the book, whether "the things that *are*, or the things that *shall be after these*" (v. 19) are considered.

In a word, then, the Lord Jesus, who, as a man, glorified God, has been entrusted with absolute authority over everything, and therefore over the church.³⁷ We do not yet *see* Him exercising His power in all these spheres; He bides His time, but He *shall reign*. Nevertheless such a position is His, accorded Him by God the Father, and shortly He will manifest it. Now He exercises His Lordship in the church, and supplies ministers for its edification, which all who own His Lordship will

37. [As Man, Jesus has been set over all things to the church (Eph. 1:22). God (1 Cor. 15:27) and the church (Eph. 1:22) are the manifest exceptions to the universal subjection of all -- persons and things -- to the Son of Man -- Ed.]

recognize.

Such is the person who gave “gifts unto men.” He, therefore, that despiseth, despiseth not *man*, but *God*. Indeed, I may say that the special care of God respects the honor of the *One*, who stooped so low to glorify God. God’s command is that

All men should honor the Son, *even as* they honor the Father (John 5:23).

Now in the chapter I have just quoted, we find that the Father has given to the Son to have life in Himself, and to quicken (or to give life to) whom He will. What would you think of any human being, or of any organization, that arrogated such a right to give life -- eternal life -- to a sinner? You would simply pronounce the conduct *blasphemous*, inasmuch as to the *Son of Man* only -- the Lord Jesus -- has the right been given.

Do we read anywhere in the Scriptures of the church, or of any ecclesiastic, except the *Apostles* (Acts 8:19; 2 Tim. 1:6), having been entrusted with the imposition of gifts in the ministry? I am sure *not*. The only source is *God*; or, speaking more strictly, God through Christ. He who led captive the former captor of fallen men, received gifts for men, and *He* gives according to the measure of His grace. All who own Him as Savior are His saints, whom He loves, and all are set by Him in the “one body,” and are indwelt by the “same Spirit, and further, all such are to show forth His praises, are left here as His witnesses. But above and beyond all this, He imparts gifts according to His own will. He takes up some of His own, and qualifies them in a special way for service in the ministry of the word. All are alike the members of His body; but every member is not a “gift,” {a *doma*} a minister. On the contrary, He bestows gifts (or ministers, if you please), for the perfecting of the *saints*, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, &c. But the thought I wished to press was that *the only proper channel of ministry is the Lord Jesus*, the ascended Man -- the One in whom manhood is joined to Deity.

I may say that there could not be Christian ministry without this exaltation of Christ. Ministry flows from Him, from that place of exaltation, it is a fruit of it. I do not say that the Lord did not send forth ministers *before* His exaltation to the right hand of God, for we know that twelve apostles and seventy disciples were by Him commissioned to go forth to preach, &c. But by a reference to the portions narrating it (Matt. 10, Luke 10), you will observe that the aspect is *Jewish*, and is a picture of what will be fully developed when He shall reign from the river to the ends of the earth -- Israel established in blessing on the earth, and made the conveyers of it to others -- when the church, of course, shall be with the

Lord reigning *over* (not *upon*) the earth. In the charge to the twelve (Matt. 10), the Lord distinctly charged them *not* to go in the way of the Gentiles, but to Israel only; whereas, after He comes from the dead, He removes the barrier to their ministry, and sends them to make disciples of *all* nations (Matt. 28); Christian (not Jewish) ministry then commenced. In the passage before us, it is said (and “it is written,” should be sufficient for faith), that He *ascended* and received gifts for men. Hence, I repeat, that ministry flows from Christ as the exalted Head in heaven.

In 1 Cor. 12 it may appear, at a superficial glance, that the *Holy Ghost* was referred to as the source of ministry; and specially would this conclusion be drawn, if Heb. 2:4 -- “gifts of the Spirit” -- be taken in connection. Well, if this were so, it would still teach that God, the Holy Ghost, imparted gifts, thus, at any rate, excluding pretentious man, whether in a king, a prelate, or a Presbytery, from so sacred a function. But, as another remarks, by a careful investigation of the subject, it will be very evident that the Lord Jesus is the *source* of ministry. In 1 Cor. 12, the Holy Ghost is looked at as the *alone distributor*, not the *giver* of the gifts. So in Heb. 2 (see margin)

God (is) bearing witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and *distributions* of the Holy Ghost.

The Holy Ghost always guards the glory of the Lord Jesus, who once humbled Himself in this world. “He shall glorify *Me*,” said the Lord; and so He does. Hence He tells us that there are *differences* of ministries, but they are from one source -- “the *same* LORD.” So there are diversities of gifts seen in operation; but one Spirit so directs them -- the Holy Ghost, actually on the earth, so works in them that there should be no schism in the body. Such is the normal view of things; such they were when Paul wrote. Alas! for what we *see* now.

The Lord Jesus, then, fits, qualifies, and sends forth the ministers; their source is divine, their mission divine, strength for it divine, their object divine, but all have to do with *Christ*.

This is the place, I think, to answer a question -- *Should not persons be “trained for the ministry”?* Certainly, but by whom? Certainly not by the *church*; for, as we shall see presently, the church is to be edified by the ministers --

for the perfecting of the saints . . . for the edifying of the body of Christ.

The Lord, and not man, fits His chosen vessel, and in His own time He puts the grace (or gift) in him and sends him forth. Hence Paul says,

When it pleased GOD, who separated me from my mother’s womb, and called me by his grace, to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him

among the heathen, immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood (Gal. 1:15, 16).

Here it is evident that this great apostle was not only *not* trained by men, but positively *avoided* men. GOD had separated him, and called him to preach. This was enough; his qualification was complete; he did not even go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before him. Indeed, we know from the Acts of the Apostles that he preached in Damascus *three* years (Acts 9:22, with Gal. 1:18) before he went to Jerusalem. Whom the Lord fits is fully qualified, and hence the church *sins* in attempting to add to what He does, and in refusing to own what, being from the Lord, must be perfect.

The training, or rather the fitness, is shown us in 2 Cor.4:1-13:

(a) *Moral fitness* -- "We have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestations of the truth, commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God" (v. 2).

(b) *Divine intelligence* -- "God . . . hath shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (v. 6).

(c) *Divine strength* -- "But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of GOD" (v. 7).

(d) *Secret of success* -- "Always bearing about in the body the *dying* of Jesus, that the *life* also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body." So then *death* worketh in us (that is, the practical walking through this scene as men dead to it), and life in you (ministers in whom "the flesh" is not allowed to rule, are those who are most used for the developing of spiritual life in those to whom they minister) (vv. 10-12).

(e) *Such do not trade in unfelt truth* -- "We having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken; we also believe, and therefore speak" (v. 13).

And just for a moment look at Rev. 1. John in that book ministers Christ as the Judge -- now judging in the midst of the assemblies, and as the One soon to judge Israel, the Gentiles, &c. Hence the judicial robes of Christ in this chapter -- His all-searching eye of fire -- His unbending, unyielding feet of brass, and His thundering, majestic voice! The sight of this puts John at His feet as dead (v. 17). Yes, John, who could lean on His bosom in the days of His flesh (John 13) falls at His feet as dead. Such, beloved, is the condition of soul that the Lord can use -- "a broken vessel." True

His love cheers His servant with “Fear not”; but I do ask, is a soul “trained for the ministry” that can be unbroken in the presence of the Lord’s august majesty?

Have you not further observed that John is a worshiper (Rev. 1:5, 6) before he ministers (v. 7)? So it is. And this leads me also to remind you that the truth about the Lord’s Supper is given (1 Cor. 11) *before* that about ministry (1 Cor. 12 and 14). The fact is, that the believer cannot *properly* appreciate ministry who does not recognize the Lordship of Jesus in the showing of His death, once a week, according to His will. If it were otherwise, 1 Cor. 12 would be 11, and 11 would be 12. You see there is no reason why saints may not break bread every Lord’s-day, *if their walk be godly*; all may then be worshipers; but although gifts are on the earth for all the church, yet it may please the Lord to withhold them for a time from any one place. Is it necessary to add that in Paul’s dealing with the Corinthians for their ungodly way of eating the Lord’s Supper, he says not a word to any minister? I am not aware that even elders are ever mentioned as being in that gathering. The loaf at the table may be broken by one, who, on behalf of the assembly, gives thanks, and so the cup is passed, after the giving of thanks, also; but this needs not a “gift” -- it may be done by any brother at the table, *it* is not ministry.

Suffer me, beloved, to enforce this on you, and so examine yourselves, whether you are gathered to *ministry* or to CHRIST. Suppose that you had no ministry for weeks, months, or years, could you still go on with the Holy Ghost in a quiet witnessing for Christ in these last days? O, may all of us learn more and more of the value of His sufficiency! Then, in the absence of gifts, we can lean more fully on Him whose Spirit will guide us into all truth; and such as are gifts will exercise themselves in the spirit of self-renunciation that Christ may be magnified in us.

In many associations of Christians it is our privilege to know some who show unmistakable signs of divine fitness for ministering. God uses them in His sovereign grace; souls are blessed by their ministry; and the Lord will reward them in His grace according as they serve *Him* in what they do. Nevertheless, they have erred in having failed to see the LORD *alone* in their preparation, ordination, and service.

It suffices to know, and to own practically, that the Lord is sovereign in ministry; and any attempt to interfere with His rights in training, calling, or appointing, is gross usurpation. We will revert to this again.

2 -- *The Direction And The Object of Ministry*

Like the truth about the church, most of us for many centuries regarded that respected ministry as hidden behind such veils of mystery as none dared to pry into except a privileged few; and, profiting by such superstition, “the laity” were never indoctrinated into the teaching of the Scriptures on the subject, if even “the clergy” were capable of telling out the mind of God in the matter.

There is nothing, however, which has been revealed in the word of God that is placed beyond the ken of the simplest child of faith! I deny that certain truths are for the *learned* only. All who are spiritual should discern spiritual things; for the normal attainment of those indwelt by the Holy Ghost is that they “know *all* things” ³⁸ (1 John 2:20).

Now, He has not left us to grope in the dark about ministry; He speaks out plainly; and it is due to His honor that we search for what He has revealed. We have already seen that Christian ministry is a fruit of the exaltation of Christ to the right hand of God, like the formation of the church and the descent of the Holy Ghost. Now, God had instructed His people Israel by the prophets (I mean here *Old Testament* prophets); as we may see by comparing such Scriptures as Heb. 1, Ex. 24:7, Josh. 8:34, Neh. 8:3, Jer. 25:4, &c.; and that parents were charged with teaching their children is also deducible (Deut. 4:10). Is there any *agreement* between that principle and Christian ministry?

- (1) In their origin, both were from God to man;
- (2) man had no share in its arrangements then; man should not meddle with it now.

Wherein do they *differ*?

- (1) Ministry, in prophets, was to *Israel only*; the Christian ministry goes out to “all the world.” God was in Christ reconciling the *world* unto Himself (2 Cor. 5).
- (2) We are told by Paul (2 Cor. 3:10), that, in contrast with the Gospel, it {the law} was a ministration of death; inasmuch as Israel only obtained life by keeping the law, which was found to be impossible; the Gospel ministry ministers righteousness, not as that which God *exacts*, but which He *gives* to faith (Rom. 1, 3).
- (3) God was pleased to raise up prophets, from time to time, to send to

38. [Not actually, for then there would be no need of teaching; but as having the Holy Ghost they possess the *power*, and in the mind of Christ the *capacity* (1 Cor. 2:16) to “know all things” Ed..]

Israel; but the ministry was not constant: the Christian ministry is constant, because the Holy Ghost, on the earth with the saints, has charge of it; and He will remain with the Assembly till it is removed from the earth. So we see, that although ministry to Israel had certain things in common with Christian ministry, yet the contrast is so great, that we must not go to the Old Testament for our information respecting Christian ministry.

PRIESTHOOD *differs from* **MINISTRY**. There is another very popular notion, that *ministry* is the same thing as *priesthood*. And so far is this indulged, that in the Establishment {Church of England}, as in Popery {Romanism}, there is a distinct and exclusive party of men known as priests; and so much are they acknowledged, that they are asked to approach God on behalf of others, as though none had the privilege but themselves. It would be well, therefore, for us to see at once the difference between ministry and priesthood; for the two things are as separable and separate as *going* and *coming*. Under the law, none could approach God but a caste of men whom He appointed as priests. These offered sacrifices for the people who were not themselves permitted to draw near to God; the veil was a barrier between God and them. (Read Heb. 9 with Lev. 2, 4.) Their relationship with Him could be sustained only by the priesthood, which was vested in the family of Aaron. But such priests approached God for *man*; the direction of priesthood is to God. Over the priests the High Priest was set, and he only could go into the “holiest” once a year, on the day of atonement.

Our great High Priest is the Lord Jesus; and He has entered into the very presence of God, because of His bloodshedding, which has perfected for ever them that are sanctified; and His presence before God gives us boldness to draw near with purged consciences into the presence of God also, in the light where He is. And to every one of you, my beloved brethren, who own Him as your Savior, is this grace given (Heb. 10).

Yes; redemption has been accomplished, the veil has been rent from heaven to earth, and access to God is granted now to the feeblest believer; not one spot remains to disturb the conscience. Hence, by the Holy Ghost given, every one whose faith is in God, can now draw near within the holiest of all, and see God in the face of Jesus Christ -- can gaze upon Him and adore Him without the least thing to hinder. O what boundless grace! Could we not now sing together

Within the holiest of all,
Cleansed by His precious blood;
Before the throne we prostrate fall,
And worship Thee, O God?

Let no man rob you of your privilege; every one of you is a priest unto God. In 1 Pet. 2 we read of a spiritual house, and a holy *priesthood*, composed of “lively stones,” who have come to Christ “the living stone”; and their office is to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. Will any dare to argue you into the belief that this privilege is not one common to *all believers*? And when such a priesthood is assembled for worship (homage and adoration paid to God, inciting praise, &c.), it may please the Holy Ghost to use any one present to address God on *behalf of the assembly*; or to lead its praises in a hymn. Such praise, or prayer, will be the expression of all the spiritual, of the whole assembly if *it be spiritual*; but this, I repeat, is *toward* God whereas if a gifted person, a minister, addresses the saints, he utters the mind of God to them; and such utterance may tend to *elevate* the spiritual condition of saints; it may be much *above* their actual state; but such is *toward man*. Again, I say, any of the priesthood except women, may express to God the praises of the assembly; but only such may teach or exhort, in whom the grace to minister has been deposited by Christ. So that it is possible for an assembly in one place, to worship God most happily; and yet to have no gift, no minister, in its midst. Do let me beseech you to ponder these differences between priesthood and ministry.

The Lord has been pleased to make known to you something of the value of Himself as your Savior; and while it is your highest privilege to go forth to Himself, and to have fellowship with such as desire to *worship* in spirit and in truth, it would be very despicable to go out to *ministry*; in this you may soon be disappointed; but to fail in the other, the High Priest, that is Christ, and the “place of worship,” even “heaven itself” {Heb. 10:19}, must be displaced; and you know that such is impossible. The priesthood then, according to the Scriptures, is composed of saints, believers in Christ, who are such *because* they are Christians. Each of you is a priest, but all of you are not ministers.

Again, it is the privilege of all saints, as priests with God, to make intercession for all men; for kings and for those in authority, &c. (1 Tim. 1). But all believers may do this, and all will, who are free to get God’s thoughts; that is, who are walking in the Spirit, and have not so frequently to halt to be occupied with their own failings and shortcomings. I say that in order for us to be at liberty to pray for others we must ourselves be in communion with God; and proper as it is to be examining ourselves, or confessing our failings to God, yet they are not communion, but rather the evidence of *loss of communion*. But interceding for others is not ministry: it is the act of a *priest*; it is the approach *to* God for man. But is this to be left to an exclusive ministry only, and to be done merely at certain fixed times?

The Scriptures do not say so. If we were all more simple and child-like before our Father, we would frequently go to Him on behalf of others; and there our own souls would be blessed, because none can be in His presence without being blessed.

If these ideas be according to the truth, what about the “gift of prayer”? Will you tell me, if a son requires the gift of begging in order to fit him to speak to his father about something on his mind? Certainly not. And does not God read my thoughts, and know what I need before I ask Him? Further, is it not the Holy Ghost who puts it in us to desire what He knows God will hear (Rom. 8)? The word of God does allude to several *gifts* {*charsmata* in 1 Cor. 12}; but that of prayer is not one, thank God; if it were so, we would need human priests to go to God for us. But we have already seen that all of us have access to Himself through Christ. The direction of priesthood, therefore, is *God-ward*; priests go from man to God.

Let us now, with our way thus far cleared, search for the *direction* and the object of ministry.

To testify of Christ, as the exalted One, has been *the* great mission of the Holy Ghost to this earth. His presence here is a witness that the Person whom God sent into the world, but whom men cast out, has been seated in glory, all things being put in subjection to Him. Hence Peter announces at Jerusalem, “Therefore” (because of the exaltation of Christ, and the gift of the Holy Ghost) “let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ” (Acts 2:36). By this announcement ³⁹ 3000 souls received the word, owned Him, were baptized unto His name, and broke bread in remembrance of Him.

In the next chapter the same truth is enunciated (ver. 13). The people wondered at seeing a lame man leaping, whom Peter, “in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth,” had healed. Peter tells them that they should not marvel, for the cure was one of the many ways which God took for manifesting that He had “glorified His Son Jesus, whom the Jews had denied in the presence of Pilate.”

Accordingly, the same hatred of man which led to the crucifixion of Christ is stirred up by Satan; and in the next chapter we find a triumvirate of assailants attacking the men that preached Jesus. “The *priests*, the

39. [Consequent upon the exaltation of Christ we have the presence and power of the Holy Ghost, and repentance and forgiveness of sins declared in the first Pentecostal sermon (Acts 2). Ed.]

captain of the temple, and the *Sadducees*, came upon them, grieved that they taught the people, and preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead”: and for such a grave offence “they laid hands on them, and put them in hold unto the next day.” But God had put His seal upon their ministry; and “many of them which heard the word believed; and the number of the men was about five thousand.”

In this most interesting chapter of the Acts of the Apostles (or we should say of the Holy Ghost, for it was really He who *acted* through the ministers, and *acts* through them still, whom the LORD appoints) -- in this portion, I say, the ministry was from God to man, and its object was God’s glory in *Christ*. This Satan knew very well; and therefore he stirred up such dire opposition to what was done. (You must bear in mind that the Scriptures always present a trinity of opposition to God: the *world* is in opposition to the *Father*; *Satan* to *Christ*, and the flesh to the *Spirit*.) Without controversy it maybe said that if Peter had preached anything but Christ and His glory, he would have been applauded as “great” and “learned”: but Satan hates his Captor {Christ} too much not to come out in ambush occasionally to give battle. Of his devices the servants of the Lord were not ignorant: they traced effects to the proper cause; and, crying to God, they owned that it was not against *them*, but against God’s *Christ* (vv. 24-27, with Psa. 11) that the opposition was raised.

By *seven* signs, which the Holy Ghost records, God again set His seal to a ministry which had for its object the glory of Christ:

- (1) the place was shaken where they were assembled;
- (2) they were all *filled* with the Holy Ghost;
- (3) they became bold in speaking the word;
- (4) fellowship in heart and soul was enjoyed by the multitude that believed, leading even to caring for each other’s temporal needs;
- (5) the apostles, with great power, gave witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus;
- (6) great grace was upon them all; and
- (7) hearts being enlarged, purses were opened, and means were laid at the disposal of the Lord’s servants.

In Acts 5 a man and his wife, who could act as hypocrites in the presence of such manifested grace are visited instantaneously with judgment. In the meanwhile believers, in multitudes, both of men and women, were the more added to the LORD. Another persecution breaks out, and the servants are cast into the common prison. The Lord by an angel lets them out, and forthwith they are found preaching again.

Summoned before the council, they are examined for speaking about *Christ*. If they had merely read the law, or delivered a thesis on some religious notion (so *fashionable now-a-days!*), they would doubtless have had the *patronage* of the great among the people; but the name of Jesus, the glory of Christ, was more than could be borne; hence the apostles who served Him faithfully were beaten, and commanded not to “speak in the name of Jesus.”

So far the *direction* of the ministry was to Israel -- its *object* the glory of Christ.

In Acts 8, the circle of ministry enlarges; its diameter extends to Samaria. Philip preached in that city the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ; many believed and were baptized, both men and women, unto (εἰς) the name of the Lord Jesus (v. 12). The Ethiopian eunuch is met in the desert; to him Philip preaches Jesus (v. 35), to whose Name he baptized him.

But, besides Philip, other servants of Christ “that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word”; and inasmuch as it bore witness to Christ, in whom is life, it was used by God in ministering peace to all who believed -- first to the Jews, and then to the Gentiles. But let it be remembered that the source was *heavenly*. Fit vessels, as we have seen in those at Jerusalem and at Samaria, were sent forth to preach of His exaltation and glory, and of salvation through Him.

