

Paul's Doctrine and other papers (They are given separately in this presentation).

Many of the Scripture quotations are literal translations from the Greek text. The reader will find that these can be checked very closely by comparing with the New Translation by J. N. D.

Foreword

The following pamphlets and booklets herein reprinted are from the pen of Mr. F. G. Patterson. (They are given separately in this presentation.) While information as to him personally seems to be limited, we can judge from his writings that he was a well instructed brother and quite active among brethren back in those promising years between 1865 and 1880 before the devastating cleavages among gathered saints had left them bowed and broken. His written ministry extends over a period of about twenty years, 1864-1884.

It is the concerted judgment of those responsible for the papers herein reproduced that this brother F. G. P. had a special line of ministry most valuable and needed for the present day. Practically all his books and pamphlets are out of print, but it is hoped that in due time, if the Lord permits, most, if not all of them may be again available.

F. G. P.'s insistence on the obligation of the church to maintain in practice the scriptural truth, "There is one body", is most timely at present. "Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit" is the exhortation in Ephesians four, and for the church of God to deliberately ignore her responsibility to hear and obey this clear call is the most flagrant kind of Laodicean indifference. We feel distinctly that if these articles, so ably written by F. G. P., were according to the mind of the Spirit in the seventies and eighties of the last century, they are equally true today. God's principles of truth and practice do not vary with changing conditions in the great house of Christendom. To be not only in the doctrine of, but in the practice of, the truth of Ephesians four is the great privilege of faith at the present time. If it leads to a narrow path and a rejected testimony, let us not draw back, for "He is faithful that promised; He cannot deny Himself." May God, by the Spirit, abundantly bless the following able ministry to His dear saints today.

Paul's Doctrine

A few slight changes and omissions were deemed advisable in this edition, in view of what has been taught elsewhere, both by the author and his contemporaries.

Chapter 1.

The Body of Christ

The fact has been current amongst thoughtful Christians, for some years, that of all the Apostles, the only one who speaks of the "Church of God" is the Apostle Paul. John, in his third Epistle, speaks of a local Assembly, or Church, as in the English Bible, (see 3 John 9,) and James (ch. 5: 14) writes "Is any sick among you, let him send for the elders of the Assembly," etc. These two exceptions in the New Testament are found in the use of the word "Church," or more correctly, "Assembly," or "Assembly of God" as only being treated of by Paul. We may also except of course the Lord's own announcement of its then future existence during His own lifetime in the words "On this Rock I will build my Assembly." (Matt. 16: 18.)

When the great Apostle of the Gentiles was first called of the Lord, on his persecuting journey against the Church of God, from Jerusalem to Damascus; the roots of his future doctrines were expressed in the Lord's words — "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" The saints on earth were Christ Himself! "I am Jesus whom thou persecutes!" "But rise, (said He) and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of (1) those things which thou has seen, and (2) of those things in the which I will appear unto thee." Here we find an intimation from the very first, that, not only were the things he had seen — this Christ in glory, and all that pertained to Him, to be the subjects of his ministry; but that further revelations were to be made specially to this man by an ascended and glorified Lord, who would appear again and afresh to him to communicate them.

In larger features I mark four distinct revelations afterwards thus communicated to Paul, and marked as such in so many words: — these four revelations give us in a short epitome the whole character, occupation, truth of its existence here, and the exit from this scene, of the Church of God.

1. The mystical body of Christ — its Head — formed by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven at Pentecost.

2. The expression of the unity on earth of that body, in and by the Lord's supper.

3. The first resurrection of those who have slept during its formation and earthly sojourn.

4. The rapture of the living and the raised saints who compose it — to be "for ever with the Lord" at His coming again.

It will be seen at a glance that these are complete in themselves. But I will now show how He calls attention to the fact that each was revealed specially to him by the Lord.

1. As to the first; we read "By revelation He made known unto me the mystery * * * * which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto His holy apostles and prophets in the power of the Spirit; that the Gentiles should be joint-heirs, and a joint-body, and joint partakers of his promise in Christ Jesus by the Gospel: of which I became a minister," etc. (Eph. 3: 3, 5, 6, 7.)

2. As to the second: An ascended heavenly Lord — Head of the Church, His body, gives a fresh revelation of His supper to Paul, adding certain features and characteristics to it, which it possessed not, as given by an Incarnate Christ on earth to His then followers. He marks this by the words "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," etc. Thence follows the supper. (1 Cor. 11: 23.) In 1 Cor. 10: 16, 17, it receives the further character of being the symbol of the unity of the "One body" of Christ on earth, expressed in that "One loaf."

3. The first resurrection he marks by the words, "Behold, I show you a Mystery" and He unfolds the truths of a resurrection from among the dead of bodies of the saints who had once been members of Christ's body here on earth, and had passed on high to be with Him till the day of His glory. See 1 Cor. 15: 51 and the whole chapter.

4. The rapture of all — dead and living — to that scene, he marks by the words, "For this we say unto you by the Word of the Lord;" and thence follows in 1 Thess. 4, the catching up of the saints — the Church of God — to be for ever with the Lord.