But lest this should be forgotten, what do we find in Acts 9? That the Lord speaks *directly* and *immediately* from heaven; and Saul of Tarsus, afterwards Paul, an *apostle of Jesus Christ* (*i.e.*, one *sent* by Jesus Christ), is converted. Here the Lord accomplishes His object without the channel of any of the apostles or evangelists; He acts *directly* from His place in glory on one who, in persecuting the disciples, was persecuting *Him*. Now, the conversion of Saul, in this way, is full of interest in connection with our subject. The enmity of the Jews showed itself in a remarkable way in their persecution of such as owned the name of Jesus; but Saul outrivaled them all: for, by his own account of himself, he “was exceedingly mad” against confessors of Christ. Nevertheless, such was the character of the ministry that by it this mighty opposer of the truth is at once arrested at the very zenith of his bitterness, and is heard to say “LORD” to Jesus. It is true that Ananias was sent to him to confirm his faith, but in this unique case we see most distinctly where ministry *starts from*, and what it has to accomplish; its *direction* is from the Lord to man, and its *object* is His glory. Unless these lessons are received into our minds from the Lord, through His word, ministry will be associated, in our minds, with very different ideas; its

direction will be only to a corporation or an association -- a Church; and its object, making proselytes to such, or providing a "living" for an individual in one of "the learned professions!" Even the "conversion of souls" may be so uppermost in the mind as to obscure the great object of Christian ministry -- viz., the glory of the Lord Jesus; whereas, if the latter were prominently sought by us, evangelists would be used in conversions, teachers in instructing the converts, etc., or we would know sometimes the joy of "standing still," and just seeing God's salvation wrought, as in Saul's case, without us. Do we not know of persons brought to Christ without any human instrumentality whatever-- by just reading the word of God which the Holy Ghost applied to their hearts and consciences? Indeed we do know some; and thousands more will meet us in glory to praise Him, of whose very existence, as well as their conversion, no believer had any knowledge upon earth.

But is the opposite not mourned over? Are there not many who, regardless of what is due to the Lord, say, Peace, peace, when there is no peace?

We see, further, in Saul's case, that the LORD had made him a chosen vessel to bear His name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel.

- (1) The choice was the LORD's; and this must be so with every true minister of God;
- (2) The chosen vessel was to preach *Christ*, to tell of *His glory*, to declare *His name*;
- (3) The direction of his mission should be to the *Gentiles*, to *Kings*, and to the *children of Israel*. In Acts 2, the circle was restricted to Jerusalem; in Acts 8 we noticed that it extended to Samaria; and now we find it become world-wide.

As was pointed out by another, the very first mention of Paul's preaching contains the nucleus of what he afterwards fully declared. He was the first to preach that the crucified One was the *Son of God* -- "straightway (or immediately), he preached Christ in the synagogues, that He is the Son of God" (v. 20). Peter had declared that He was "Lord and Christ": now, Paul announces His *personal* glory as the "Son of God" -- a truth which is calculated to give very high tone to the ministry of any servant of Christ. Preachers of the law, as that by which man may get peace, or may please God, are ignorant of the gospel of the glory of Christ, which Paul preached; and souls who never learn the latter, know nothing of deliverance in their souls, although they may have life.

It would be, perhaps, foreign to our object, to search into the meaning of Paul's expression, "my gospel" (2 Tim. 2:8); but, let us bear in mind that, although the testimony to Christ, borne by Peter and others before Paul, forms *part* of the ministry which respects the glory of Christ, yet the special revelation made to Paul respecting the mystery -- Christ and the Church -- is that which gives peculiar character to the Christian ministry which we are investigating. None can doubt this statement who reads Col. 1:23-26.

Before quitting Acts 9, let us observe another example of the *object* of ministry; or rather, a way in which the object is met. The Lord told Ananias, that Paul was to *suffer* many things for His name's sake. "Suffer?" one asks; "I thought *the ministry* was a very respectable position, which immuned persons from suffering; a situation which rather gave opportunity for *ruling* -- at any rate, for taking things very easily."

Indeed! Let us go back to Acts 7:59 -- "And they *stoned* Stephen." Go on to Acts 12, and read of Herod *killing* James, and proceeding to take Peter also (because he saw it pleased the Jews), cast him into prison. See the Jews (in Acts 13), stirring up devout and honorable women, and the chief men of the city, and raising a persecution against Paul and Barnabas, *expelled* them from their coasts. In Acts 14:19 we see Paul *stoned*, and *dragged out of Lystra as dead*. Will you search all through the Scriptures, and show me one example of a faithful witness for Christ finding his path an easy one? The idea may prompt some, now-a-days, to intrude themselves into a place, into which the Lord never called them; but Paul, at the very outset, was to *suffer* many things for the name of Christ. Accordingly we find him and Silas, with their feet fast in the stocks, sitting in the jail at Philippi (Acts 16), singing praises to God, and used to loose stronger fetters with which Satan had bound their keeper.

Beloved brethren, I am fully persuaded that every true and faithful minister of Jesus Christ (I do not say of *churches*, but of the LORD -- such as He calls, and such as serve *Him*, and not man) will, like all who *live* godly in Christ Jesus, suffer persecution. True, a blind fanaticism may impel such lawlessness as evokes the punishment of criminal law. I do not speak of this: I mean that faithfulness to the Lord on the part of a truly godly spiritual servant of God will now, as ever, expose him who practices it to the scorn, and derision, and persecution too, in some shape, of those who, being carnal, are enemies of God. I say more, that a worldly religion will take the *lead* in such opposition. Who "killed the Prince of life"? Did not the *religious* Jews? By whom was Stephen stoned? Was not Saul of Tarsus, the "Pharisee," an abettor to the crime? I do not wish to leave the *Scripture* history, or I would ask who lighted the fires of Smithfield, and

who persecuted the Puritans? I may add that he will know nothing of suffering for the *name of CHRIST* who becomes the minister of a religion which the *world* patronizes; but all who serve the Lord after the fashion of Paul (Gal. 1:10) must wait patiently for *His* approval.

In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.

We see, then, that to suffer for Christ is an element of the Christian ministry: to glorify Christ, “whether by life or by death” (Phil. 1:20), was Paul’s only aim; and such was his utterance in his prison at Rome.⁴⁰

It is remarkable that many in these days aim at being popular preachers, and, with most pious motives, at conversion of souls; and not a little effort is made in “revival meetings” to extort a confession from many. Surely every feeder upon the “fatted calf” should have a heart to make merry with the father when returning prodigals receive His welcome; but I would seek to press the inquiry upon myself, on every minister of the gospel now listening to me, and on every saint -- What is the motive? Is it that Christ be magnified? or is it not that you may be well spoken of as being used in conversions?

Let us learn a lesson from Stephen. He began his ministry “full of the Holy Ghost” (Acts 7:65); his address is recorded, but not one word is said as to the result of any but himself, whom wicked hands sent to heaven. I say that not a *conversion* is referred to. Yet persons talk so much about conversions, as if they formed the highest object of ministry. What! was Stephen’s ministry without an object? Well, let who will merely aim at men’s approval: may we learn to have our eye fixed on CHRIST, for His divine approbation.

It suffices to learn that the Lord’s notice of His faithful servant is specially chronicled. He, whom Paul assures us took His seat after having

40. (1) The CIRCUMSTANCES in which God’s servants are to commend them selves are the very opposite of ease.

They are exhorted to follow the example of Paul, whose highest gift made him, in the eyes of the world, to be one of the meanest and most contemptible. However, he endeavored to approve himself -- *in* much patience, in affliction, in necessities, in distresses; in stripes, in imprisonments, in tossings to and fro, in labors, in watchings, in fastings” (2 Cor. 6:1-5).

(2) The MANNER in which the servant of God is to approve himself, in the circumstances, is “by pureness, by knowledge, by long-suffering, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned, by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armor of righteousness on the right hand and on the left, by honor and dishonor, by evil report and good report” (2 Cor. 6:6-8).

(3) But being always misunderstood by the world and by the worldly, he refers everything to God: hence in His sight he is true, although regarded as a *deceiver*, &c. (2 Cor. 6:9-10).

purged our sins (Heb. 1:3), showed Himself, through the opened heavens, to His faithful martyr, as the One whom *the very religious world* had killed, but who was then standing (or placed) at God's right hand!

The great object of ministry, therefore, is to magnify CHRIST; and this God accomplishes through His servants, whether by their preaching or by their suffering, or by both. Of course souls are brought to God by it, and saints are edified through it.

3 -- The Immediate Director of Ministry Is the Holy Ghost

Arriving at Acts 13, we find the Holy Ghost particularly mentioned as selecting "whom He will" for special work. It is well to remember that His action is recorded in this book, in which we get an insight into His operations as long as the Church is on the earth; and that is questionable wisdom which does not own His presence and directorship now as in apostolic times.

Saints forget this -- if ever they knew it -- who sanction *men*, when the *Holy Ghost* should be free-to *call* and *appoint* to the ministry.

Let us see how He acted in the case before us. At Antioch there was an assembly of *saints*. All, however, were not *ministers*; for it is distinctly said

there were in the church (or assembly) certain prophets and teachers.

Two extremes of error are to be avoided in this day of confusion:

- (1) it is not true that there should be only *a* minister to an assembly of Christians;
- (2) it is equally false that all saints in an assembly are necessarily ministers.

There are *four* specified as being in the gathering at Antioch: this excludes the idea, at once, of a *one man ministry*; again, if all present were gifted men, the Holy Ghost would not have said "*there were in the assembly prophets and teachers.*" Indeed, I say without hesitation, that the word of God sanctions no such notion as being *the* minister of a church. We will see this more transparently as we proceed.

From among the prophets and teachers at Antioch, then, the *Holy Ghost* directed the separation of Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto He had called them.

Now, "*the work*" was a special tour for preaching the word in the

western regions; and the *laying on of hands* was a sign of fellowship and blessing expressed by the assembly (or by their fellow-laborers merely) at Antioch.

I do not apprehend any difficulty to simple souls, who have traced the action of the Holy Ghost in Ministry so far. It is as monstrous to conceive of two *directorships*, at the same time, as to think of two heads ordering one body. It was not the assembly of saints, nor a college of officials, that called and sent forth these men on their mission; the *Holy Ghost selected* them (v. 2); and the *Holy Ghost sent them forth* (v. 4).

The laying on of hands was not for ordination; they had been already ordained by the Holy Ghost {they were already preaching}, and saints were then more subject to Him than to impeach His sufficiency or try to supplement what He had completed. I say nothing of the folly of supposing an inferior order of ministers -- "prophets and teachers" -- ordaining such as God had set *first* in the church, viz., apostles.⁴¹

The act of the imposition of hands seems to have been practiced from very early times, as we see, right through the Scriptures. Thus, "Israel stretched out his right hand and laid it upon Ephraim's head . . . and he blessed them" (Gen. 48:14-20). Again, the Lord took children into His arms, His hands upon them, and *blessed* them (Mark 10:16).

Further, hands were imposed as an external sign of countenance, approval, or fellowship, as is our manner of greeting each other in this country. And, lastly, hands were imposed as an expression of *conveyance*, as in Leviticus, where we read of the offerer transferring or conveying, ceremonially, his sins to the head of the sacrificed lamb; and also in 1 Tim. 1:6, and Acts 8, &c., where we read of the Holy Ghost being communicated *mediately* to the Samaritan converts by the laying on of hands. I should remark here that Timothy, who was specially indicated before by prophecy, received his gift for ministry *mediately* by the laying

41. [It greatly simplifies this question, by observing, that the only persons who ordained Elders or Bishops (substantially the same as see Acts 20:17-18; 1 Tim. 3, &c.), were Paul and Barnabas, who did so as commissioned by the Holy Ghost and sent by Him (Acts 13.) and Titus who was delegated by the Apostle for that purpose. The authority and terms on which Titus acted were full and precise:

For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain Elders in every city as *I had appointed thee*" (Titus 1:5).

Were you challenging the ecclesiastical appointment of the day, could definite apostolic authority be produced such as that which Titus could appeal to? It has been contended from 1 Tim. 5:22, "lay hands suddenly on no man," that Timothy too ordained; it *may* have been so, but of this nothing is certain. "Hands" were laid on person for various purposes.. Ed.]

on of *Paul's* hands. At the same time, however, the Presbytery (the elders) associated or had fellowship with Paul. In 2 Tim. 1:6, *διὰ*, *through*, or *by means of*, is the particle used; whereas, in 1 Tim. 4:14, *μετὰ*, which implies *community* or *participation*, is the word employed. I do not remember another similar instance, in which the Lord employed one of His servants as the honored channel through whom He conveyed a gift; and, of course, it were absurd of any not thus specially commissioned to pretend to the position. The Queen may charge one of her ministers to confer a title in her name, and the act would be valid; but without such royal commission the ceremony would be just child's play.

So, now that we have neither prophecy to indicate, nor apostolic authority to convey a gift, the act of imposing hands with that object would be mockery. Therefore, to impose hands to-day on any one, and by any one, with a view to the conferring of a gift as for ministry, is sinful mimicry of apostolic power.

I conclude that the assembly at Antioch expressed their participation in the *work* of the apostles Barnabas and Saul by laying their hands upon them. It was not *ordination*. Similarly, I presume that saints might now meet together and commend in prayer to the Lord beloved brethren going forth to service and why may they not also lay their hands upon them on such occasions? Their doing so would of course impart nothing to them, neither would the omission entail any loss. Yet I suppose that if they were simple, and in full fellowship with what the Holy Ghost was doing, they would unceremoniously express the same, and they would be gainers.

I suggest these thoughts to you, not to arraign any of my dear brethren before your bar for your judgment on them; God is my witness. But I deem it needful to call your attention to Scripture on these points, which have been so distorted in Christendom, lest you should refuse to own those whom the Lord has gifted, and whom the Holy Ghost uses.

*I say, therefore, that the SERVANT OF GOD NEEDS NO DIRECTORSHIP BUT THAT OF THE HOLY GHOST; and THE INTERFERENCE OF MAN IS AS SINFUL AS THE SUBMISSION TO IT IS DISHONORING TO GOD.*⁴²

42. I would here refer my reader to 1 Cor. 16:12. Even an apostle's desire for Apollos to *visit* Corinth is refused. Paul greatly desired him to go to the Corinthians with the brethren; but *his* will was not at all to go at that time. Paul finds no fault with him; on the contrary, he hopes that he will go at some convenient time. How marvelously gracious of God to chronicle this! Apollos had, no doubt, great respect for the apostle's feelings, and must have weighed the suggestion with all becoming gravity; but his personal responsibility to the Lord, and his freedom to act according

(continued...)

4 -- Ministry in its Relationship to the Assembly of God and to the World

This proposition might have been considered in connection with our first, but I thought it deserving a separate place, inasmuch as great confusion exists in the minds of men about the Church and the world, and, consequently, the ministers suited to each. We saw that the *Assembly of God* was composed of believers in Christ, indwelt, individually and corporately, by the Holy Ghost. Outside it were Jews and Gentiles; but as the “middle wall of partition” between Jews and Gentiles has been removed, let us speak now of those outside the Church as forming *the world*. The apostle Paul designates the position of those with the Holy Ghost “within”; and he uses the term “without” for those not in the assembly (1 Cor. 5:12).

I would therefore say that a caste of ministry is specially fitted for service “without,” and others labor “within.” Now, all of them are set in the Church --

first, apostles; secondly, prophets; thirdly, teachers; after that, miracles; then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues (1 Cor. 12:28).

Looking at the Scripture we read (Eph. 4) we find a list differing a little from this,

He gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers.

The fact is that a formal category of gifts is found nowhere; the Holy Ghost, in His grace, supplies in each case, that which suits the particular subject He is elucidating. In 1 Cor., therefore, we find not only a *list*, but care is also taken to give the *order* of the gifts, and what the Corinthians prized most highly, “gifts of tongues,” are given *last*. What poor, foolish beings we are! Like children, we are so fond of playthings to the neglect of that by which we should profit for God’s glory. Tongues were for a sign to the world -- those “without” -- at the commencement of the church’s existence; these the poor Corinthians desired; they did not earnestly covet the *best* gifts {1 Cor. 12:31}; least of all did they rise to what God is in His nature as the One in whom alone true joy was to be found. They rejoiced in the manifestation of His power, but they did not joy in God Himself (Rom. 5:11).

I may here remark that the gifts are to last as long as there is the

42. (...continued)

to what he believed to be the direction of the Holy Ghost, led him to decline.

“body” upon the earth; hence Eph. 4, “for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.” At any rate those given in this portion shall remain.

Respecting the APOSTLES and the PROPHETS we have them in their *writings* not in *persons* -- *they* have had no successors.

We are told (Eph. 2:20) that the apostles and prophets are the foundation of the holy temple built by the Lord.

Viewed as a building, indwelt by the Holy Ghost, its corner stone is Christ indeed. Paul speaking of the same thing (1 Cor. 3, as “God’s building,” in which Paid is a responsible builder, speaks of Christ as the foundation.

You will observe that the apostles and prophets, Paul in particular, had authority for laying the basis of the building; in other words, through what they wrote and spoke, we learn what the building is. If Paul, “a wise master-builder,” builds, he puts in that material which corresponds with the foundation; he puts in no wood, hay, stubble, but gold, silver, and precious stones; and he says to us who follow him, “Take care what *you* build.” So much for 1 Cor. 3. Again, the Holy Ghost in Eph. 2 sanctions the principles laid down by the apostles and prophets, and by a figure of speech speaks of *them* instead of their *teachings*, as the broad but limited basis of the “holy temple.”

This should be pondered in a day like this, when some would impeach the completeness of the scriptures by introducing “new ideas” apart from the word.

Now, when these two passages are considered, it must be evident that there could be no apostles and prophets after the close of the sacred canon, except some would start another building, which indeed would be “another,” or we should have to think of more than one foundation to a building.

It would appear, then, that the apostles were the authoritative agents used by the Holy Ghost, not only for teaching, but for governing the assembly; and their teaching and conduct are given us in the New Testament, while the prophets were the mediate communicators of the mind of God to the assembly, at a time when the epistles, as we now have them, were not together. The apostles, in that sense, were prophets, but the prophets were not apostles. The assembly could appoint neither, but on the contrary was to be subject to, and was to profit by them.

The assembly in its relationship to the prophets is seen in 1 Cor.14. That portion, by the by, is not so much given us for showing how the *gifts*

acted as that we might learn how the HOLY GHOST directed such as were present. This principle is all-important, because although we might not have the same number of gifts to-day, yet we *have* the same Spirit to direct such as remain to the church.

Is it necessary to remind you that the “prophets” of Eph.4 are post-Pentecostal gifts? To those that doubt the statement I remark

(1) That the *order* in which they are mentioned here, as in 1 Cor. 12, should be sufficient to show that they are prophets of a new order of things, gifts “set in the assembly,” which, of course, did not exist before Pentecost; they are placed *second* to the “apostles,” and I have never heard any one who asserted that the apostolate ever existed before the Lord Jesus created it.

(2) The Apostle Paul tells us that “the mystery, which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, . . . as now revealed unto the holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit” (Eph. 3:2-5). He speaks of preceding dispensations as being in “*other* ages”; while what is peculiar to this -- viz., the dispensation of the church -- is “Now revealed”; and such revelation is made unto such as God has “set in the church” -- to apostles and prophets, whom we have still in their *writings*.

The apostles and prophets, therefore, were gifts of the Lord for the Church; they accomplished their ministry in the deposition, of truths respecting “Christ and the Church,” and they have passed off leaving no successors. ⁴³

Every class of gift now existing should profit by the *example* of the apostles, in whom, in some measure, all the gifts were deposited; while all saints need to profit by their TEACHING, sanctioned as it is by the Holy Ghost as forming part of the “Holy Scriptures.”

Evangelists are next referred to. They are the ministers of the *gospel* preached to every creature under heaven, while the teacher is a minister of the *church* to fulfil the word of God (Col. 1:23-25). Is the thought of *rank*, as men say, suggested in this order? Beloved brethren, how can persons

43. {“Prophets” in the sense of giving *revelation* are no longer existent since the close of the canon of Scripture. But “prophets” in the sense of forth-telling the mind of God as revealed in the Scripture continues. Note that “prophesying” (1 Cor. 13:8-10) continues until “done away” when the perfection of glory arrives -- at the coming of the Lord. “Prophesying,” as well as “knowledge,” here in 1 Cor. 13:8-10 refer to the gifts in 1 Cor. 12: “word of knowledge” (v. 8) and “prophecy” (v. 10) -- just as “tongues” (1 Cor. 13:8) refers to the gift of “kinds of tongues” in 1 Cor. 12:10 (which have ceased).

There is a lack in this excellent paper of a due consideration of this prophetic ministry. }

indulge such carnal thoughts, who, being once dead in trespasses and sins, have by sovereign grace, been delivered from wrath? Would that be walking worthy of our calling, with all lowliness and meekness? Surely not. The fact is that, in the Epistle to the Ephesians, the *order* is not a prominent design at all, as in 1 Cor., where there was carnality; and I should think that it was time to profit by the admonition given (1 John. 12:1-3, 1 John 4:1) respecting the *spirits* in men, when I found any one professing to be a servant of God contending for position, or for his “rank in the ministry.”

The evangelist seems pre-eminently to be one whose ministry lies chiefly without in the world. We saw before that the church of God was viewed as a building composed of “lively stones.” To use the figure, then, I would say that the evangelist’s work is to dig in the quarry for the stone, which he turns over to the teacher for polishing and arranging in its proper place; while the pastor sees that no efforts of tempests outside, nor the schemes of the many enemies -- Satan being the chief -- who hate its founder, should in anywise toss it about.

But no one can be an evangelist to whom the Lord has not committed the gift. As Sovereign, He may bless the word read even by a *Mormonite*, which would not, therefore, stamp the reader as an evangelist. I repeat that the Lord trains the man, from the child, for his work; reveals the knowledge of Himself to the individual; puts the grace into him; and, providing an open door for his ministry, the Holy Ghost sends him forth, and uses him for bringing souls to God.

In connection with what we saw of Philip (Acts 8) who was an evangelist (Acts 21:8), I would suggest a few thoughts respecting this gift of Christ, and then proceed to the teachers.

- (a) The *Holy Ghost*, and not the assembly, nor any other individual, directs the movements of the evangelist (v. 39).
- (b) His is not an *office*, as we shall soon see, which *necessarily* supposes residence in the place with the assembly; the evangelist is a gift who *may* (indeed he should) reside in a place for some time and evangelize it, and may also start from it to evangelize other places, as did Philip; but his gift supposes traveling, for which he in every way is fitted by the Lord.
- (c) It is not said that Philip received *salary* for preaching, nor any pay whatever; indeed, he could not *expect* it from the church, for he was not *its* servant but the Lord’s, who supplies His servants bountifully. Paul -- than whom, I suppose, none worked more hard for the Lord -- worked with his own hands (Acts 20:33-35) as a tent-maker; Luke as a

physician; and even our blessed Lord, to set an example, was not ashamed to be a carpenter (Mark 6:3). So much for the *positive* evidence against a *paid-ministry*. For *negative* testimony, I may say that I do not find one example in all the New Testament to support the practice. We must, however, bear in mind that it is the privilege of saints who are competent to help forward anything that is for the glory of the Lord, and to encourage those -- whether evangelists, pastors, or teachers -- whom He permits to labor in His word. The principle is plain enough in the word -- "They that preach the gospel should live of the gospel"; thus the Apostle Paul assured the Corinthians. ⁴⁴ But *he* never used that power: he would be free from all men; and as to the Corinthians, they were too carnal to be permitted to have fellowship with so holy a work. However, when he was in need, the offering of the Philippians was "an odor of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God"; and he regarded it less as that which he desired, than as that which was "fruit abounding to their account" (Phil. 4:14-19).

There are other examples of fellowship in the gospel expressed by lodging and boarding God's servants, who took nothing of the Gentiles (3 John 6-8; Rom. 16, &c.).

So to-day the evangelist, directed by the Holy Ghost, goes ⁴⁵ uninvited to a place where perhaps he knows no one, and announces the gospel. Some saint of God -- a Gaius (Rom. 16:23) -- recognizing the gift of God in him, or possibly one of the converts, like Lydia (Acts 16), offers the

44. [Paul pleads, and that right earnestly too, on behalf of his fellow-laborers; he presses and insists upon the right of the servant for material support (1 Cor. 9), although, on the other hand, he would rather die than accept temporal aid from the carnal Corinthians (v. 15), more shame to them! It is important to insist upon the *principle* of the laborer to support, while he should be free before the Lord to concede right in the interest of grace. Paul owned the principle by receiving from the Philippians, and waived his right in the case of the Corinthians. We need the sanctuary balances to hold things with an even hand. Ed.]

45. Similarly in these days of printing, an evangelist *writes*, and would, if he were rich in gold and silver, scatter far and wide where he cannot minister in person. It is the privilege of those who discern, in what is written, the gospel of Christ, to aid him in the scattering of the books or tracts. He writes on his responsibility to the Lord; and so do others publish, while some open depots, &c., and all who have ability give away the books. In the same way many others who cannot buy receive freely of such as can, and assist in the spreading of them; thus we are co-workers together. I think it would be doing service to the Lord to remind any *Christians* to whom the Lord has entrusted some of this world's goods of a privilege which, if they indulged, *as unto HIM*, they would be less burdened with "the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches"; while they would be trading with what the Lord has committed to them for His praise here and their reward hereafter, *if done unto HIM* (Matt. 25).

hospitality of his, or her, house. Another saint of God offers the use of his house, or defrays the expenses of a room to preach in; while another or the same busies himself in inviting people to the preaching. In all these ways he is helped and encouraged, while those who have fellowship with him, "after a godly sort," have fruit which abounds to their account.

More than this; if the servant of the Lord be so wholly engaged in His service as not to have time to support himself it is the will of the Lord that saints who know him should, in all simplicity, see to it that he has his needs supplied. It may now be asked, "What then is the difference, as to support between such as you have described and a paid evangelist?" This -- the one is entirely dependent upon God, and exercises faith in Him for all he needs the other cannot exercise *faith*, for he knows and *sees* the source of his supply in man. I would ask -- Does the Lord send forth His servant and neglect to provide for his maintenance? Why He could even use ravens to feed one once (1 Kings 17:4, 6).

The evangelist, then, is such a gift as the Lord fits, calls, and sends forth, and whom the Holy Ghost directs and uses in the bringing of souls to CHRIST; the *world* is his field, to the unsaved is chiefly his mission; he is, himself *in* Christ, and starting from Him, he rests not till souls are *with* Him in Christ. In other words, the work of the evangelist is not complete even when a person finds peace in believing; he must be "perfect in Christ Jesus." Christ suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, to do more than to save from hell -- it was to bring us to *God* (1 Pet. 3:18); and to drop the convert short of this is bad workmanship: the stone is not only to be quarried out, but to be brought up and set in its true place in the "holy temple." And the evangelist labors with this end in view.

The "PASTORS and TEACHERS" differ from the evangelist in being more used to those "within." The heart of the evangelist addresses itself chiefly to the hearts of the lost, anxious, and unsettled; the teacher, on the other hand, instructs and leads on the *saints*. At Samaria, for instance, Philip the Evangelist preached, and many believed on the Lord and were baptized. Soon Philip leaves them -- he is transported to the desert; but teachers come down to Samaria from Jerusalem and minister Christ to the converts.

In this way the teacher is a higher order of gift, so to say, than the evangelist; he engages the soul with the perfections and the glories of Christ, who is the only source of real nourishment for the spiritual life of a believer. The teacher knows where the treasures are, for he himself is in the enjoyment of them, and he *has the ability to demonstrate them*. In this he differs from his brethren in whom the grace to teach has *not* been

deposited; they may know the fulness that is in Christ, and they may be filled with it; but they cannot so tell of it as that the spiritual can profit; while such is the teacher's gift that he can speak for his neighbor's good unto edification (Rom. 15:2; 1 Cor. 14:3). He speaks, moreover, with conscious authority -- in fact, he is exhorted to speak as the "oracles of God"; he must know the mind of God, and, assured of it, he is to disclose it (1 Pet. 4:11). Of course, if he is not prepared thus to teach, he should not, I gather, teach at all. On the other hand, it should not be forgotten that even the teaching of a Paul, apostolic as it was, was measured by the Scriptures, which the Bereans searched, and for which act they were, in comparison with the Thessalonians, "MORE NOBLE" (Acts 17:11).

The evangelist leads the soul to *Christ*; the teacher detains it, and ministers to it *of Christ*; the pastor's godly care is, that it does not wander away *from Christ*. The evangelist and pastor are engaged for Christ's glory with the *individual*; the teacher with *truth* for it.

There is just one thought which I would offer you from Acts 15: -- You remember our noticing four {five are named} teachers {and prophets} in the assembly at Antioch (Acts 13), and we said that if the assembly was gathered for edification, one or more of *these four* would be such as the Holy Ghost would use to give a suited word at the time {suited occasion}.

Now we find Judas and Silas -- not mentioned among the four {the five} -- going to Antioch. If there was *exclusiveness*, or rather if *all* the teachers {and prophets} were not the common property of the assembly at Antioch, as of all the assemblies, then it would have been "irregular" for Judas and Silas to speak in that gathering. But they did exhort, comfort, and confirm the brethren. And such should be the attitude which all the gifts of the Lord should maintain to-day, and the saints to them. However, it is not so; and, indeed, will never be again! But in the midst of the ruin, let us be thankful for any whom the Lord gives us; and if we have none at all, let us adore Him for His word, and for the divine teacher, the Holy Ghost, who ever remains with us to take of the things of Christ and reveal them unto us.

How ARE WE TO KNOW THESE GIFTS? for even the youthful gathering at Thessalonica was exhorted to "know them which labor among you and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; and esteem them very highly in love, for their works' sake" (1 Thess. 5:12, 13). I reply by asking, how do you recognize a believer in Christ? Is it simply by what *he* says? No; there is divine intelligence given you, by which you discern Christ in him; so also, the spiritual will discern the gifts by their works; and esteem them for *their works' sake*.

If the individual be spiritual, he will be occupied with Christ and not with his gift, and thus commend himself to the godly; and so, if saints be walking “in the Spirit,” they will see the gift in the individual, and will profit by it. I remember hearing a servant of God express the idea thus -- “It will not be the *blind* leading the blind, nor the *seeing* leading the blind, but the *seeing* leading the *seeing*.” There are four evils on this score which prevail in the present day:

- (1) Unsent men assume the place of the Lord’s servants;
- (2) Saints slavishly follow, and thus encourage them;
- (3) Saints, failing to recognize true gifts, are losers; and
- (4) Real gifts, discouraged by the ruinous aspect of things, hide themselves, and thus exhibit lack of confidence in the Lord.

I find other gifts referred to in Rom. 12, the gift of exhorting (v. 8). The style of the apostle then changes, “He that giveth,” and he introduces the *liberal giver* and the *diligent ruler*. To the last we shall refer directly.

So far as we have gone we see

- (1) That all these gifts -- apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, teachers, and exhorters, proceed from the Lord -- were never appointed by men.
- (2) The children of God are simply to know them, to own them, to profit by them, and to help them in carnal things where they need it.
- (3) We have not such authoritative persons now as apostles and prophets, the others are still supplied by the Lord; and
- (4) Even the apostles never appointed the evangelists, pastors, &c., the Lord only gives them. This I must press, for we are coming now to see another order of ministry of a very different character whom the apostles or their delegates *did* appoint.

5 -- Offices in Local Gatherings of Saints

On this part we must be very brief lest we tire you. There are three sets of ministers pointed out in the Acts and the Epistles, who differ from those we have been reviewing in a few important particulars, which we may learn by referring to the scriptures which speak of them.

1. And first, “THE SEVEN” (those chosen in Acts 6, and called in Acts 21:8 “the seven”) have been long known in ecclesiastical history as “deacons.” Although they are not so named in the Acts, yet it is generally supposed they are the same class spoken of in Phil. 1:1; 1 Tim. 3. In the

portion last quoted the diaconate is an “office” ⁴⁶ and he who holds it is to be grave, not double-tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre; holding the mystery of the faith in a good conscience; his wife is to be grave and faithful, and he is to rule his own house well, &c.

Now, what was this “office?” This we learn from Acts 6 many poor and needy saints were soon found in the assembly at Jerusalem, and it would appear that the apostles not only ministered the word, but attended also to the temporal necessities of the saints in their midst, to meet which the richer brethren had placed money at their disposal (Acts 4). What a reality is Christianity! Jealousy of nationalities still existing, the Grecians murmured against the Hebrews because Grecian widows were neglected in the daily ministrations. The occasion was used for appointing fit persons to attend to *that business*, viz., taking charge of the collections for the poor saints, and judiciously and discreetly apportioning them. In the case before us the apostles permitted the gathering at Jerusalem to select such as they thought fit for “this business,” and seven being chosen, the *apostles appointed them*.

A very valuable office is this; and when exercised in subjection to the Lord, who always cares for His own, much may be done to rebuke idleness on the one hand, and to comfort and help the needy on the other.

The wife and children of the deacon are, I judge, associated with him in many ways, in the carrying out of details. Hence their qualifications are so strictly laid down (1 Tim. 3). They live in the place; move in and out among the saints, so as to find out in the gentlest ways where need is on the one hand, and who are those that may be asked to meet it on the other. Hence he is not to be a *money-lover*; nor his wife a *slanderer*! O that we knew many of such men today! It would be our place to *own* them where we find them, and to thank God for them but not having apostolic authority, we cannot appoint them.

A deacon, then, is one that “serves tables” -- attending to the bodily needs of the poor saints at the *local gathering* in which he meets, and he ministers (or serves) in temporal things. (In this way, I suppose, Pheobe was a deaconess, Rom. 16:1) The deacon may be, besides, a person *gifted* by the Lord to minister the *word*, as Stephen and Philip were; in this he would be responsible to the Lord, and to none other; in his *office* as deacon he is servant of the *local* assembly. If he removed to another place, he would be “out of office.” An evangelist, or a pastor, or a teacher is a gift *everywhere*; a deacon is in office -- and that for temporal things -- in his

46. [In Tim. 3:10 it reads, literally, “serve as a deacon”; “office” should be deleted. Ed.]

city or town only.

2. BISHOPS AND ELDERS. The Apostles Paul and Barnabas ordained elders in every assembly (Acts. 14:23). They had traveled about Asia Minor, had visited cities in Lycaonia, and in each city where there was an assembly of saints they appointed *elders*.

Again, in Titus 1:5, we find Titus left in the island of Crete to ordain elders in every city.

From these two scriptures we learn

(1) That the appointment of elders was a purely *apostolic* function, accomplished by the Apostles themselves or by their delegates;

(2) Not one elder, but *elders*, were appointed; and not to a diocese or district, but to the *gathering* (we saw on a previous occasion that in apostolic times there was only *one* assembly of Christians in any given place, which was an expression of the one Assembly or church of God); and such men would be specially guided by the Holy Ghost to walk before the infant assemblies as “patterns to the flock.”

From 1 Tim. 5:7 it appears that some of the elders had gift to “labor in the word and doctrine”; but their essential function seems to have been to rule, direct, advise, guide. I dare say that their judgment was instructed by the Holy Ghost, so as to detect improprieties among the saints -- as, for instance, in late attendance at or absence from meetings, in dress, and in other matters of detail in daily life.

Further, the very persons called elders, whom the Apostle Paul summoned from Ephesus to meet him at Miletus (Acts 20:17) are exhorted as *overseers* (v. 28). Now the word “overseers” is translated from *ἐπισκόπους* (Episkopous), which occurs also in Phil. 1:1; 1 Tim. 3:1; Titus 1:7, where it is rendered “Bishop.” Clearly, then, the elders were bishops.

We see, therefore, that the elders (*πρεσβύτεροι* = presbuteroi, literally *elderly* persons) were the Bishops (*ἐπίσκοποι* = episkopoi), or overseers, in the various assemblies. Neither these nor the deacons should be confounded with *gifts*; inasmuch as they required *apostolic* appointment which the gifts needed not; they were located; the gifts were not.

You will now question the meaning of the subscription at the end of the Epistle to Titus in our English version {KJV} “It was written to Titus, *ordained first bishop of the Church* of the Cretians, from Nicopolis of Macedonia.” Well, it just means nothing, for it does not occur in the Greek text.

The fact is simple enough. Titus was authorized by the apostle to go

through Crete and accomplish a work -- appointing bishops {Titus 1:5 ⁴⁷} -- which Paul only or his substitute could do; and far from Titus being the resident bishop of the Cretians, he was directed by Paul to meet him at Nicopolis (Titus 3:12).

For us, therefore, to appoint elders to-day, we need, for each city, two things which where can we find?

(1) Apostles whom the HOLY GHOST used authoritatively for making overseers; and

(2) The flock -- one assembly of all the saints in the place over whom to appoint them. Will any dare to say we have either? There are, thank God, holy men among us, who by their jealous care for the spiritual growth and Christian walk of the saints, commend themselves to the godly. And are we not to submit to such in the Lord? Surely. Should we not thankfully seek their counsel, refer to their sober judgment, and imitate their Christ-like walk? May the Lord, in His grace, help us to do so, and may the number of such examples to believers be greatly increased!

And let me urge my younger brethren, who are gathered to the name of the Lord Jesus {Matt. 18:20; cp. 1 Cor. 5:4}, and gathered according to His word (where meaningless modes of appointment are avoided) let me admonish you to esteem such grave, elderly, godly men very highly for their work's sake. Had we apostolic power, there are some who would doubtless be appointed, and then be titled "elders." But are we not to profit by such, because they are not thus inducted into office and thus made to possess a *title*? It is as much ours to submit as it is theirs to rule; but both need something beyond a *blind acquiescence* on the one hand, and *official interference* on the other; each requires to act towards the other as for the LORD.

Let us bear in mind, beloved brethren, that ministry was never intended to bestow importance before men upon them in whom God deposited gifts. His aim has been His glory in Christ. And indeed, when we remember that we carry along "the flesh" in us, which the Holy Ghost can never use, how much need there is for walking softly? The apostle Paul exhorts (Rom. 12),

I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think (of himself or of others) more highly than he ought to think;

47. {"For this cause I left thee in Crete, that thou mightest go on to set right what remained [unordered], and establish elders in each city, as I had ordered thee (Titus 1:5 -- JND.)}

but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.

We are all brethren, and members one of another {1 Cor. 12:12, etc.}, although having gifts differing. In short, if instead of his gift, the servant of God is occupied with Christ, he will see much to abhor himself, and repent in dust and ashes; and far from asserting *his* gift he would just consider the glory of Christ in the well-being of his brethren. Indeed, every servant of God should bear in mind that, unless the living God comes in and owns his ministry, it is profitless. The sower puts the seed into the ground, and it *dies*. GOD must quicken it, or there it remains. How this should take the importance out of those of us who think something of ourselves because God uses us. And so, if we walk in the Spirit we will learn to value what God gives us through His servants, encourage them in their services, and would seek never to puff them up by false adulation. Further, our quiet secret prayer to God would be for their own growth in divine things; we would watch their walk with godly jealousy, remembering how Satan aims specially at those whom his Captor, our Captain of Salvation, has placed in the front rank of His aggressive army.

What a precious theme is ministry! How it takes us into the very presence of God, who hath reconciled; of Christ, who maintains His body in the earth; of the Holy Ghost, who is here below directing according to His will.

The Lord Himself will soon descend from heaven for us, beloved brethren; while He leaves us here, He graciously provides for our spiritual growth, and He strengthens us to be His living witnesses, each in our own sphere; but in all we have been considering there is nothing to clash in the least with His own blessed promise, "I come quickly."

And now, little children, abide in him; that when he shall appear, we (His poor, unworthy servants) may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming (1 John 2: 28).

Summary

- (1) The way of the Holy Ghost is to instruct souls respecting their personal standing in Christ; their corporate relationships to each other; and the presence, as a divine FACT, of the Spirit of God in the assembly upon the earth, before developing ministry.
- (2) The source of Christian ministry is in *God*, through *Christ* the exalted head over all things, and hence the *sin of* interference on the part of man.

- (3) All believers form a holy priesthood to offer spiritual sacrifices *unto* God: but ministry proceeds *from* God to man; and its object is the magnifying of the person of Christ, and God in Him.
- (4) The *directorship* of ministry, as well as power for its efficiency, is vested in the HOLY GHOST.
- (5) Pastors and teachers are gifts for the *whole church* everywhere, and not for *a* church only; the field for the exercise of the gift of the evangelist is the *world*, and all should seek to establish saints in CHRIST.
- (6) Bishops (or elders) were *located* (not traveling) functionaries, who, being divinely qualified to rule in, and to be ensamples to, the flock, were appointed by the apostles, or by their commissioned substitutes. Such, if known now, should be submitted to; but, without apostolic authority, cannot be formally appointed.
- (7) Deacons (and probably deaconesses) were chosen by the assemblies, and appointed by the apostles, to be servants of the gatherings, seeing to the temporal need of the saints, &c.

Appendix: *Women in Connection* *With the Christian Ministry*

There is not the, smallest matter of detail in our every-day walk for which the word of God does not afford light and guidance; and if we be entirely led by it we need not deviate from the straight line in the least degree.