Now although we know that from the first, Paul taught these things to the Church of God, as his early writings and ministrations abundantly prove, it is striking and remarkable that it was reserved till the close of his ministry, when in prison in Rome, we should have been taught in its

fullest character the truth of the unity of the Church of God, as unfolded in the Epistle to the Ephesians.

In the prison at Rome Paul wrote four Epistles — the close, with the exception of 2 Timothy, of all his written ministry, as far as we are told. They are, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon.

1. Colossians — written to people he had never seen, and to neglect which would be to fall into Laodicea, who is warned — unfolds the positive side of the gospel, which would set the soul in conscious union with Christ in glory — holding the Head — this Head of His body — and just leads the saints up to the edge of this body — "unto which ye are called, in one body;" but no farther.

2. Ephesians — would teach them the whole truth of the mystery of Christ and the Church — His body; when "all were seeking their own and not the things of Jesus Christ" when "many walked of whom I told you (said he) even weeping that they are enemies of the cross of Christ, whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, who mind earthly things." Philippians 3.

3. In Philippians — Individual devotedness, in those that were "perfect," — i.e., morally answering in spirit and walk and ways to the glory of Christ in heaven; or those who were true, yet otherwise minded, and to whom God would reveal more — Paul himself to be imitated in this.

4. These truths did not hinder, but rather were the basis of uprightness of heart and ways, even in a runaway slave towards his earthly master. Practical righteousness in daily life is thus inculcated in Philemon; and Onesimus — though gifted by Christ as His servant, and converted to Him for His glory — must go back to his mistress and master, and bow his neck to the yoke again, and trust the Lord of all hearts to enable him to serve as bondsman; or "being made free" to "use it rather" for Christ.

Thus we have: —

1. The Positive side of the gospel — Colossians.

2. The Unity of the body of Christ, when all was ruined — Ephesians.

3. Personal Devotedness — Philippians.

4. Practical Righteousness, through grace, in Philemon.

All sent forth through the Apostle by Jesus Christ in glory from the prison walls in Rome when total ruin had supervened.

This Epistle to the Ephesians is not addressed to the "Church of God." It is addressed to the "Saints and Faithful in Christ Jesus." Perhaps the same pen with which Paul wrote Philippians, indited this Epistle. "All were seeking their own." "Grievous wolves" were scented from afar, long before. Had they already begun to scatter the flock? Be that as it may, the address was not to the "Assembly of God at Ephesus," but to "Saints and faithful ones in Jesus Christ." From that moment to the end, therefore, does not this letter afford a divine ground for faith — be the days never so evil. It taught the "Church of God" — a purpose of the ages — brought out in time, to sojourn for a moment on the earth, but not of the world, and to have a place in eternal things when the world has passed away.

It was written then in view of a day of complete ruin.

It was provided for faith's comfort and direction for a day of ruin: and that "Until 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" Ch. 4: 13.

The body of Christ was outwardly scattered to the winds, and never could the unity of the body be maintained again: but the Spirit of God held it intact, and the ruin never would be such that the saints and faithful might not be with Him, who abides in and with the church for ever, in practical power and fellowship. Thus there never can come a moment when this cannot be observed; nor can "One body" be useless, as the divine positive ground of action, by those who feel that the days are perilous, and are using all diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit, in One body, till Christ comes again.

I will now examine what Scripture teaches of the formation of this One Body of Christ on earth. In this paper I do not touch upon the Body of Christ as a thing of counsel, as spoken of in Eph. 1: 23, composed of all who are His from the first formation of it until He comes again. I only treat of the practical side of the fact that

"There is one body and one spirit" (Eph. 4: 3.)

It will be well to seize the distinctive position which the Jew and the Gentile occupied before God in the Old Testament days, before the formation of the Body of a risen and ascended Christ. The quotation of two Scriptures will mark this distinction plainly.

As to Israel, I read, "Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, 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." (Rom. 9: 4-5.)

As to the Gentile, "Wherefore remember, that ye, being in times past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called uncircumcision by that which is called circumcision in the flesh made by hands; that at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world." (Eph. 2: 11, 12.)

The simple reading of these passages will show that all the blessings, and privileges, and promises, and hopes that God gave, were confined to the elect nation of Israel, and to partake of these blessings, a Gentile should come in and partake of them subordinately to the Jew, in whom they were vested as the vessel of blessing.

We read in 1 Cor. 12: 12, 13, "For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body; so also is Christ. 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." Now, before the formation of such a Body out of both Jew and Gentile could take place, it was necessary that God Himself, who had surrounded Israel with a "wall of partition," should remove the same. It was not sufficient that the wall of partition which God had placed around the Jew, had been almost obliterated by the unfaithfulness of those who had been thus hemmed in. The partition wall existed as fully in the mind of God, and to faith, as though there had never been an unfaithful Jew on earth. God had placed it there, and God must remove it Himself, ere He would form the body of which we read here.