Masters and servants, parents and children, husbands and wives, teachers and taught have, each and all, their several lines of conduct laid down for them by GOD; and if we are His children we should certainly discover His will, and we should do IT. Obedience and a will, not our own but His, should practically characterize the saints of God. We are not our own, but bought with a price, therefore we are to glorify GOD in our bodies, which are His (1 Cor. 6:19, 20). We delight to sing of the grace of God in Christ; by which we are saved; but do we remember that being thus saved we are not to please ourselves but God? But to please another we need to consult *his* will, for if not we may, with our best motives, and most industrious efforts, be doing the very opposite which he desired. So to please God we should honestly set aside *our* notions -- from whatever source they might have been derived -- and endeavor to discover *His* mind from *His* word, and then, by the power of the Holy Ghost, do it.

I believe that if such a course of absolute subjection to God were pursued, Christian women would never dare to leave the place God has allotted to them, and intrude into men's; neither would Christian men, to whom the Lord has committed any gift leave their niche unoccupied for women to fill. And lastly, if subjection to God were practiced by *all* the saints, then those Christian women who so recklessly assume a place, which even common modesty -- not to say the word of the Lord -- forbids, would soon retire into becoming shamefacedness, receiving no countenance from the saints.

Of course I need say nothing of a *worldly* woman taking such a place, for just as with *worldly* men who intrude themselves into "the ministry" for the sake of a "living," the world will be sure to give its patronage! And for what reason? *Because such conduct is opposed to God the Father.* Yes; I repeat, that whatever is opposed to the mind of God will be sure to receive the world's patronage, and *vice versa*.

Now, those of my readers who took pains to notice the conduct of the Holy Ghost regarding ministry, as it is shown in the Acts and in the Epistles, must have observed that not one instance is recorded of a woman having been either an evangelist, a pastor, or a teacher. Such an omission is certainly very significant, and I do wonder that Christian women are not more careful in avoiding, in the nineteenth century, what the Holy Ghost did not introduce in the first! Should this word meet their eye, may they ponder it. *The Lord will not tolerate lawlessness.*

But there is not only *negative* evidence against the ungodliness of women assuming the place of God's gifts for the church (pastors and teachers) or for the world (evangelists), but *positive* testimony is also against it.

The idea of a minister (or servant) of Christ always carries with it, to my mind, one of *authority*. Hence the expression, "ambassadors of Christ" (2 Cor. 5), suggests the thought of one sent *by Christ*, to speak *for Christ*, to act in *the stead of Christ*. What a position! How careful, prayerful, and self-renunciating should the ambassador be! The result is that such in the name of the Lord should have a hearing; the church receiving with meekness the word through the teacher; and the evangelist must be faithful in his message to the world, "whether they will hear or whether they will forbear." I say the true servant of Jesus Christ is, in a very important though *divine* sense, one in authority.

Now, the positive teaching of Scripture regarding the woman is that

she is to be in subjection, [to] learn in silence with all subjection; not to *speak* in the assembly.

For I suffer not *a woman to teach* nos to *usurp authority* over the man, but to *be in silence* (cp. 1 Cor. 14:34, 35; 1 Tim. 2:11).

From these Scriptures, then, it is very evident that

- (1) If the assembly be gathered *as an assembly*, in which teachers may teach, or exhorters may exhort, women are NOT to speak;
- (2) Whereas a teacher may invite saints to a meeting over which he may assume responsibility, and may instruct them *as an authoritative teacher* -- the woman is not allowed to take such a place; and
- (3) It is equally contrary to the mind of the Lord for the woman to appear before the world as an authoritative evangelist.

THEN, HAS THE WOMAN NO PLACE IN THIS BLESSED WORK! O yes, she, has.

The Lord did not find fault with one who went into her city and invited the men to come and see the man who told her all things that ever she did - Jesus the Christ (John 4). After His resurrection, He sent Mary to His disciples with a message of His resurrection (John 20); Dorcas made clothes for the poor (Acts 9); Priscilla (*with* her husband, Aquila) took Apollos and instructed him more perfectly in the way of God (Acts 18:2); before the canon of Scripture was complete God was pleased to make known His mind by prophets, as we have seen; and, it seems from Acts 21 that the four daughters of Philip the Evangelist prophesied. Now we must not forget that PHILIP was the evangelist -- the *daughters were not evangelists*. It is said that they *prophesied*; and, taken in connection with the revealed mind of the Lord respecting the non-publicity and the unassuming mode in which women should conduct themselves, I see no reason for deducing the highly improper, yea ungodly, conduct of women taking a place which the Lord in His sovereignty did not apportion to them. But to prophesy did not *necessarily* need a prominent place; for Agabus the prophet told of Paul's imminent suffering and thus prophesied; but could he not have uttered his prediction in private? And so I judge could Philip's daughters. At any rate, *we have neither prophets nor prophetesses now*. But further, Paul speaks of certain women in Rom. 16 connected with his ministry: Phoebe was a servant (deaconess) of the gathering at Cenchrea; Priscilla was a *helper* (v. 3); Mary bestowed much labor on the servants of Christ (v. 5), &c.

I conclude, from the above references

- (1) That where the grace and the time are afforded by the Lord, godly women may be of immense service in going about and inviting people to preachings, lectures, &c., thus being "helpers" to evangelists and

teachers; and if such were active, much expense might be avoided in the use of printed bills, &c.;

(2) Such women as have the time and grace will find abundance to do in visiting and helping on young converts, comforting the sick, finding out real cases of need among such as do not tell it to the public, and - securing means from those who delight to use their money for the Lord -- such godly women may relieve the poor needy ones;

(3) Further, they may have Bible classes at their houses, or in Sunday Schools, for instructing *females* or *children*. But I would seek to impress upon my sisters who would be evangelists or teachers, and my brethren who encourage them, that the *authority of the Lord Jesus has never been given for such conduct*.

To say that it must be right, because souls get blessing by it, is bad reasoning, and dangerous; for in the same way a Roman Catholic might argue -- for we know that God as Sovereign uses His word preached even by Papists. O that the glory of Christ may be the sole object of every dear sister and also of every brother! for then His will will be submitted to; His mind obtained upon every point; His word will be the only guide. If the Lord intended to do without women in His service He would take them away immediately after they were converted; but no, He graciously leaves them here to perform their functions in "the body." But, as in the natural body, certain delicate organs, unobtrusively, unheard, and unfelt (*till they become diseased*), perform their functions for the good of the whole structure, in submission to the nervous center s presiding over them, so in "the body -- the church," Christ, *the Lord*, has plenty for subject women to do (or to suffer), *but they must be subject to Him*; and there is something seriously wrong -- there is decidedly some spiritual disease -- when she whom the Lord would have to be remarkable for her *modesty* arrogates to herself a position of authority.

Chapter 5

Help For Enquirers

And now, brethren, I commend you to GOD, and to the *word* of His grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified (Acts 20:32).

These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and *searched* the SCRIPTURES daily, whether those things were so (Acts 17:11).

I have read these two Scriptures, beloved brethren -- I address you who are *brethren*, saved ones, believers on the Lord Jesus Christ, for only such can be really interested in what is now before us -- I have read these Scriptures, which refer to God's *word* and His authority, because I am sure that all who sue godly must feel that there never was a time when the authority of the word of God had more need to be pressed on the hearts and consciences of His people than at the present. Disregard to it is given one of the signs of the last times. Paul, speaking of the last days, says --

For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears, and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables (2 Tim. 4:3, 4).

That is to say, one of the signs of the last days would be that Christians would have itching ears, and instead of accepting God's teachers -- for I shall show you presently that all real teachers are God's gifts -- instead of taking the teachers God gives, they, having itching ears, would heap *to themselves* teachers. Moreover, the apostle says in this epistle, they would not *endure* SOUND DOCTRINE; that they would. turn away their ears from the truth, and be turned to fables. What I want you to see is, that the standard for Christians is not *fables* -- *not* men's books, however able men may be -- not catechisms, however ably they may be got up; but the standard is God's truth -- nothing more, nothing less. The apostle speaks of the Bereans being more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the *word* with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, comparing all they heard therewith. By the law (that is the *writings*) and the testimony, they measured everything. If I read anything professing to be instruction for me, I

examine it by the word, and thank God for it, *if it stands the test*, else to me it is so much waste paper. Now, brethren, if that were the case, if this rule were adhered to, the occasion of this meeting would never have been. I am persuaded if my brother, as I trust he is -- I do not know the gentleman -- had read the Scriptures, and had compared the (so-called) “brethren’s” books with them, he would never have produced this little book I hold in my hand.⁴⁸ I have never in my life seen anything pretending to teach which so fails of its object. The writer does not keep to the word of Cod, as I shall show you presently. But there is another thing I should like you to notice, viz., the solemnity of a meeting like this, because it is another evidence of the last days, that instead of Christians helping on each other, building each other up, and forwarding the work of God, they are found attacking what they know nothing about; not *error*, for this must be attacked, but truth. Brethren, this is a grievous matter. If tonight I had to stand up and speak against infidelity, against those who openly hate the truth, my path would be as clear and easy as possible. But I have to deal with those who love the Lord Jesus -- with a child of God, as I trust the “Elder” is.

In attempting to criticize anything, there are two qualifications necessary to the critic: two principles which we should hold by. The first is -- THAT THE TRUTH, WHICH IS THE STANDARD, should be fully known. The second is -- THAT THE THING CRITICIZED, or the PERSONS JUDGED, should be equally well known. I hope to show you before I have done, that the “Elder” has neither of these qualifications. He neither knows the truth with which to compare -- at least so far as the six subjects he touches are concerned, nor does he know what are the so-called errors that he pretends to warn against. I shall not only be able to show you that the little book is *Absolutely untrue*, but I hope to go farther, and show you something of what God’s word teaches on these points; and also show you, from five witnesses which I have brought here, that the people whom this dear brother has attacked, are not the people which he thinks they are.

First, then, as to

The Law And God’s Righteousness

This is a large subject, and therefore I can but give you just a hasty sketch of it. The charge against us is, that we say the Law is abrogated. Now it is very remarkable that, some years ago, a great discussion occurred in Glasgow between some of our brethren of the Scotch Church. Dr. Norman Macleod and some others led the discussion. Dr. Macleod, and not the so-called

48. *A few Counsels Regarding Some Prevalent Errors*, by an Elder, Aberdeen, 1869.

brethren, asserted that “the Law was buried in the sepulcher of Christ.” Others opposed Dr. Macleod, and went to the other extreme, saying that *Christians* are under the Law. It is remarkable that the only answer to these, that I am aware of, has been given by Mr. Darby.⁴⁹ So that, far from the brethren asserting that the Law is buried and abrogated, they stand up for it -- they hold its authority. But what they say is, that through the death of Christ, whereby its authority was maintained, we are dead to it (Rom. 7:4). What does Paul say in this chapter? The pith of it is this -- You cannot have two husbands; you must be subject to one husband, not to two. Not that the Law, he says, is dead, but “*ye are become dead to the Law by the body of Christ.*” The two husbands set before us are the Law on the one hand, and a risen Christ on the other. Now, says the Apostle, the Law is not dead, but you, by the body of Christ, are dead to that state to which the Law applies, *i.e.*, to man in his natural state, for the Law applies to man *in the flesh* to restrain the evil that is in him; but it only produces lust, by prohibiting that which the natural man lusts after, thus only showing what man in the flesh is. It manifests, like a plumb-line, the crookedness of your wall; but its province was never to straighten.

By the law is the knowledge of sin (Rom. 3:20).

It is holy, just, and good. It makes certain exactions; and if you do not come up to them, it condemns you. But through the body of Christ, believers are dead to it and married to another, even “to Him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God.” That is, in newness of life with Christ which every *believer* has, fruit to God is borne which could not be in the flesh *under Law*. That is the pith of the argument. Just as in the 6th chapter the Apostle says:

Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid, how shall we that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? {Rom. 6:1}.

Not that *sin* is dead; for sin would be very active indeed, if allowed; but you are dead to it, and no longer its servant. Once you *served* it; but now, being alive unto God in Christ Jesus, you are no longer under its dominion. [The proper rendering of Rom. 6:11, is, “So also ye, reckon yourselves dead to sin, and alive to God in Christ Jesus.”] And if the Apostle dismisses sin in Rom. 6, with a *bad* character, he dismisses Law in Rom. 7 with a *good* character. But *he dismisses both*; though *they* are NOT dead, you are become dead to them.

But some one will say, I quite admit that we are not under the Law for *justification* ; but we are under it as a “rule of life.” Well, not under the Law for justification -- so far we agree. But we are under the Law as a rule of life,

49. The Sabbath; Is the Law Dead, or Am I?

you say. What are we taught by the Lord Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount? He puts in contrast what was given by Moses with the grace which He Himself now brings in. There have been attempts made to show that the Lord Jesus *spiritualizes* the Law in that discourse. On the contrary, in that sermon, He puts what Moses said *in contrast* with that which He Himself teaches. He says that it had been said of old --

an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth -- (Ex. 21:24) -- but I say unto you, that ye resist not evil; . . . and if any man will sue thee at the Law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also (Matt. 5:38, 40).

The Law says -- "Thou shalt love thy neighbor and hate thine enemy." The Lord says "*Love* your enemies," "Bless them that curse you," &c., so that this sermon is not a spiritualizing of the Law, but a putting of the Lord's own standard in grace and truth in contrast with it. In other words, the standard of the Sermon on the Mount was very much higher than anything that Moses ever said. The Law was given to the Jews, and is a divine standard for men, as men, before God; but here, as was just, when the Son came, we have a standard immeasurably higher for those who are to be introduced, in the knowledge of the Father's name, into the kingdom He came to set up -- the kingdom of heaven. The fact is, they have different motives, because they have different relationships.

Hitherto, God was not revealed as a Father; there is one God, and His name one was the burden of Old Testament teaching -- "Jehovah our God is one Jehovah," in contrast with the idols of the heathen. But the presence of the Son revealed the Father, as it is said, "The only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared Him" (John 1:18); and with this new privilege and relationship come new responsibilities and moral obligations. Therefore it is said in Matt. 5:48, "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." The child must be pitied which needs his Father's "Thou shalt not" which is applicable to the servant only. Hear the word of God in Gal. 4:1, 9:

Now I say, That the heir as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all; but is under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the father. Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world: but when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying Abba, Father. Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ. Howbeit then, when ye knew not God, ye did service unto them which by nature are no gods. But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage?

As children with a father our relationships are different, and our “*rule of life*” is correspondingly higher; it is “to walk even as he walked” (1 John 2:6, and 1 Pet. 2:21).

But as this is of fundamental importance, we will look a little more closely into it, and in point of fact the whole question will be found to turn on this, whether I am “in Christ,” or “in the flesh.” If in the flesh under law, I am condemned: if in Christ, then He is my righteousness, and my life, and my example. I have not lost my responsibility; but it is after a new order. For “law” is not identical with “responsibility.” Law is a pressure on an unrighteous man (1 Tim. 1:9), to restrict lust: it is the perfect measure of what the creature ought to be; condemning him if he does not come up to the mark. Responsibility and moral obligation to God is the due relationship of the creature, man, in every condition to God as sovereign and supreme. Responsibility never ceases from Gen. 2 to Rev. 22. But the law is limited of necessity to the trial of fallen man (Gal. 3:9), and to man in his fallen state (1 Tim. 1:9). It was not in Eden, though responsibility to obedience was there: hence it is written, “The Lord God commanded the man” (Gen. 2:16). But this commandment was not a prohibition against what was in itself wrong, as “Thou shalt do no murder,” but a simple test of *obedience*. It is commonly said he {Adam} was put under the law, and it is even tried to be shown how he broke all the commandments, but it is mere nonsense -- the warping of the mind by tradition, to suppose, for example, that he could be told not to covet his neighbor’s wife! He was under responsibility to obey God, and failed in it, -- and with his sin got the knowledge of good and evil; and thus being turned out of the garden, was *without law* (*ἀνομος*) (Rom. 2:12-15), and his posterity, though not without responsibility, having a knowledge of good and evil, and the work of the law {i.e., conviction} written on their hearts, their consciences meanwhile accusing or excusing them.

The law itself was not given till Sinai to a particular people. It is said to have been given to the world; but how could it have been given to the Egyptians, seeing it begins with this address to Israel

I am the Lord thy God, that brought thee out of the land of Egypt?

And in Psa. 147:20, we read:

He hath not dealt so with any nation, and as for his judgments they have not known them..

Cain was not under it, yet *sin* was there (Gen. 4:7). Nor do we read of it {the law} during the whole book of Genesis. Yet responsibility was there, and *sin*, and God’s judgment.

When given to Israel, it was the perfect measure of God’s requirements from man in the flesh, a rule of life to him suitable to God’s holiness, justice, and goodness; but to man in the flesh this must necessarily be a “ministration

of death and condemnation,” even though mixed with such provisional mercy and grace as God reveals in Ex. 34:6, 7, to which the apostle refers in 2 Cor. 3:7, 13.

And now when we come to Rom. 3:19, we find the whole world guilty before God, after a résumé of God’s previous ways in government, on the ground of man’s responsibility, ever since creation (Rom. 1:20), and none found righteous, good, nor holy (Rom. 3:10-18). Responsibility has not ceased, and for that reason man is guilty, and his mouth stopped before God; and of human righteousness there is none. But now, apart from law, as a principle of dealing with man in the flesh, God’s righteousness -- another kind of righteousness altogether -- divine righteousness, is manifested through the blood of Jesus. Not that there was anything new in it, save its manifestation; for the principles on which God dealt with man must ever have been in accordance with His own nature, and by this I understand His righteousness, though the circumstances under which He dealt with man were different at different times: it was witnessed by the law and the prophets -- that apart from all requirements at the hand of man, or the fulfillments of his responsibilities, God could be just, and yet justify, on the principle of faith in Jesus (Rom. 3:21-26).

Then in Abraham’s case, when he had no righteousness, God could reckon his faith for righteousness -- thereby without works, justifying the ungodly, and making sure the promise to him, *before the law was introduced at all* (Gal. 2:19). Nor did it change matters after it was introduced; for David, *under* it, has but to speak of the blessedness of the man to whom “the Lord imputeth righteousness without works.” And as Abraham’s faith was imputed to him for righteousness (Rom. 4:9), so shall it be to us also, if we believe on Him who raised up Jesus our Lord from among the dead, who was delivered for our offences and raised again for our justification (Rom. 4:24, 25); so that being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, access into the grace, the true grace of God in which we stand, and rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. And not only so, but, if reconciled when enemies, we shall now be saved, or preserved by this risen life of the Lord Jesus, for future glory (Rom. 5:1-10).

Have we then no responsibilities? God forbid! How shall we that are dead to sin live any longer therein? In this chapter we are taken back to Adam (Rom. 5:12, &c.), to unfold the state of our nature (*i. e. sin*), as up to this point Paul has treated of its fruits, our *sins*. What then are our responsibilities, and under what moral obligations to God are we? Responsibility and moral obligation exist independently of law. Angels have them and fulfil them (except fallen angels) in their own sphere. The Son of God owned them (not that He had them after the fashion of the creature), when “above,” in heaven, He said (Heb. 10:8, 9), “I come to do thy will, O

God,” and on earth, in answer to those who understood not His relationship to the Father, He said,

As my Father hath taught me, I speak these things. And he that sent me is with me: the Father had not left me alone; for I do always those things that please Him (John. 8:27-29).

Adam had them {responsibilities} in the garden of Eden, and in breaking them, brought in sin, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned. For until the law, *sin* was in the world, though not transgression ⁵⁰, which is the breaking of a given law (Rom. 4:15): But though existing {i.e. sin}, and equally hateful to God, it is not imputed (cp. 2 Cor. 5:19), where law is *not* -- (i.e. God was dealing graciously). Nevertheless it existed, as death -- its awful judgment -- proved, from Adam till Moses. But now as by one ⁵¹ offence, death came upon all, so by one⁵² accomplished obedience of the Lord Jesus, the free gift came upon all unto justification of life, and, with this new life, our new responsibilities and moral obligations. For, as by one man's disobedience the many were constituted sinners—not in act, though after acts proved its truth but in fact, in condition, in state -- so by the obedience of one shall the many be constituted righteous, not in act, though after acts will prove it, but in fact, in condition, in state.

What had the law to do with this? Nothing.

It came in by the way (παρεισῆλθεν Rom. 5:20), that the offence might abound.

But where sin abounded, grace superabounded. Thus, where death hath reigned, its reign is over; now grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord. And it is as possessing this “eternal life” that was with the Father, far above all law or creature rule, in its own absolute, perfect existence of light and love, that we find our relationship to God even the Father, and our consequent responsibilities and moral obligations. What relation then have we, as Christians, to law? Let the word of God say:

I through law am dead to law”; (not that I might be lawless, but) “that I might live to God. I am crucified with Christ: Nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me (Gal. 2:19, 20).

Therefore, the same apostle elsewhere says, “For me to live is Christ”(Phil. 1:20). The question then is this: Am I a Jew in the flesh, under law, to live as

50. I would call attention to the fact that the translation of 1 John 3:4 in our Bible -- “Sin is the transgression of the law” -- is wholly false: no doubt the effect of traditional education. It is in the original, “Sin is lawlessness” -- referring to a *state*, not an *act*. It is *ἀνομία* not *παραβασις* *όμου* as in Rom. 4:15.

51. [“One offence,” not Adam's life work of disobedience. Ed.]

52. [“One act of righteousness,” not Christ's life work of obedience. Ed.]

a Jew, or, am I *in Christ*, and Christ in me, livingly operating by the Spirit of life which has set me free from the law of sin and death, to *live Christ* here below?

The law is just, and holy, and good, but by it is the knowledge of sin, and as many as are of its works are under the curse (Gal. 3:10). But “God is light” and “God is love,” perfectly displayed in the Lord Jesus Christ, by whom salvation came; so that, as *believers*, sin shall not have dominion over us, because we are not under law, but under grace (Rom. 6:14); and we are delivered from under law by his death, *that we might* bring forth fruit to God (Rom. 7:4). The spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death; and sin has been condemned in His cross, that the righteous requirement of the law should be fulfilled in us who walk *not* after the flesh (to which law applies), but after the Spirit (Rom. 8:4); and “if ye be led by the Spirit, ye are NOT UNDER LAW” (Gal. 5:18). May the Lord give you to know the new relationship we are brought into “in Christ,” and the responsibilities flowing therefrom, and the power -- viz., the Holy Spirit whereby these relationships are maintained intact.

We have then the following, viz.:

1st. All alike being guilty -- God’s righteousness in the passing over of sins in former times; in this present time, in His being just and justifying the believer {believing in} in Jesus (Rom. 3).

2nd. Faith, counted for righteousness to the man who has no righteousness to boast of (Rom. 4).

3rd. Peace with God, access into the grace wherein we stand, and rejoicing in the hope of the glory of God; and not only so, but salvation for that glory, in the risen life of the Lord Jesus Christ; and further, “justification of life through Him” (Rom. 5).

4th. Deliverance from the dominion of sin -- having been crucified with Christ -- and not being under law, but under grace (Rom. 6).

5th. Deliverance from under law, that married to Christ risen from the dead, as Christians, we should bring forth fruit to God (Rom. 7).

6th. The presence of the Holy Ghost, the power by which these relationships are maintained, so that we are no longer debtors to the flesh to live after the flesh; but after the Spirit (Rom. 8).

But does not David say, “Thy law is my delight” (Psa. 119:77)? Reference to a Hebrew concordance will show that there are six words translated “law” in the Hebrew. In Deut. 33:2, where the “fiery law” is spoken of, the word *dāhth* is used. But another word, *tō hr-āh*, is used 25 times in Psa. 119 (*dāhth* not at all), and translated “doctrine” in the margin of Psa. 19:7.

The same word is used in Prov. 6:20, “Forsake not the law,” *i.e.*,

doctrine, “of thy mother”; and in Isa. 42:24, where if others were not obedient to His doctrine, He at least would magnify it, and make it honorable, though others might despise it. “Law” here embraces, no doubt, the whole teaching of Jehovah to His people, whether contained in the Ten Commandments or elsewhere. For the Christian, he is in Christ, and he is “to walk as he walked.” That is the standard.

But some say, that if the law is set aside, persons ‘will do what is forbidden in it, and what state of things will that lead to? Persons? Whom do you mean? For if you mean the ungodly, they are disobedient, with or without the law. They are not subject to the law of God; neither, indeed, can be. Moreover, I did not say that the law is put aside. As to the world, God in His government, restrains the passions of men, in a measure, by the laws of the country, governed by the Gentiles, to whom He has committed rule. But does any natural man accept and reach the standard of the law?

As regards the believer “subject to Christ” (1 Cor. 9:21) ⁵³ is he lawless? No, brethren; on the contrary, he has the spirit of Christ and the nature of Him who was the obedient One, and he is sanctified unto the obedience of Christ (1 Pet. 1:2), *i.e.* in the spirit of a son, to obey as Christ obeyed. He has a much higher standard than “thou *shalt*,” or “thou shalt not,” as is distinctly taught in 1 John 2:6, where it says, “He that saith he abideth in Him, ought himself also *so* to walk, *even as HE walked.*” that is the standard; But let me ask those who say they are still under the law, how is it that you break the law with such impunity?

The law tells you, for example, to remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. Suppose I allow that the Lord’s-day is the Sabbath. It is not, as I shall soon show: but say that it is. -- Then, in Ex. 20, you are told,

In it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates.

53. The translation of this passage, so often misquoted from the false rendering in our version, is as follows (1 Cor. ix. 20, 21):

To them that are under law, as under law, *not being myself under law*, that I might gain them that are under law. To them that are without law, as without law (being not without law to God, but *duly subject* to Christ), that I might gain them that are without law.

Thus in v. 20, he on the one hand disclaims being under law (although this is left out of the copy from which our version was translated, all good authorities agree in restoring it to the text. Gb. Sch. La. Tisch. Alf. W. K., J.N.D., vide Textual Criticism for English Students., Bagster), while on the other, he is as far from being lawless, but “duly subject to Christ.” Neither ἐπὶ νόμου nor ἀνόμος but distinctly ἐννομος Χριστῷ.

Now, supposing that the Lord's-day is the Sabbath, let me ask you -- "Do you do any work on that day? Do your servants work? Do you take cold instead of hot food, so as to let the servants rest? Do you use the cattle or the stranger within your gates? Do you light a fire? (Ex..35:3). If so, you break the law, and if under it you should be *stoned*. Where is your conscience as to this? There was a man that gathered sticks on the Sabbath day, and the command was given to stone him (Num. 15:32, &c.). People say they are under the law, but they do not keep it. As a matter of fact you do not, and you could not keep it though you were to try. But Christ redeemed those under it, from the curse of it (Gal. 3:13). And for Christians, "sin shall not have dominion over you; for ye are NOT under law, but under grace." Is that the same as being lawless? Certainly not -- they are to be subject to Christ in everything; and the law is not abrogated, but they are not under it.

I will now give you the following extract

If I speak of *moral law* (which Scripture does *not*), I make it, by the very expression, a fatal thing to be delivered from it. Yet Paul says, the Christian is delivered from the law. If I make of the law a moral law, including therein the precepts of the New Testament, and all morality in heart and life -- to say a Christian is delivered from it is nonsense, or utterly monstrous wickedness. Certainly it is not Christianity. Conformity to the divine will, and that, as obedience to commandments, is alike the joy and the duty of the renewed mind. I say obedience to commandments. Some are afraid of the word, as if it would weaken love and the idea of a new creation. Scripture is not. Obedience and keeping the commandments of one we love, is the proof of that love, and the delight of the new nature.

Law has its own proper effect. This leads me to the text constantly quoted: "Yea, we establish the law." And here I would pray you to weigh what I say. I declare, according to Scripture, that law must always have its effect as declared in the Word of God, always necessarily upon whoever is under it; but that that effect is always, according to Scripture, condemnation and death, and nothing else, upon a being who has in him a lust or a fault. That it knows no mercy, but that it pronounces a curse upon every one who does not continue in all things written in it; and that whosoever is of the works of the law is under a curse. Now, in fact, the Christian has sin in him as a human being, and, alas! fails; and if law applies to him, *he* is under the curse; for it brings a curse on everyone who sins. Do I enfeeble its authority? I maintain it, and establish it in the fullest way. I ask: Have you to say to the law? Then you are under a curse. No escaping, no exemption. Its authority and claim must be maintained, -- its righteous exactions made good. Have you failed? Yes, you have. You are under the curse. No, you say, but I am a Christian; the law is still binding upon me, but I am not under a curse. Has not the law pronounced a curse on one who fails? Yes. You are under it. You have

failed, and are not cursed after all! Its authority *is not* maintained; for you are under it; it has cursed you, and you are not cursed. If you had said, I *was* under it and failed, and Christ died and bore its curse; and now, as redeemed, I am on another footing, and not under law, but under grace, its authority *is* maintained. But if you are put *back again* under law, after Christ has died and risen again, and you are in Christ, and you fail and come under no curse, its authority is destroyed; for it pronounces a curse, and you are not cursed at all. The man who puts a Christian under law destroys the authority of the law, or puts a Christian under the curse, -- for in many things we all offend. He fancies he establishes law. He destroys its authority. He only establishes the full immutable authority of law, who declares that a Christian is not under it at all; and therefore cannot be cursed by its just and holy curse.

No Christian supposes he is at liberty to kill or steal. That is not the question. But does he refrain from killing or stealing, because it is forbidden in the law? Every true Christian, I am persuaded, will answer, No; though he recognizes the prohibition as quite right. The man who refrained from killing, simply because it was forbidden in the law, would be no Christian at all. I have only to add, that the apostles do not refer to the law as the great standard, nor do all the duties they enjoin form part or parcel of it; for they enjoin duties which flow from grace. And grace is not law. We must not, then, confound the law with duties to God and our neighbor, imperfectly given in the law, and perfectly given in Christianity, along with the duties which the knowledge of God's love in Christ added to the others, the duty to be an imitator of God as manifested in grace in Christ. Being under the law gave sin dominion over me. The grace of God -- is that law? -- hath appeared, and teaches me to live soberly and righteously and godly. But that *is* just the reason why I do not want law, because I am better taught by grace, which gives me power as well as rule. Under grace we are taught of God to love one another in the very nature and spirit we have. Hence, loving my neighbor as myself, I fulfil the law; not by having it, but by having love wrought in me by grace, and not being under law."

But I have a yet happier aspect of the subject to touch on before I close: the positive side of it. What is the rule of life? I answer, Christ. Christ is our life, rule, pattern, example, and everything. The Spirit our living quickener, and power to follow Him. The Word of God, that in which we find Him revealed, and His mind unfolded in detail. But, while all Scripture, rightly divided, is our light as the inspired word of God, at least to those who have an unction from the Holy One, Christ and the Spirit are set before us as Pattern, Life, and Guide, in contrast with law; and Christ is exclusively everything. And power accompanies this (see 2 Cor. 3), we are

declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us; written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of

stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart . . . But we all, with open face beholding the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord.

I ask, is not Christ here in contrast with law; and if this be not exactly what I am to be, an epistle of Christ; and if there be not power in looking at Christ to produce it, which cannot be in a law? So Gal.2:20; 5:16, where, in contrast with law, Paul shows the Spirit to be the power of godliness; that if led of it, we are not under law, and that a”against the fruits it produces there is no law. So Rom. 13,

But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh to fulfil it in the lusts thereof.

It is an object governing the heart, which is life, and at the same time the object of life: -- One to whom we are promised to be conformed, and one to whom we are earnestly desirous of being as conformed as possible now -- One who absorbs our attention, fixes it to the exclusion of all else. We are predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren. My delight in Him is the spring of action and motive which governs me [*“Law,”* J.N.D.].

The Sabbath And The Lord’s Day

The next subject I come to is the Sabbath, and a very important subject it is. “An Elder,” in this book tells us what the Plymouth Brethren say. Who are these “Plymouth Brethren”? I do not own the name. I am a brother of every believer in the Lord Jesus, and if I lived in Plymouth the Elder might call me a “Plymouth Brother”;⁵⁴ but I do not live there, hence I do not own the name. People say now that every Christian must have a *distinctive* name. This the Scriptures deny. What “distinctive name” had Paul, Philip, Lydia, &c.? “One is your Master, even Christ; and ALL ye are brethren” (Matt. 23:8). “Saints, Christians, believers, little children, brethren,” &c., are the *family* names of ALL. For my own part, I refuse to *marry* to any of the made-up parties, and so take *their* names. Such as are given me in the Scriptures are enough.

“Let names, and sects, and parties fall,
And only *Christ* be all in all.”

So said George Whitfield. Once sects and parties had no existence. In heaven they cannot be. Here they are, and will be, till lapsing into open apostasy (2

54. [No, not even then, for we are a heavenly people, passing through, although not of *it*; hence I may be sojourning for a season in Plymouth or elsewhere, but that would not make me a “Plymouth Brother”; it is not a place on earth that characterizes me, but heaven and Christ are what characterizes me. Ed.]

Thess. 2:3) they will be spued out of the mouth, as nauseous to the Lord (Rev. 3:16). Outside He stands knocking, with an offer to go in and sup with him that opens to HIM.

Well, the “Elder” says that these brethren hold “that every day is a Sabbath, and every day is to be held alike as a holy day.” He does not tell you what the teachings are, but simply *says* we hold every day alike holy. It is well to observe that the “Elder” did not quote one *accredited* author among the Brethren. The pith of his statements is, that we refuse to admit the distinctive place of the Lord’s day. I shall endeavor to show you the difference between the “Sabbath” and the “Lord’s day”; for ignorance respecting these two very distinct days, has led to much confusion in Britain and other places. The Sabbath is a divine institution, as mentioned in the second chapter of Genesis. You read that after the work of six days, God rested on the seventh day, and sanctified it. Carefully note that it was God’s rest, not man’s. God rested after He had finished His work. It was not that He rested from labor, as man needs to do, for none of us would say that; but “He rested on the seventh day” with a certain measure of complacency no doubt, in what He had done, “*from* all His work, which He had made” (Gen. 2:2). It is not said God rested *in* His work, -as He assuredly will, one day, in divine complacency, founded on the atoning value of the work of Christ in redemption (cp. Zeph. 3:17; Heb. 4; Rev. 21). But it is expressly stated. “He rested on the seventh day *from* all His work,” &c. That which was capable of being spoilt could neither be a sufficient satisfaction to God, nor a permanent blessing to man. It served as a sign of a rest that remains, and in which man, through redemption, will participate with Him (Heb. 4). And this was the meaning of the Sabbath in Ex. 16, founded on a redemption typically accomplished (Ex. 12-15); the shadow and earnest of better things to come, as we are told in Col. 2:17; though as Christians, we have now, for faith, the body or substance in Christ.

And into this scene of goodness and rest Adam was introduced; ⁵⁵ as it is written: “The Lord God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden, to dress it and to keep it” (Gen. 2:15). Sin had not yet entered to disturb the scene of rest; nor had the curse yet been passed upon the ground, that sentenced it to bring forth thorns and thistles, so that henceforth, in labor and toil -- in the sweat of his face -- man must eat bread. The same word that before bid it bring forth every tree pleasant to the sight, and good for food -- the tree of life also, and the tree of responsibility -- and put Adam to enjoy all this goodness, in dressing and keeping it, in a manner we can have no experi-

55. [But it is not said into God’s rest. Both the *work* and the *rest* were peculiar to God, and man had no direct part in either, into the *fruit* of the one He entered, in to the other believers will enter (Heb 4). Ed.].

mental conception of, because the whole scene has long since passed away (Gen. 2) -- bid it now (Gen. 3), because of Adam's sin, bring forth thorns and thistles, and fixed on Adam the sentence we are all familiar with, "in the sweat of thy face thou shalt eat bread." That *is* to say, labor and toil began with sin -- the keeping and dressing of the garden was neither labor nor toil, in the language of Scripture -- and that, so far as we read anything to the contrary, upon the first *Sabbath* that dawned upon the world (cp. Eccl. 2:22, &c.). That is why we find God, who in Genesis 2:2 had rested, here in Genesis 3:21 again at work to make coats of skin for Adam and his wife, who had found out their nakedness by their sin. Similarly the Lord said, in John 5:17, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." That is to say, the introduction of sin had broken in on God's rest. Nor could He rest again, until sin was put out. The types and shadows of the law could not do this, but the Son of God came and did it (1 John 3:8);

And now the shadows of the law
Are all fulfilled, and all withdraw.

But the Sabbath was God's rest, not man's. Passing over a lapse of 2500 years, we find the Sabbath again mentioned in Ex. 16; and that after redemption was typically accomplished. In the 20th chapter the commandment is given to keep it holy, with the word "remember" prefixed to the commandment to keep it holy, referring to their having before got it in ch. 16, where we also read that it was broken the *first* time it came round. He now recalls it to their remembrance, with a fresh injunction to keep it holy, to which was attached a curse in case of disobedience (Num. 15:35). But the people did not keep the covenant, and in Ezek. (20:12, &c.), we read that they were sent into Babylon, because, among other things, they did not keep the Sabbath. God gave the Sabbath to Israel *after* the Exodus; mark that. For in the book of Genesis no mention is made of the Sabbath having been given to man, even to Abraham. The first mention of it, as given to man, is in Ex. 16, where God gives it *as a sign between Him and an earthly people*. That Sabbath they broke. And do not forget, that God never yet entrusted any mercy to man, that man has not abused. Even at the present time man abuses the grace of God. The children of Israel broke the Sabbath, and were sent into Babylon.

Coming to Luke 6:10, we find the disciples going into the corn fields on the Sabbath day, and plucking the ears of corn. The Pharisees contended that the disciples broke the Sabbath. What said the Lord Jesus? He, in plain terms, told them they were simply hypocrites, for they only adhered to the outward sign without keeping the thing in its integrity. But, more than that, He showed them that One was present, who was superior to the Sabbath. He said the Son of Man was *Lord* also of the Sabbath. What does that mean? Why, the authority of the Son of Man, the Lord of the Sabbath, over the Sabbath itself;

and with Him, though now the rejected One, the introduction of a new principle -- grace -- which, acting above the limits of the Law, would give rest and blessing to those who believe on Him, in contrast with the curse that attached to Israel as under the law and having broken it And what do you find in John 19, 20? That the Son of man spent the Sabbath in the grave. It was a solemn teaching to the Jew, who could go on with shadows, to the refusal of Him, who was the substance! Do you wish to side with blind Pharisaism against our rejected Lord? Beware! But, practically, they do, who refuse the plain teaching from the two Scriptures (Luke 6, John 19) that I refer to: for the fact that the Lord was in the grave on the Sabbath day is, of all others, the clearest evidence that the old order of things had now come to a close, with His rejection and death; and "the first day of the week" (John 20:11) begins, with His resurrection, a new era, What is the fact? That which had been given by God to man, as a sign between Him and His people, HE *sets aside* for a while until they will be restored to their land (Isa. 66:23, and Ezek. 46:1). He is in the grave on the Sabbath day. The Lord Jesus showed that the sign had failed, and He gave it up with that nation for the present (cp. Rom. 11).

In the 17th of Matt. we find Moses introduced, as the type of the raised-up dead, and Elijah as the type of those who shall not taste death at all. The Lord Jesus is represented as "coming in His kingdom" (2 Pet. 1:16, &c.). But besides this we learn something else. Till that vision has its fulfilment, Moses passes off from the scene, and Elijah, too, withdraws, and a voice is now heard saying, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased, hear ye HIM." We are no longer subject to Moses the law-giver, nor to Elijah, the reformer, but to the *Lord Jesus* who is Lord also of the Sabbath. I suppose all will agree in this; but this is the question raised -- Did not the Lord Jesus change the Sabbath from the seventh day to the first? Let John 19 and 20 answer it. The *seventh* day was passed by the Lord Jesus in the grave, and on the *first* day of the week, he rose. Compare also Matt. 28:1 -- "In the end of the *Sabbath* as it began to dawn towards the *first* day of the week, came Mary Magdalene," &c. Now, if evening was the time to change the day but not a word is found to that effect. "The *seventh* day is the Sabbath." The first day of the week is another matter. As a matter of history, we know that the early disciples never confounded the two days.

The Sabbath and the First Day were distinct, and were always kept separate. The Seventh day was kept by the *Jews*; on the first, the Christians met to break bread, in remembrance of the Lord Jesus. The early fathers, Cyprian, Justin Martyr, and others, and the historian Josephus show, that until the third century, the Christians kept the two days as distinct as possible. The *Sabbath* was not observed by the Christians who adhered to the Word of God, neither did the Jews observe the Lord's day. I remember reading, when

at school, of a correspondence between Trajan and Pliny. In it, Christians as separate from *Jews* and from *Romans*, were reported as specially observing the Lord's day -- first day of the week -- in meeting to break bread. This shocked all outside the church at that time; but the godly Christians were unmoved. One of them said to his persecutor -- "Christianus sum; intermittere non possum." The Jews on the other hand, hated the Christians because they would *not* observe the Seventh day -- which, I repeat, is the Sabbath.

But let the question be asked -- Do you hold the Lord's day equal with the others? and we answer, Certainly not. The Lord's day is to Christians -- those who know it -- the most blessed of all the days of the week. It is asserted that we would do any work on the Lord's day; but the very contrary is the case. Let those who know us point to our practice. We pretend to no infallibility; by grace we stand. We do not labor -- except in the word -- on the Lord's day. And conduct of an opposite kind, if known, would assuredly meet with the censure it deserves. The accusation is false, and Christians should know better than to lend themselves to such slander.

I will now give you an extract from *Lectures on the Book of Revelation*, by William Kelly, pp. 30, 31:

"I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day." The 'Lord's day is not at all the same thing as "the day of the Lord." The same expression (*κυριακος*) was used with regard to *the Lord's* Supper, because it was not a common meal, but a holy and divinely-instituted memorial of the Lord. So the Lord's day is not a common day, but one specially set apart, not as a command, but as the expression of the highest privilege, for the worship of the Lord. The Sabbath was the last day which Jehovah claimed out of man's week; the Lord's day is the first day of God's week, and, in a sense, we may say, of His eternity.

The Christian *begins* with the Lord's day, that this may, as it were, give a character to all the days of the week. In spirit the Christian is risen, and every day belongs to the Lord. Therefore is he to bring up the standard of each day that follows in the week to that blessed beginning, the Lord's day. To bring down the Lord's day to the level of another day, only shows how gladly the heart drinks in anything that takes away somewhat from Christ. The man who only obeys Christ because he *must* do so has not got the spirit of obedience at all. We are sanctified, not only to the blood of sprinkling, but to the obedience of Jesus Christ -- to the obedience of sons under grace, not that of mere servants under law. The lawlessness that despises the Lord's day is hateful; but that is no reason why Christians should destroy its character by confounding the Lord's day, the new creation day, with the Sabbath of nature or of the law.

Read also the following from *Notes on Luke*, ch. 6, by J.N.D., and say whether we give, or not, due place to the Lord's day:

The Sabbath, in any real sense, man had entirely lost; indeed, he had never entered into God's thoughts of rest. It was *His* rest, and had not sin spoiled all, man should have enjoyed that which was the result, not of his own, but of God's labor. This is the proper character of that rest which belongs to man distinctively; but sin having come in, the necessity has arisen that God should work afresh, if man is ever to share the rest of God (see Heb. 4). Meanwhile, Christ has appeared and finished the work which God gave Him to do. Hence, we who believe, find rest in Christ, as does God Himself. In Him, by virtue of the accomplished and accepted work of redemption, we have our Sabbath spiritually.

This is the reason why Christians keep the first day of the week, and not the seventh or the Sabbath day. The *rest* was acquired by the power of Christ's redemption, and the first day, when He arose from the dead, was that which proclaimed it to faith, spite of man's guilt and ruin. The seventh day will be the rest of man on earth; the first day celebrates Christ's taking us in Him to heaven. Then was life from the dead, life more abundantly, liberty from the law and every consequence of sin -- in a word, the victory of grace. The Christian, therefore, has the *first* day distinctively, because it belongs to and witnesses of the perfected work of Christ, and consequently introduces heavenly rest. The first day is in contrast with the seventh, which appertained to the round of man's labor in nature, and of the Jews under the law, in which Adam and Israel utterly broke down. It is the *Lord's day* emphatically, and thus testifies of the triumph of Christ's word and the glory of His person—not the day which guilty unbelief would have perverted into the proof and means of His inferiority. It is positive direct blessing to Him who owns and honors it -- not because it is the close of legal toil, but the commencement of Christian hope -- the resurrection-day when we begin our spiritual life; and look on for what will crown so precious a pledge.

Sanctification

The next point is *sanctification*. The Elder tells us in this little book, that the brethren teach some "dangerous error" as to the question of sanctification. Unfortunately, he does not tell us what sanctification is; but states that "it is a great and dangerous error to say that the believer has his sanctification in Christ, precisely as he has justification." He confounds "sanctification in Christ" {positional sanctification} which is complete, with sanctification through the application of the word of God, by the Spirit, which is progressive; a very common but ruinous mistake.

Now, what is sanctification?

In 1 Cor.1:30, we read, "But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom and righteousness, and SANCTIFICATION, and redemption." With Christ we get everything -- wisdom, righteousness,

sanctification, and redemption -- *the casket with all the contained jewels.*

But born of the Holy Spirit, I have a new nature -- a divine nature (2 Pet. 2:4), and I read in Rom. 6:11,

reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, and alive unto God in ($\epsilon\iota\upsilon$) Christ Jesus.

That is, *death*, and not the improvement of the old nature, is the door of escape from the old state I was in -- viz., sin, into the new state I am in, viz., “alive unto God in Christ Jesus.” If tempted to sin, I resist by the power of the Holy Spirit within me. That *is* the power by which I mortify the deeds of the body. But, improve the old nature? Impossible!

So that the doctrine about *man's nature* becoming sanctified, will not stand the test of the word of God. It is false. But what is the teaching in the word of God? That as a believer in Christ, I am thereby, irrespective of time, there and then fit for Heaven. In Col. 1:12, you read --

Giving thanks unto the Father, who hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light

and again in Acts 26:18, where Paul was sent to the Gentiles,

To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them that *are sanctified* by faith that is in me.

To give you an example: The thief on the cross, the moment he believed on the Lord Jesus, was meet for Heaven -- “To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise.” Yet if he had lived, there would have been room for progress in holiness and conformity more and more to the spirit of Christ.

That is what the apostle says in Phil. {3:10}:

That I may know *Him*, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death.

He is aiming to be made more and more in his walk like unto Christ. Hence there is progress. I do not say “progressive meetness,” for all that would impeach the *meetness* of Col. 1. If in 1869 I become a believer in the Lord Jesus, there are many things that I may go on with; but, as I grow and learn, I give up this, that, and the other thing, which I see not to be such as the Lord approves of. You may find many believers *meet* for Heaven going to concerts, &c., thinking nothing wrong about it. But as they see more and more what it is to be “set apart” from such things, and to walk with One who sanctified -- separated Himself; in heavenly glory, from such things for their sakes, that they might be sanctified in truth (John 17:19) -- they give them up. As far as *standing* in Christ is concerned, the believer is perfect; as to his moral *state* and *condition*, he has to grow in grace (not *into* grace) and in the

knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (2 Pet. 3:18). As to the flesh, it is and always will be bad. But the believer seeks day by day to “grow up into Him in all things, who is the Head.” In this sense the Scriptures teach progressive sanctification.⁵⁶ For it, the apostle prayed for the Thessalonians (1 Thess. 5:23); and the same burden lies upon the heart of every godly Christian. I will now give you a short extract from a tract on *Sanctification*, by C. H. M.:

It is of the utmost importance to apprehend, with clearness, the distinction between a truth and the practical application and result of a truth. This distinction is ever maintained in the word of God. “Ye are sanctified.” Here is the absolute truth as to the believer, as viewed in Christ, and as the fruit of an eternally perfect work. “Christ loved the Church, and gave Himself for it, that He might sanctify it” (Eph. 5:25, 26). “And the verily God of peace sanctify you wholly” (1 Thess. 5:23). Here we have the practical application of the truth to the believer, and its results in the believer.

But how is this application made, and this result reached? By the Holy Ghost, through the written word. Hence we read, “Sanctify them through Thy truth” (John 17). And again, “God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth” (2 Thess. 2:13). So, also, in Peter: “Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit” (1 Pet. 1:2). The Holy Ghost carries on the believer’s practical sanctification on the ground of Christ’s accomplished work; and the mode in which He does so is by applying to the heart and conscience the truth as it is in Jesus. He unfolds the truth as to our perfect standing before God in Christ, and, by energizing the new man in us, He enables us to put away everything incompatible with that perfect standing. A man who is washed, sanctified, and justified ought not to indulge in any unhallowed temper, lust, or passion. He should “cleanse himself from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit.” It is his holy and happy privilege to breathe after the very loftiest heights of personal sanctity.

His heart and his habits should be brought and held under the power of that grand truth that he *is* perfectly “washed, sanctified, and justified.” This is true practical sanctification. It is not any attempt at the improvement of our old nature. It is not a vain effort to reconstruct an irretrievable ruin; No; it is simply the Holy Ghost, by the powerful application of “the truth,” enabling the new man to live, move, having

56. [Sanctification is both absolute and progressive. In the former I am set apart to God from the very first movement of the divine life in the soul, and that according to all the value of the person and work of [the Lord Jesus (Heb. 10:14, &c.); in this view there can be no improvement; but on the other hand there is abundant scope for daily practical sanctifying walk and ways. The point should be to bring up the walk to the position. Ed.]

his being in the sphere to which he belongs. Here, there will undoubtedly be progress. There will be growth in the moral power of this precious truth -- growth in spiritual ability to subdue and keep under all that pertains to nature -- a growing power of separation from the evil around us -- a growing capacity for the enjoyment of holy exercises. All this there will be, through the gracious ministry of the Holy Ghost, who uses the word of God to unfold to our souls the truth as to our standing in Christ, and as to the walk which comports with that standing. But let it be clearly understood that the work of the Holy Ghost, in practical sanctification day by day, is founded upon the fact that believers “*are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once*” (Heb.10:0). The object of the Holy Ghost is to lead us into the knowledge, the experience, and the practical exhibition of that which was true of us in Christ, the very moment we believed. As regards this, there is progress, but our standing in Christ is eternally complete.

“Sanctify them through Thy truth; Thy word is truth” (John 17:17). And again -- “The very God of peace sanctify you wholly” (1 Thess. 5:23). In these passages we have the grand practical side of this question. Here we see sanctification presented, not merely as something absolutely and eternally true of us in Christ, but also as wrought out in us, daily and hourly by the Holy Ghost, through the Word. Looked at from this point of view, sanctification is obviously a progressive thing.. I should be more advanced in personal holiness in the year 1861 than I was in the year 1860. I should, through grace, be advancing day by day in practical holiness. But what, let me ask, is this? What, but the working out in me, of that which was true of me in Christ, the very moment I believed? The basis on which the Holy Ghost carries on the *subjective* work in the believer is the *objective* truth of his eternal completeness in Christ.

Confession of Sins

This dear brother {the “Elder”} says we deny the truth about confession of sins. Some of the thousands of persons who have heard the preaching here during the last six months, could have told that dear man otherwise, if he had taken the trouble to inquire. And, brethren, let us have up other feeling than that of thorough shame, that God’s children should be found thus speaking of one another. It is my shame, it is your shame, it is his shame! We should be found loving one another, speaking well of one another. To accuse our brethren should be no act of rashness. The greatest soberness and careful examination of every statement should be exercised, specially so, when others are guided by our judgment, as I learn is the case with my brother, the Elder. Now, if “An Elder” had asked those who have heard me, they could have told him that there is scarcely one address during the last six months, which I have delivered, in which I have not brought out in some way the truth about

confession of sins.. Those of you who have heard me know that it is so. You see now how unsafe it is to decide upon mere *hearsay* evidence, or upon the judgment of prejudiced persons.

The sum and substance of what I have taught is this: In the 1st Epistle of John you read --

If *we* say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. But, if *we* confess our sins (to God) He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Who here confess sins? God's children -- we. And those of us who know what confession is, know what a relief it is. If I have anything lying on my conscience, I cannot have joy in my soul; and you that are believers, all know, that you cannot have rest, until you go and unburden yourselves to God. Like a child that has got a clean apron soiled with ink; if it has any sense of cleanliness about it, it will be greatly troubled till it gets the soil removed. So with the child of God; he cannot keep the soil on his conscience. He confesses his sins, and gets forgiveness and cleansing; and thus his communion with God is restored.

But it must be kept clearly in view that the forgiveness of sins and the cleansing (1 John 1:9), with which the Father *ever* greets the confession of His *child*, are quite distinct from that forgiveness once granted, and for that reason never to be repeated, which is spoken of in Col. 2:13 --

You being dead in your sins, and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath He quickened together with Him, having forgiven you ALL trespasses.

Here we learn our present connection with Christ risen from the dead, in the new standing into which we are introduced, as quickened together with Him, from out of that state of alienation and enmity by wicked works, in which we were in the flesh. And this is of necessity connected with a plenary. pardon of ALL trespasses attaching to that state, out of which the Christian is delivered by the death and resurrection of Christ, because connected with Christ, who has left behind Him on the cross the sin and the judgment attaching thereto. Cp. also Eph. 1:7,

In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace.

The confounding of these two things is the real question at issue and that they are so confounded is evident from the burden of such a form of prayer as "Accept us in Christ, and forgive us our sins" -- thereby, so far as words go, giving up Christ and Christianity. "Acceptance in Christ and forgiveness of sins," as in Ephesians and Colossians, is the *present* portion and privilege of every true Christian: "forgiveness of sins and cleansing," as in 1 John 1:9, is the needed provision for every child of God during his sojourn here below. And it was in view of this necessity, that our Lord taught His disciples to

pray, "Forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us." And 1 John 1:9 assures us that "if we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

Another point in connection with this is -- is confession of sins a thing for the public congregation? I admit that a public transgression may demand a public confession. But we are dealing here with *individual* sins -- such, perhaps, as are known to God only; and I ask you -- Is the public assembly the place for such a confession? It is not. It is a question between my soul and God; and if I have sinned in thought, word, or deed, I am to confess *that sin* to God of which I am conscious, and His word assures me that He is faithful and just to forgive me. God wishes me to confide in Him, and when I sin, I confess my sins to Him, having the judgment of it according to the light against which I sinned in my soul: not as to One who hates me, but as to One who loves me -- not to One who is against me, but to One who is for me -- not to One who is a stranger, but to One who is my Father. The Scriptures then are very distinct as to the confession of sins being the duty of every believer, as a *personal question* between him and the Lord, before he can go on again in the sunshine of God's favor, desiring and striving to live to Him, and to please Him. Of course, if it is a question between man and man, we must "confess (our) faults one to another" (James 5:16).

But "An Elder" might say to me, "Ah, but I do not say you do not bold confession of sins. What I do say is, that 'it is a sad perversion of the truth to say that it is not necessary.'" Well, though he does not say that we do not hold it, I know that is what he means in his tract; and I say we *do* hold it. His insinuation thereof is false.

The following is an extract from the April number for 1869, of *A Voice to the Faithful* --

In the case of the saint, confession is at once the most gracious provision and most blessed exercise to meet his need down here . . . Who that knows anything of his own heart, and of the defiling influences around, does not also know the relief and rest in which a *true* spirit of confession maintains his soul. But the confession of a saint *must* be true. Self-judgment and confession must be something more than skin-deep, if we are to dwell in fellowship with Him in whom is no darkness at all, for He knows just where we are in our souls, and what He looks for is truth in our inward parts . . . There is a wide difference between confession in order to forgiveness and the evasion of punishment, which is really Popery; and confession in view to the restoration of communion with the Father, in whose love our hearts have learned to find their only rest. We have hitherto spoken only of confession towards God, but it has also its bearing towards men . . . Wherein it has touched our standing and relationship towards God, it will be first judged; but wherein it has also touched our relations to men, it will not be neglected; and this latter point

demands the deepest exercise and self-examination, and self-emptiness also, on our part, for the tendency of our heart is to evade, if possible, that which may lower us in the eyes of our fellows, whether men as men, or our fellow-Christians. How commonly do we hear one who has failed, and in a way has owned it too, saying, I have confessed to God, and there is no need to confess to man" . . . "Confess your faults one to another" is the pith and marrow of much that is detailed at length under the law. The necessity for restitution, and for the acknowledgment of wrong done, both natural conscience and law most plainly teach; and does the Gospel teach a lesson of less self-denial? Surely not, but rather a deeper one, as in it we learn how self is judged and mortified, and Christ alone to live and act in us . . . May the Lord teach us self-emptiness, and so enable us always to maintain a good conscience before God and before man. We ought to walk before men as before God, always able to look each one in the face with the confidence that we are keeping back nothing which is their due, that we are hiding nothing even in our hearts, which in confession we ought to make known.

The Lord's Prayer ⁵⁷

As to this I have no quarrel with any. I leave every one perfectly free to use it or not to use it. There is no Christian in his senses, but thinks that whatever the Lord did or said was absolutely perfect in its place. The question is, What is the place *He* gave it?

The argument against its use, drawn by some, from asking forgiveness is weak. But for all that, the demand of it is generally a proof that true forgiveness is not known (Col. 2:13); but this is a question of spiritual perception and judgment.

The truth is, that Brethren, though often assailed on the point, have never given any judgment, or prescribed any rule whatsoever about it. Individuals may have done so. Its habitual use has dropped out, as it has amongst many other Christians, just as we never find it in the prayers of the New Testament, after Pentecost, because the Holy Ghost led saints on each occasion according to the particular wants of the moment, -- all surely consistent with the summary so beautifully given in this prayer, but in the freedom given by the Spirit to express every want as it arose. ⁵⁸

There are three important features in the nature of this prayer which have

57. [The Lord's prayer -- His thoughts for us as in Spirit ascended -- are recorded in John 17. The *Disciples'* prayer, perfectly adapted to the circumstances preceding the accomplishment of Atonement and the Ascension of Jesus, is given us in Matt. 6. Ed.]

58. See *The Bible Treasury* 7:175.

been overlooked by many

1st. It was intended for believers, but for whom redemption was yet *prospective*, and for whom the way into the holiest was not yet opened by the blood of Jesus.

2nd. The Holy Spirit, the promise of the Father (see Luke 24:49; John 7:39; Acts 2:33) had not yet been given. Contrasted with this, we have *our* position unfolded in Eph. 2:18,

For through Him we both have access, *by one Spirit*, unto the Father.

(Cp. also Eph. 6:18; Jude 20, &c.).

3rd. This prayer was not, and could not *then* be, in Christ's name. The Lord's own statement is distinct on this point, "Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name" (John 16:24). Now that Christ has accomplished redemption, and gone up on high as the Savior, who has finished His work, our great High Priest, the essential character of true prayer is, that it is in *Christ's name*; the Lord's prayer, as decidedly was not.

That it contains moral principles of essential value to believers, now as well as then, every Christian will own; yet the habitual use of it argues that the spiritual intelligence of those who use it, is not beyond that of the disciples to whom it was given before the accomplishment of redemption; and hence they are doing unconscious disrespect to the will of God the Father, to the finished work of Christ, and to the present witness of the Holy Spirit (cp. Heb. 10). Sympathize as we may with those who continue to use the Lord's Prayer now as a formula, we and they also ought to understand His word and will, besides having upright intentions. And manifestly, the redemption of Christ and the gift of the Holy Ghost have wrought a total revolution as to the conscience, communion, worship, and walk of the saint. They have brought us out of bondage into liberty, and consequently put our prayers on a different footing from what would have been right and comely before our deliverance. This is a question of great importance for those who desire to know their full standing in Christ, since the Holy Ghost has been given. I need scarcely add, that we all believe that the Lord's prayer was divinely suited to the (then) *actual* state of the disciples; hence it could not fully express their subsequent relations, nor the outgoing of affection proper to them afterwards. [See *Thoughts on the Lord's Prayer*, W. Kelly.]

Faith and Repentance

These subjects being of great importance, I would take this opportunity of referring to them, as there are various errors afloat concerning them, and I cannot do better than give a few extracts from the published writings of well-known Brethren. I trust they may serve to clear the minds of any who have

been troubled on these points, either as to what they are in themselves, or as to what Brethren have taught on them.

True faith is the work of the Holy Ghost in the soul, revealing the object of faith in divine power; so that the heart receives it on divine testimony, as divine truth, and a divine fact. . . . It is really identical with the communication of a new life by the power of the Holy Ghost, through the word. Hence, we are said to be the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus; to be born of the Spirit, and to be begotten by the word of truth. Faith is the divinely-given perception of things not seen, wrought through the word of God by the Spirit . . . If the word reveals a divine person in grace, He becomes the object of *trust*; if a work, its efficacy becomes the ground of *confidence*. But the trust and the confidence is not the *faith*. Faith is then the real vivid perception of what cannot be known by sight: - God -- Christ -- anything revealed of God -- being the object. If there is merely a mental conclusion, as in the end of John 2, or assent to a proposition, it is worthless. If it is the revelation of the object of faith to the soul, by the Holy Ghost, it is real and living; and this only is true faith. Further, though all rightly preached together, we must not confound faith in the *person*, and faith in the *work* of Christ. The latter alone can give peace to the conscience (unless the direct revelation of God as by Nathan to David, or Christ to the woman that was a sinner); but the former is always held out as the first proper object of faith; while Scripture declares, that whosoever believes on Him, is under the benefit of His work. *Faith* in Him is quickening and saving. *Peace of conscience* according to God's declaration, belongs to those who do believe in virtue of His work. The difference connects itself with the question of repentance . . . All who know what grace is, believe that faith precedes repentance, and everything else that is good and right in man. Otherwise he would have what is good, before he believed the truth at all; he would have it without God. And as to repentance, substantially, the whole moral change, the essence and substance of his return to God would have been effected without any truth at all. For if he repents through the truth, he must believe the truth in order to repent. I judge repentance to be a much deeper thing than is thought. It is the judgment of the new man in divine light and grace, on all that he who repents, has been, or done in flesh . . . Hence, repentance will in one sense deepen all one's life, as the knowledge of God grows. [*Further Remarks upon Righteousness and Law*, pp. 39-45. J. N. D.]

There is that which is an invariable *accompaniment* of the new birth, which troubles many an earnest soul who is looking for peace. I speak of repentance . . . There is never a real effectual work of God in the soul apart from true repentance . . . In all scripture where the work of repentance is spoken of as a doctrine, or the fruits of it spoken of in a soul, it *invariably follows* faith. I do not say but that it has gone before *peace*. Peace with God may not be known for many a day, but the work

of repentance has always followed *faith*. and consequently *accompanied the new birth* in every instance. Many have thought that repentance is sorrow for sin, and that a certain amount of it is necessary before the reception of the Gospel. Others have got into the other extreme, and have thought that it is a change of mind about God. Now, these thoughts are both wrong . . . Repentance is the true judgment I form of myself, and all in myself, in view of what God has revealed and testified to me, whatever may have been the subject He has used . . . When a soul is born again, and has thereby a new nature which it had not before, it begins to discover the workings of the old. Sometimes the work is very deep and long, and often the most wretched experiences are gone through, ere the soul learns peace with God . . . All this terrible experience is but learning what your old nature is in God's sight; it is a true work of repentance in a soul [*The New Birth*, by F. G. P., in pp. 13-20].

I now proceed to the consideration of

The Church

What is the Church? for the "Elder" does not know what the Church is. In the first place, he talks about there being in it "the dead" and the "living." Such a thing as a dead member being in God's Church, is not contemplated in Scripture, for of the members of the Church, which is the body of Christ, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all, the Holy Spirit says,

You hath he *quickened* (or caused to *live*) who were dead in trespasses and sins (Eph. 2:1).

And in verse 5,

Even when we *were dead* in sins hath *quickened* us together with Christ.

The members of the body, are members of Christ, and livingly secured in Him. [There is another aspect in which the Church. is viewed in Scripture, viz., as God's responsible witness on earth, and as such, committed to the responsibility of man; and in that character it has failed -- become like a great house full of vessels of honor and dishonor, and, as an unfaithful witness, will be spued out of Christ's mouth as nauseous -- Rev. 3:16 -- similarly to His manner of dealing with Israel of old, as we learn from Hos. 11, and elsewhere.]

The Church of God, which is the Body of Christ, is composed of believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, Jew and Gentile, blessed with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies in Christ, children {sons} by adoption {son-placement}, being accepted in the Beloved, their sins forgiven, admitted into the knowledge of God's counsels, sealed by the Holy Spirit individually, and baptized by the Holy Spirit collectively, into one Body {1 Cor. 12:13}, of which Christ is the Head, they the members, united by the Holy Spirit to

Him, and by the same uniting bond to one another; it being emphatically stated that they are co-quickenened with the Christ, who were once dead in trespasses and sins; co-raised and co-seated in the heavenlies in Jesus Christ -- being saved by grace through faith -- and that they are God's workmanship (and His work can never fail, being independent of man's responsibility), created in Christ Jesus unto good works (Eph. 1, 2:1-10). Thus it is composed of *living* members of Christ, united to Him by the power of God, and the effectual presence of the Holy Spirit, sent down from heaven, while He is sitting at the right hand of God; and they are sitting in Him.

Of the different names in Scripture by which the Church is called, I will now give you a brief sketch, that you may the better understand the matter.

The Church is called "the Body of Christ." By this name it is called in 1 Cor. 12, and I beg you will search the Scriptures to which I shall refer you. In that chapter the Holy Ghost develops the Church as "the Body," and hence the word "members" is there used over and over again. The members of the body are spoken of as the eye, the ear, hands, feet, and so on. We read (1 Cor. 12:13):

For by one Spirit we are all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have all been made to drink into one Spirit. For THE BODY is not one member but many.

It is again referred to in Eph. 4:4 -- There is ONE BODY"; not many bodies. I lay stress upon this, because people speak about "different bodies of Christians," and persons talk of "my church," and "I belong to Mr. So-and-So's church," with no sense of the dishonor and shame, in God's sight, thereto attaching. Let me tell you that the Holy Ghost countenances no such thing as bodies, sects, &c. When He alludes to them, it is only to condemn them (1 Cor. 1:10, 13). There is one BODY absolutely, and ONE BODY only. There is one *Church*, and one *Church* only; and, as I said before, this Church gets the name of the BODY. Every believer in the Lord Jesus Christ east, west, north, south -- man, woman, or child, saved by grace and sealed by the Holy Spirit, is a member of this one BODY. Blessed union!

Again, in Matt. 16., the Lord Jesus brings out most blessed teaching respecting the Church. There you will find the first intimation of it by the Lord Himself. I shall not dwell upon it; but there are one or two thoughts I must suggest to you in reading that chapter. The Lord did not speak about building His Church until He was rejected by Israel. Hence it was, after people had said, Thou art John the Baptist, or Elias, or Jeremias, or one of the Prophets, that the Lord asked his disciples whom they said He was? Peter, taught of the Father owned -- "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God." Jesus then said, "Thou art Peter, and upon this Rock" -- the Son of God Himself -- "I will build *my* Church." The first thought, then, is that the Lord Himself is the builder -- "I will build"; the second, that He is going to

build something that had not existed before. “I *will* build.” Israel was not it—it had not been before. It was a *future* thing He was to build— “I *will* build my Church.”

There is one text in Scripture which men have made a good deal of, fancying that this Church existed during the Old Testament times. That Scripture is in Acts 7:38 -- “He who was in the Church in the wilderness.” It is not the simple hearts that are troubled by that; it is the clever people, and it is very curious that clever men who know Greek, do not observe that the word used is *ἐκκλησία*, which means an *assembly*, a *congregation*, or a *gathering*. [The word translated “Church” would better be “assembly.” The town clerk dismissed the assembly (*ἐκκλησίᾳ*). Here it is not the *Church*, yet it is the same word precisely (Acts 19:41). The expression “Church (assembly) of God” and the Church (*the* assembly), which is “His body” (Eph. 1:22, 23), defines THE assembly or church of which we speak. The “assembly in the wilderness” was of Israel; while the assembly of Acts 19:41 was an Ephesian mob. The Church of God is, moreover, called the “House of God,” “Bride of Christ,” “The Lamb’s wife,” &c., applying to it, and to nothing else. Lastly, in 1 Cor. 10:32 we read of “the Jews, the Gentiles, AND the Church of God.” Here it is evident that the assembly (church) of God was not the *Jewish* assembly in the wilderness (Acts 7), nor the Ephesian or Gentile mob (Acts 19:41); but is the “Body of Christ,” a perfectly new and distinct thing since the *cross* -- *gathered out of* Jews and Gentiles (Eph. 2): composed of both, distinct from each, and occupying a position before God of blessedness in Christ, which could not have been known till Christ had died, risen and ascended *to*, and the Holy Spirit had come down *from*, heaven, as the witness of Christ’s exaltation on the one hand, and the bond that unites believers to Him there, on the other.] It is very simple. therefore -- “He who was in the *congregation* in the wilderness” -- that is of Israel. But Scripture does not confound Israel with the Church.

In 1 Cor. 10:32, three classes of persons are mentioned:

Give none offence, neither to the *Jews*, nor to the *Gentiles*, nor to the CHURCH of GOD.

These are very distinct. The Jews were not the Church the Gentiles were not the Church; it was a distinct thing, composed, I say, of believers from both Jews and Gentiles. In Eph. 2:11, 12, Paul speaks of those who were “in time past Gentiles in the flesh,” “being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world.” And in v. 14, &c., “Christ is our peace, who hath made both one;” that is, Jew and Gentile, “and hath broken down the middle wall of partition” that parted them asunder, “having abolished in his flesh the enmity” between them, *i.e.* “the law of commandments in ordinances; for to make in himself of the twain {of the two}, one new man -- *i.e.* a new kind of

man, Himself the pattern, -- "*So making peace*" between them, who were before at enmity with one another. And not only that, but "that He might reconcile both unto God," with whom they were both at enmity, "in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby."

The Church, Then -- The Body of Christ -- Did Not Exist Before Pentecost

In Matt. 16 it is said expressly to be built by Christ, on the foundation of Peter's confession, that He was "the Christ, the Son of the living God" -- and having been at this time rejected by the Jews, was in *contrast* with His being presented to them as their Messiah, on the ground of their own promises in the Old Testament, as the seed of David according to the flesh. Now, it was not till His resurrection, that He was declared to be the Son of God with power (Rom. 1:4), and accordingly, after this announcement of His intention to build His church, He goes on to speak of the necessity of death and resurrection -- a thing that Peter did not understand the need of at the time (Matt. 16:22).

But, while the Lord Himself speaks as the builder -- and what He builds, the gates of Hades will not prevail against, -- there is also another thing in Scripture -- men are builders too -- and the assembly is formed on earth, under the responsibility and by the activity of man. Paul himself was a wise master builder as we read in 1 Cor. 3:9, --

For we are laborers together with God; ye are God's husbandry; ye are God's building. According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise master-builder, *I* have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now, if any man build upon this foundation, gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; every man's work shall be made manifest; for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire, and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide, which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burnt, he shall suffer loss; but, he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire. Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which *temple* ye are.

In this case men are the builders, and are responsible for their work. I shall not dwell upon this, but give you three thoughts.

(1) When such builders build correct materials, gold, silver, precious stones, these will stand the test of the scrutinizing eye of Him, who, in the judgment shall say to them, "Well done!"

(2) There are others that build wood, hay, stubble, which cannot stand the same test.

(3) There are others who defile or destroy God's temple, and God will destroy them.

Now, brethren, this is a solemn thing. Look round on Christendom to-day. I exclude no sect. I take in all -- Established Church, Wesleyans, Baptists, Presbyterians, Episcopalians, &c. -- I take them all, and the question asked of each is-- What are you building? You say *you* have got *a* church.

Then, of what is it composed? Have you got gold, silver, precious stones there, such as will stand the test at the judgment seat? Or, on the other hand, have you not got some who are not believers at all to build up your "cause," to carry it on, to keep up your numbers? Beloved, this is a solemn question. Now, such are wood, hay, stubble, which cannot stand the test; that is man building, but he is building with wrong materials.

Thus the Church of God is looked at as a building; Christ the builder in the one case, and His work can never fail; nothing can touch his "living stones"; on the other hand, men are the builders; some, building gold, silver, precious stones, and are thus co-workers with Him; others, wood, hay, stubble, to be burnt; others, again, defiling God's temple -- they will be destroyed.

Further, the Church of God in another aspect is called the "House of God" (1 Tim. 3:15).

That thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the Church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.

It is the house of God pure and holy, and nothing should defile it. This is His estimate of His own. Let me say, that the first Epistle to Timothy is written with a view of maintaining the Church in its primitive beauty and order; when we get to the second Epistle, it supposes it is in a state of ruin; the first love is left, and hence what is called the "House of God" in the first, gets another title altogether. Evil had got in, and it is now compared to "a great house," full of vessels of honor and dishonor. In 2 Tim. 2:20, the apostle says,

But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and earth; and some to honor, and some to dishonor.

Now, I have shown you what the Church, the body of Christ is, in God's sight -- a perfect thing, composed of living indefectible members -- true believers; these the Lord Jesus will come to take to be with Himself, when His voice shall be heard in the air shouting for His saints. I have also shown you that which looks like it, but is not it; and which shall be left behind, when the saints are taken away.

There is what the Lord Jesus builds, and also what they build, who build according to His mind -- living stones (1 Pet. 2:5). There is also what man, away from God's mind, builds, with which God cannot be satisfied. That which God builds, though often invisible now, was never designed to be *invisible*. It is our shame that it is so: for, in John 17, the Lord, referring to the principle of the oneness and separateness here spoken of, desires it, "that the world might believe," &c. The other, that which man builds, we can look upon. It is the professing mass; but its testimony is not for the truth. The saints are in it, but mixed up with unbelievers, so that as a witness for God, it is a ruin; to our common shame, for we are all guilty in this matter.

I know that missionary reports boast of the "numerous sects in the Christian world"; but such "glory in their shame," in OUR shame; for none of us is exempted. But, in view of such a state of things, does the Lord leave us without resource? No, no; He is too tender and gracious. What does He give in 2 Tim. 2:19, &c.?

Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are His. And, let every one that nameth the name of Christ, depart from iniquity.

Further,

In a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood, and of earth; and some to honor and some to dishonor. If a man, therefore, purge himself from these, (the vessels unto dishonor) he shall be a vessel unto honor, sanctified and meet for the Master's use, and prepared unto every good work.

God's principle in dealing with us now, is not the *reparation*, or reformation of the ruin; but distinctly -- "If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honor, sanctified and meet for the Master's use, and prepared unto every good work"; and that is what is referred to in Heb. 13:13, where the comparison is made to the camp of Israel, *i.e.* the great professing body of the people, where the worship of God was degraded.

Let us go forth, therefore, unto Him *without* the camp, bearing His reproach (v. 13).

[By referring to Ex. 33:7, you will notice

- (1) that idolatry had got into the midst of what had been before of God;
- (2) that God did not say to purge the camp in this case -- the faithful were to GO FORTH outside. *Separation* from evil, not *patching*, is always the Divine principle;
- (3) those left were *Israelites*; but they did not seek the Lord. It says distinctly "Every one which sought the Lord, went out unto the tabernacle of the congregation, which was without the camp." "He that hath an ear to hear, let him hear."]

In this day of ruin God calls upon us not to reform the Church, nor to repair the ruin; but He calls upon the faithful to purge themselves from the vessels of dishonor. And this is the ground which every faithful Christian must take in obedience to God's Word; owning one body, nothing else, and meeting on that large ground -- "one body," "one Spirit," &c. (Eph. 4:4, 6), where every believer in the Lord Jesus may be gathered, if subject to the truth. Of course the Holy Ghost warns us against doctrinal evil (2 John); such as hold it are not to be received. It is *a broad* ground on the one hand, admitting all believers in the Lord Jesus; on the other, it is *narrow*, shutting out *evil -- moral and doctrinal*. Was it a small thing for Elijah to stand apart from the evil of his day? He could not boast of *numbers*; but, he was a witness for the truth and the rights of God.

And what is the blessed promise of the Lord Himself? --

Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am *I* in the midst of them {Matt. 18:20}.

What did the early believers do in the time of Paul? They were gathered on the first day of the week to break bread {Acts 20:7}. And, when they were so gathered, they publicly manifested their unity in partaking of the one loaf. The Lord's Supper was the external sign of their unity; the presence of the Holy Spirit the power of it. This we get in 1 Cor. 10. They thus manifested the oneness of the body, while, at the same time, they carried out the injunction of the Lord -- "This do for a remembrance of Me." When the Apostle Paul addressed a letter to the Church at Ephesus, there could be no mistake that it would go to the assembly at *Ephesus*. It was not a time when there were sects and parties. There was one gathering of Christians at Ephesus, and *one only*. So if Paul had addressed a letter to the Church at Corinth, it would go to the assembly in Corinth only. But, if to-day, any one addressed a letter to the Church in London, it would go to the dead-letter office, for there is no gathering there that could rightly claim it, as being THE Assembly of God in London. There is no such thing now to be seen.

May lowliness and godliness of walk, as well as zeal for the truth and steadfastness in the faith, characterize the few gathered together in the faith of the "one body," the abiding relationship into which Christians are formed by the presence of the Spirit. They are not THE assembly, though in faithfulness to Christ, spite of their feebleness, and much and often-confessed failure, they seek to own practically the truth concerning it. The saints now are scattered about in various sects, and under various names, to our common shame. There were times when there were no sects or parties, but when all were of one heart and soul, and love to Christ inspired the whole. At the present all are split up into more than a thousand sects and parties, and we cannot put our hands upon what is the Church of God. It is all scattered, and we don't know where it is. "But the Lord knoweth them that are His.

Ministry

The next thing we come to is MINISTRY. “An Elder,” in his book says, that the “brethren” deny ministry. His own words are these -- That we hold

that a standing ministry in the Church, is not an ordinance of God.

If by that, he means, that they refuse God’s ministry, it is untrue, as I shall show presently. But, in this book, he not only makes that charge, which is false, but he does not tell you what ministry is. The Elder mixes up the ministry and the priesthood, and a greater blunder he could never have made. Ministry and priesthood are very different things. Every believer is a priest to God; as we read in 1 Pet. 2:5,

Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy *priesthood*, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.

Now, PRIESTHOOD IS THAT WHICH CARRIES UP WORSHIP TO GOD FROM MAN MINISTRY IS THAT WHICH BRINGS DOWN GRACE FROM GOD TO MAN. In this sense every believer -- all Christians -- are priests to God; can go and worship God, offer up spiritual sacrifices, and can intercede with God for others. They are a holy priesthood. We are agreed, in that we do not own those whom men call priests, as such. Every *believer* is a *priest*; but every *believer* is not a *minister*, in the sense in which ministry is spoken of in Eph. 4:12.

What, then, about ministry, to come to the matter more closely? The Apostle Paul gives the answer in 2 Cor. 5:18 --

God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the MINISTRY of RECONCILIATION; to wit, that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the WORD of RECONCILIATION.

So you see that the ministry spoken of here, is that which has the word of reconciliation committed to it. But it is MINISTRY from GOD. Note this:

Now, then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech by us: we pray in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God.

(Leave out the word “you” in reading the last verse.) The word translated *Ministry*, in the first part of the passage, is the same word as is elsewhere translated *service* and *waiting*; and the word *minister* is from a Greek word which means a *servant*, a *doer*, a *waiter*, an *officer*. So that you must not confine it to one particular character of service. In Eph. 4 we not only get a list of ministers, but we get their source. The Lord Jesus Christ, Himself, is the giver as Head of the Church, His body; who having received gifts, provides for the establishment, growth, and development of His Church, through means of apostles and prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers. Let

us look at it. The 11th verse says, “And He” -- that is, the ascended One -- “gave some apostles; and some prophets; and some evangelists; and some pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come, in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: that we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine,” &c. From this Scripture I want to show you one or two things:

(1) The immediate *source* of the ministry is the LORD JESUS CHRIST Himself. He ascended, and He gave gifts unto men. If this be so, then men cannot be choosers; the Lord Jesus in this case is the Giver. It is said, on the one hand, that the Queen, or her advisers, can choose ministers for the Church. This the word of God absolutely denies. It is said, on the other hand, that the people can choose their own minister. This has no foundation in Scripture. The Eph. 4 tells me that the Lord Jesus gave gifts, and He only; and in 1 Cor. 12:18 we read,

But now hath God (not man) set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him.

It is important to note that we nowhere get a complete list of these gifts -- God would have us search His word to discover His mind. Hence, if you will refer to Rom. 12 and 1 Cor. 12., you will find gifts mentioned which are not found in Eph. 4, but which have their function in the one body, as much as the five specified in this latter chapter. Rom. 12. and 1 Pet. 4:10, 11, show God in His grace, the *spring* of all gifts: Eph. 4 presents to us Christ as the *giver*: while 1 Cor. 12 gives us to understand that the Holy Spirit *distributes* them to every member of the body, to profit withal, v. 7; and, “all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as He will,” v. 11. This distinction is, moreover, recognized in the same chapter (1 Cor. 12:4, 5, 6).

To this I may add, that if 1 Cor. 12 thus shows the Holy Spirit communicating these gifts, 1 Cor. 13 tells us the atmosphere (love) in which they must dwell, to be of use for edification in 1 Cor. 14, which displays the assembly as the sphere of their exercise.⁵⁹

With the apostles and prophets we have to do in their writings; *in the nature of things*, as being the *foundation*, they could not exist now. They have no successors in men. There is no such thing in Scripture as “Apostolical succession,” except it be “the grievous wolves” whom Paul alludes to, as

59. [I would add that in ch.12 the principles, source, and power of gift are fully unfolded, while ch. 14 shows the gifts in exercise, and regulates them according to divine order and comeliness, while ch. 13 coming in between minds up in *love* gift and its exercise in ministry. Ed.]

successors to himself (Acts 20:29); or those who said they were apostles, and were not, and were found liars, in Rev. 2:2.

Before the Canon of Scripture was completed, there were prophets; and when the assembly of God was gathered together, the prophets could speak two or three, by course (1 Cor.14). And why were the prophets given? Because the Canon of Scripture was not completed. Now that it is completed, we have not such gifts. The apostles and prophets are at the bottom of the building. The foundation stones of your buildings are not put in the middle; they are put at the bottom. The apostles and prophets are the foundation -- the Church began with them -- Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone. I mention these things because there are some calling themselves Christians, who tell us they have the power to appoint apostles. They must be *false* apostles, for you do not get the apostles at the top of the building; they are at the bottom. Evangelists, pastors, and teachers we have still in this day {and prophets in the forth-telling sense}. Is the Church always to have them? Most positively, while it is on earth. Ephesians tells me we are to have them till -- mark that word, *till* -- "we all come unto a perfect man"; that is, while there is the need of them in the Church, there will be evangelists, pastors, and teachers. In Eph. 4 and in 1 Cor. 12, not a word is said about *bishops*, *elders*, or *deacons*, but the evangelists, pastors, and teachers go on *till*, &c. The next question is -- Were these men ordained to their offices? Here you must draw the line between a *gift* and an *office*. Evangelists, pastors, and teachers are all GIFTS of the Lord Jesus -- the evangelist's labors being in the world, and the others confined expressly to the Church. An office does not necessarily suppose gift; and while evangelists, pastors, and teachers are spoken of as *gifts*, bishops, or elders and deacons, are local *officers* in the Church.

The question is raised whether the evangelists, pastors, and teachers were ordained by the Church. Let Acts answer it. I read that there was a persecution after the stoning of Stephen (Acts 8 and 9), and what do you find? "They that were scattered abroad, went everywhere preaching the word." In the Acts 11, we find God honoring their preaching, for by it "a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord." But not a word about human ordination in it all. In other words, these men were gifted by the Lord Jesus; they were responsible to Him, and to Him only. Out they went upon their ministry, asking questions of no one. The Church owned them, but could not appoint them, for they were already appointed to the work by the Lord. In the case of Matthias, who was numbered among the apostles, people say the apostles appointed him. Nothing of the kind. Those present cast lots according to Jewish custom, and the lot fell upon him; so he was *numbered* amongst them. There was no ordination; no laying on of hands. [It may be well to remark here, that in Acts 1:22, the words "ordained to be" have been gratuitously interpolated -- there is nothing corresponding to them in the original, which

reads simply, “must one be a witness with us of his resurrection.”]

Then, as to Paul. Was Paul ordained? We read that the brethren laid their hands upon Barnabas and Saul (Acts 13:2-5). But was it for the purpose of ordaining or appointing them? Just think of such a thing the lesser appointing the greater. What is the fact? Barnabas and Saul had been already used by God in a very marvelous way, long before anything was heard of the brethren laying their hands on them. They had gone into Asia and other places preaching and teaching, and the Lord had used them abundantly. In Acts it is stated that there was a special work to be done; and hence the Holy Ghost says when the disciples were gathered together, “Separate me *Barnabas* and *Saul* for the work whereunto I have called them.”⁶⁰ It was a *special* work which they were at this time called to do. And the brethren then gathered together, having fellowship with the work of Barnabas and Saul, fasted and prayed, and then laid their hands upon them *as a sign of fellowship* simply. Just as in 2 Tim. 1:6, Paul writes telling Timothy, “Stir up the gift of God that is in thee, by (δὲτα the particle signifying the instrumental means), the putting on of *my* hands,” and in 1 Tim. 4:14, “neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, *with* (μετα the particle signifying association), the laying on of the hands of the Presbytery.” The Presbytery had *fellowship* with Paul, and laid their hands upon Timothy, although the gift was an apostolic impartation. Not that the Presbytery conferred a gift or ordained him to anything, but simply showed fellowship with Paul as he imparted it. And so in Acts 13, the brethren expressed, by the imposition of hands, their association or fellowship with what the Holy Ghost was doing through Barnabas and Paul. (For Paul’s separation and appointment to the ministry, see Acts 9, 22; 2 Cor. 4; Gal. 1, &c.). As I have said, the evangelists, pastors, and teachers are the gifts of the Lord Jesus {of Christ}, specially given by Him. They are sent forth by Him who says, “Occupy till I come”; and the gifts are responsible to Him, and to *Him only*.

But what about bishops, elders, and deacons? In the Acts 6 the word *deacon* is not used at all. However, I suppose the persons chosen there answered to deacons. But for what were they chosen? The apostles wanted to give themselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word, and not to serve tables, and they therefore said,

Look you out seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom *we* may appoint over this business.

The business was taking care of the money contributed for the poor saints. The apostles and teachers did not want to have anything to do with the money matters, saying,

60. [It was because of this special work that Barnabas is called an “apostle.” Ed]

It is not reason that we should leave the word of God and serve tables, but we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the Word.

The men chosen were not necessarily men with gifts; they were men selected to hold the office of deacons -- to take care of the-money and distribute it to the poor. [Stephen and Philip were beyond these men with *gifts*. The former was stoned for exercising his, and Philip went away preaching the gospel. In other words, as an evangelist, the Lord gifted Philip with it -- the apostle had nothing to do but to own it. But the Church *chose* the deacons, Philip among them; the apostles *appointed* them.] Hence the qualification mentioned in 1 Timothy for them, that they must be grave, not given to much wine, nor greedy of gain; but pure in walk, having sober wives, not slanderers, but faithful in everything, and ruling their children and their own houses well, &c. These were the men who, being “of honest report and full of the Spirit and wisdom” (Acts. 6:3), the apostles appointed over the business of distributing, among the poor saints, the contributions that were made on their behalf.

They were selected by the church, because by the grace of the Holy Spirit, those who gave their money were permitted to choose the men who were to distribute it -- but always, be it noted, subject to the apostles’ appointment : as it is written, “whom *we* may appoint over this business” (Acts 6:3).

And what about elders? The word *elder* is from a Greek word that means an ‘elderly person, an *elder* -- *πρεσβυτερος*. But the very same persons are called in Acts 20:17, 28, “overseers,” or bishops.” “Take heed, therefore, unto yourselves, and to all the flock, in which” [The true rendering of the original here is “*in* which,” not “*over* which.” Translated by *King James’ divines*, we can easily understand how the word “over” was introduced. 1 Pet. 5:2 is a co-relative passage worthy of note, “Feed the flock of God which is *among* you.” Here the translation is correct, the original word (*ἐν*) is the same in both passages] the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers -- (*ἐπισκοπους*). But who were these that are called overseers? The very persons who, in an earlier verse, are called elders -- “And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called the *elders* of the Church.” Moreover, “overseer” is translated “bishop” in 1 Tim. and in Phil. 1:1. So that bishop, overseer, and elder are words applied to the same person. Now, the translators of our, generally speaking, very excellent version of the Bible {KJV}, in the time of James I are chargeable with intentional departure from a plain translation in some cases, swayed no doubt by their own *ecclesiastical* ideas of things. Mind, I am not finding fault with the translation -- I am not capable of that; but I cannot help seeing that in Acts 20:28, it should have been “in which the Holy Ghost hath made you *bishops*.” But that would not have accorded with

their idea of only *one* bishop. Now, the Church at Ephesus had many *bishops*, or *overseers*, or elders. But who chose those elders? Did the Church? Nothing of the kind. The Church never chose them. How, then, were they chosen? Paul and Barnabas visited every Church in the circuit here mentioned in Acts 13 and 14, and “chose for them elders” (Acts 14:23). The elders were never chosen by the Church ; they were chosen by the apostles; they were either chosen directly by the apostles themselves according to the true meaning of this Scripture, “they chose *for them* elders in every Church” (Acts 14:23) not, the Churches chose for themselves, and the apostles ratified their choice, but distinctly, “the apostles chose for them,” or they were chosen by the apostles’ delegates. Here Paul and Barnabas chose them directly, so that there was no Church here whose elders were not appointed directly by apostolic authority. It is not said they laid their hands on them, either here or elsewhere though possibly they did, judging by analogy. For this cause was Titus left in Crete, to set in order the things that were wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as Paul had appointed him (Titus 1:5). But there is not a word here about another’s continuing the task; nor even that Titus was to continue it after the apostle’s death. Nor was he to appoint where he pleased, but definitely at Crete, where he had this special duty to perform; and, when required, to be diligent to return to the apostle at Nicopolis (Titus 3:12), and not stay at Crete. Timothy no doubt had a similar authority to exercise, probably in a more general way, inasmuch as he is so fully instructed as to the necessary qualifications of those who were to hold these distinctly “local charges.” It is strange that people never notice these things, and yet here they are in the word of God. And this is why I say that *we* cannot appoint elders: because we have no authority to do it. The Church has no authority to do it. The appointment was apostolical; and, as I said before, we have no apostles now.

But the apostle says --

Know them which labor among you, and are over you, in the Lord, and admonish you.

Know them and *respect* them, and bow to them, when they act *IN the Lord*. The next verse, at the same time, giving the common responsibility of *all* the saints, “Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feeble-minded, support the weak, be patient toward all men. See that none render evil for evil unto any man; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men” (1 Thess. 5:14, 15). If you ask me -- Do you own them in the Church? -- I say that if in any gathering, however small, I find any person, a sober, faithful man, who goes out leading and helping the saints of God, I respect that man’s judgment, I bow to it as to one in authority; but mark, I cannot *appoint* him. If I see anyone that acts like an elder described in Timothy, I own him; But I cannot appoint him. And on this point also Heb. 13 gives clear light. There they are told to “remember them

which have the rule over you (or “guide you,” in the margin), who have spoken unto you the word of God.” This is authority indeed. It is one thing to assume “rule,” another to “speak the word of God,” which is what characterizes a sure “guide.” By him, the present mind of God for his saints is communicated. These were doubtless now departed; hence the word “remember.” But, in the Lord’s faithfulness, others filled their place; hence, in v. 17, the word “obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves ;“ and in v. 24, “Salute them, &c.”

The word translated “have the rule,” and in the margin “guide,” is the same as is used in Acts 15:22, of Judas and Silas, “*chief men* among the brethren.” This is noteworthy.

1 Cor. 16:15, 16, also shows us how Christians, without losing their proper responsibility, are still to be subject to those who are specially engaged in the work of the ministry.

I beseech you, brethren (ye know the house of Stephanas, that it is the first fruits of Achaia, and that they have addicted themselves unto the ministry of the saints), that ye submit yourselves unto such (mark the word), and to every one that helpeth with us, and laboreth.

There are two clear reasons for not appointing elders and deacons now:

1st. Not being either an apostle, or an apostle’s delegate. as Timothy or Titus, no one has the requisite authority;

2d. “All the flock,” in which they were appointed, in any given place, is now, alas! outwardly broken up into sects and heresies; and hence the appointment could not take place, even were there the requisite power, till all the present sad divisions had ceased, and the saints had come together again, owning their common union by the Holy Spirit, as members of One Body. This is a simple reply to the constant query, “But why did the Lord at the first order such appointments, if they were not to continue?” It shows His wisdom and love. He foresaw the *divisions*, and wisely forbore perpetuating an appointment which would practically be null and void through the willfulness of men more intent on the success of a cause, than careful for His glory. Be it remembered, Scripture recognizes but One Church, the Body of Christ (churches, of course, locally), and speaks but of sects and heresies to condemn them (1 Cor. 3, 11, &c.). Now, on the contrary, there are numerous rival systems, calling themselves “Churches,” and each of these will proceed to elect its own deacons and elders. I asked a deacon of a company of Baptists how far his deaconry extended? “Not beyond those who meet with us in --,” was his reply; and this was in a town of over 150,000 souls, among whom one rejoices to know there are thousands of God’s saints. “Can this be of God?” I said to him. He saw his error, and gave up the office to which, without the warrant of Scripture, he had been appointed. In the

anarchy that prevails, through man's sin, in the house of God, which normally is "the Church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth," but has become "a great house, full of vessels of honor and dishonor," the perpetuation of appointments to the office, would be an empty form. God foresaw the anarchy which has crept into the Church, and hence, in matchless wisdom, forbore to continue an office, which only helps, as now imitated, to *perpetuate division* amongst those He called in oneness, to walk in subjection to His word. To *rightly* recognize elders or deacons in any one sect, would be, either on the one hand, to unchristianize all outside that sect, according to the principle contained in those words, "Take heed, therefore, unto yourselves, and unto ALL THE FLOCK, *in which* the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers" (Acts 20:28); and again, "The elders I exhort Feed the flock of God, which is among you," &c. (1 Pet. 5:1-2); or it would be, on the other hand, to sanction and countenance those divisions so emphatically condemned by the Holy Ghost (1 Cor. 1, 3, 11, 13).

Such, then, is something of what I believe the Scriptures teach about ministry:

1. It is not priesthood.
2. The ascended LORD is the source of ministry.
3. Evangelists, pastors, and teachers will be afforded, as long as the Church is on the earth.
4. Neither the apostles nor the Church ever ordained any of these.
5. That bishops, or elders, and deacons were not necessarily *gifts*, but were officers in local assemblies. A teacher, evangelist, or pastor was such wherever he went. Elders, or bishops, and deacons were attached to *local* assemblies.
6. The appointment of elder and deacon was strictly apostolic, and hence there is no Scriptural authority to-day for their appointment; although if persons answering to them exist, *they* are to be *owned*.
7. The evangelist is responsible to the Lord for his services to the world; the pastor for caring for the saints; and the teacher for teaching them, and they for receiving his instructions and for walking in the truth thus taught; but over the assembly, as such, gathered for example, to break bread, the word of God owns no human president, God Himself being present by His Spirit. I shall conclude this part of the subject by the following extracts:

We are charged with rejecting Christian ministry. To this the short reply is, that we reject nothing but un-Christian ministry. I do not believe that persons appointed by the Sovereign, or chosen by the people, are therefore ministers. This is the point in question. I disclaim the title of either to choose or appoint them, or of any but God. But I believe

Christian ministry to be as essential to this dispensation as the fact of Christ's coming. So far am I from setting it aside, I believe it to be essentially from God, and object to the perversion of it, or the mere will of king or people (though both are to be respected in their place) interfering with so holy a thing. I read that when Christ ascended up on high, "He gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers." This is the only source of ministry; not the appointment of a king nor the choice of a people. I see it, on the one side, asserted that authorities have a right to appoint, and, on the other, that the people have a right to choose. I do not believe either. Christ gives when and how He pleases: woe to them who do not own it! In a little tract called the "Protestant Dissenters' Manual" it is stated that a man has as much right to choose his own minister as his own lawyer or physician. This seems to shut out God altogether, just as much as what is objected to. If Christ has given a gift, the saint is bound to own its use, and Christ's word by it.

Where is the proof of an evangelist's gift? In the converted souls whom God blesses through his means. The Church may own and recognize him in it; they must do so if they are spiritual -- if the gift, and therefore, the appointment of God be there. They sin against Christ, who has sent him, if they do not. The consequence of these human appointments or choosings has been the fixing of a person who pleased the patron or people, fit or unfit, as the one only person in whom every gift must be concentrated, or the Church loses part of its inheritance and portion. And the whole service has been turned habitually into a preacher.

We do not object to ministry, but to the assumption of the whole of it by one individual, who may or may not be sent; and if he have one qualification, yet not all. A man may be eminently qualified for an evangelist, and he is made pastor, for which he is in no way fitted. He is qualified to teach, perhaps, but not to rule, and he is put to guide the flock. It is the substitution of a minister, good or bad, for the whole work of the ministry, of which we complain." [*On Christian Ministry: What is to be Received and What is to be Rejected*, by J. N. Darby.]

Again,

In the ministry of the Spirit there are two distinct departments that which is *within* the Church, and that *without*. It is, indeed, true that the same individual may be (but it is not necessary) qualified for both; but the ministry of the pastor would not be required in the world, nor that of the evangelist in the Church. The command is, "go and preach the Gospel to every creature"; here is the evangelist sent forth into the world: "not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together;" here is the Church, "come together in one place." The first and necessary qualification of the evangelist is, for himself to have been reconciled to God, and to have had put into him "the ministry of reconciliation" (2 Cor. 5) -- "We believe, and therefore do we speak." "Let him that heareth say, come." The office

itself would legitimately lead from place to place, it would require one to endure hardships, to be instant in season and out of season -- continually pressing God's message on unwilling hearers; "whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear." Its end is answered in the ministry of an individual, though it was the Lord's grace to send His disciples out by two and two, and the apostles' practice to follow, in this respect, His example. The evangelist sent into the world must necessarily need support, "for the laborer is worthy of his hire"; but this he is not to expect from the *world*, but from those who are worthy (Matt. 10:11). He is necessarily much cut off from a worldly occupation, in going from city to city and place to place; and, therefore, it would be matter of wisdom to determine how far he should be employed in the things of this life . . .

With respect to the ministry in the Church, it is not, as that of the evangelist, migratory, but stationary. It does not *necessarily* prevent a man from exercising a worldly calling because, in fact, it does not depend upon the energy of an individual, but brethren meet together to edify one another according to the power of the Spirit among them.

Among the evils which have arisen to the Church from the attempt to unite the two departments of the ministry in one man, may be noticed, first of all, the undervaluing of the pastoral office. Almost all systems that have been formed by men have been looked upon as more or less extensive spheres for preaching the gospel; and hence almost all stated ministry has become properly that of the evangelist. The Church is not fed; believers are not built upon their most holy faith, because the heart of a minister is more called forth in its sympathy to those who are dead in trespasses and sins than to those who are converted. If, indeed, there be a heart burning with love for souls, and God has given him wisdom to win them, let him take the large sphere that is set before him -- "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel" [*Bible Subjects "for the Household of Faith*, vol. 1, p. 114].

Seven Hints to Young Believers

Beloved in the Lord,

If you have been led by the Holy Ghost to own the Lord Jesus as your Savior -- to know that, for His sake, your sins have been forgiven -- allow me to exhort you on one or two particulars.

- (1) Let HIM, not the *instrument* used for your blessing, have all the praise; for He alone is worthy; and His servants would be "carnal" indeed (1 Cor. 3:1-9) if they allowed you to think of *them*, when the praise and adoration belong only to Him.
- (2) You have been led to see at least, that you know very little of God's word: so all of us should candidly admit (1 Cor. 8:2). Then search daily

to find in the Scriptures a deeper acquaintance with the PERSON to whom you are brought. You know what the word has done for your conscience; now learn about the Divine *Object* for your *heart*. In this day of confusion and lawlessness the saint of God needs, as ever, to be commended “to God and to the word of His grace” (Acts 20:32).

- (3) Loud talking and much disputing ill become followers of {the Lord} Jesus in this day. A quiet consistent walk, in whatever relationship of life we are found, will weigh much more heavily (1 Pet. 2:12).
- (4) Make it a habit, when you meet together, to avoid the gossip tendency of the day. The PERSON of the Christ, as shown to faith, by the Holy Ghost, in the word, should be *the only theme*. This will exclude slander on the one hand and *creature-worship* on the other.
- (5) Next to thus living consistently before your relations, persevere in prayer to God (Eph. 6:18) for them, and watch a favorable opportunity to speak to them. This needs wisdom (Isa. 1:4; Prov. 15:28).
- (6) Wait on the Lord to enlarge your hearts towards unconverted persons. To such as you know, watch your opportunity to commend a good Gospel tract or book. Respecting this, you should feel it your privilege to lay by, as the Lord prospers you, for the scattering of what you believe, according to God’s word, is the truth to help souls. So also, instead of wasting money on needless things, look after the poor -- especially those who are the Lord’s (1 Tim. 6:17-19).
- (7) I would lastly add, that you should most earnestly find out what is the mind of the Lord respecting you in these last days. To gather round *men* -- to aid in schism, would be simply to go counter to the truth in John 17, Eph. 4, 1 Cor. 12., &c. if you are willing to *do what* is right, the Lord will make plain your path (Phil. 3:8-21). But surely every saint of God should feel that the present condition of the Church -- *God’s church* on the earth; is anything but what it was when

All were of one heart and soul,
And love to Christ inspired the whole;

when no names, and sects, and parties, severed *practically*, as to outward testimony, the “One Body.”

When the Lord was here His disciples gathered round Him. Soon after His ascension the HOLY GHOST baptized the believers into One Body (1 Cor. 12:13), and all then, “with one accord,” owned no other name but His. And when He comes again it will be to gather all the *saints*, from Adam’s time to the moment He comes -- to whom? -- HIMSELF.

Where were names and parties at Pentecost? Where do you find them in the early times of the Church’s history in the Acts? What will become of

them in the glory? I speak to BELIEVERS only. (The *unconverted* cannot understand this.) Wilful MEN sectioned off the Church of God into sects and parties. The LORD JESUS, the HEAD, *never* did. And the HOLY GHOST positively *condemns* such an act (1 Cor. 1:1-13. "He that hath an ear to hear, let him hear."

One is your Master, even CHRIST, and ye all ARE BRETHREN (Matt. 23:8).

May He who is coming "quickly" (1 Thess. 4; Heb. 10:37) -- stir up the hearts of all His own to learn from THE Shepherd's voice. May Divine wisdom be afforded such as are *gathered to* His name (Matt. 18:20); and who endeavor, in much feebleness, and before many dear saints who do not *understood* us -- to keep the "unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace": who in obedience to the Lord (2 Tim. 2:20-22; Heb. 13:13 -- desire to keep *His word* and not deny *His* name -- May we gladly welcome whom *He* receives -- May we positively, for His honor, refuse whom *He* rejects.

May our true love, in Him, be manifested by us to all whom *He* loves and who love Him. May abundant grace, mercy, and peace be yours, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Yours truly in Him,

C. J. Davis