The prophets had spoken of a day of which it was said, "Rejoice ye Gentiles with his people," etc. But even in such a state of blessing, "Gentiles" remained "Gentiles," and "His people" remained "His people." They never spoke of this "body," in which Jew and Gentile alike have lost their national position — where there is neither Jew nor Gentile, bond nor free. There are three things before God in the world. Paul enumerates them in 1 Cor. 10: 32. They are, "The Jew, the Gentile, and the Church of God." In the last mentioned, both Jew and Gentile have ceased to be such before God, believers amongst both having been incorporated into this Body of which we speak. The prophets spoke of the time when that which we know familiarly as the Millennium, or more correctly, the "Kingdom,"

will have been established on the earth; then the Jew will be the central nation, and the Gentile will rejoice with the people of Jehovah: a state of things which will come in after the Church has been gathered, and is with Christ in heaven.

The foreshadowing of the removal of this "wall of partition" was frequently seen in the ministry of the Lord Jesus Himself in the gospels. Instance the woman of Samaria, who could not understand how that the Lord, a Jew himself, should say, "Give me to drink," to her who was a woman of Samaria, as the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans. (See John 4, see also the case of the Syrophenician woman in Matthew 15.) Before this "wall of partition" was removed, it was "unlawful for a man, that is a Jew, to keep company, or come unto one of another nation." (Acts 10: 28.)

The Wall of Partition removed.

This hindrance to the formation of the Body of a risen and ascended Christ was formally removed by God Himself in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, where He wrought redemption for His people. We read "For he is our peace, who hath made both one and hath broken down the middle wall of partition; having abolished in his flesh the law of commandments contained in ordinances: for to make (create) in himself of twain, one new man, so making peace; and that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby." (Eph. 2: 14-16.)

The cross, then, besides being the scene where the Lord wrought redemption, was the removal of the difficulty, or wall of partition, which then existed between Jew and Gentile. It was the basis or groundwork for the formation of this Body, and to reconcile a people from both Jew and Gentile to God — giving access to both by one Spirit unto the Father (v. 18) the name by which God has revealed Himself to each member of the body, in His Son Jesus Christ; as heretofore He had revealed Himself under the name of Jehovah to the one elect nation — the Jew. (Ex. 6: 3.)

All this, however, does not constitute a body. It only removes the hindrance, and is the ground or basis of the whole work, as of redemption. The next thing, therefore, which is wanted is to have the Head of the body in heaven, raised up from the dead — a glorified Man.

Head of the Body, in Heaven.

The remarkable quotation of the Eighth Psalm by Paul in Eph. 1: 22, will be helpful to us in understanding this — read verses 19-23: "The working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places . . . and hath put all things under his feet (quotation from Ps. 8), and gave him to be the head over all things to the Church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all."

The Eighth Psalm speaks of a "Son of Man," to whom dominion over all creation is given. If we consult Gen. 1: 26, we find that God gave to Adam and his wife a joint headship over all creation; but this headship was sinned away and lost when man fell. The whole creation, now groaning and travailing, was made subject to vanity through the fall of man. (See Rom. 8: 19-23.)

This headship is given, as Ps. 7 tells us, to a "Son of Man." And we discover who this Son of Man is in Heb. 2: 6, etc., where the Apostle quoting the Psalm, tells us that we do not yet see the grand result of all things being subject to Him. He says, "For in that he put all under him, he left nothing that is not put under him. But now we see not yet all things put under him, but we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour: that he, by the grace of God, should taste death for every thing." Thus we find who this "Son of Man" is. It is Jesus. This brings us back to Eph. 1, where Paul quotes the Psalm. Christ, then, as Man glorified, has been taken up of God from the dead, and "seated in the heavenlies," "Head over all things, to the Church, which is his body," and is waiting there for the manifest assumption of this Headship, during which time the Body is here.

We have now the Head of the body in heaven, a glorified Man, as well as the wall of partition removed. But this does not yet constitute the Body; and before we look at it we must turn aside for a moment and see what Scripture says of union with Christ.

Union with Christ.

In the Old Testament times the saints were newborn, but they were not united to Christ; they possessed life, although the doctrine of it was not made known. The Abrahams and Davids, etc., all had new life imparted by the power of the Holy Ghost through God's word — they were saved by faith — lived and died in faith in God's promises of a Saviour to come. But faith in itself is not union. We could not speak of a patriarch being united to a man at God's right hand by the Holy Ghost sent down; because there

was no man to whom to be united — and "the Holy Ghost was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified." — (See John 7: 37-39.) Even when Christ was here, a Man amongst men, there was no union between sinful men and the Lord. Hence He says, "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." (John 12: 24.)

On the cross He enters in grace into the judgment under which man lay — bears the wrath, and all that the righteousness of God required; and in His death lays the ground that God may bring those whom He saves into a new state, through redemption, to Himself. He rises from the dead; having borne the wrath — ascends to heaven, and is glorified — a Man at God's right hand. The Holy Ghost was then sent down, and dwells in the Church. — Acts 2. He makes the body of the believer His temple. — (1 Cor. 4: 19.) He seals him — having believed — until the day of redemption. — (Eph. 1: 13, 4: 30.) He unites him to Christ — "He that is joined to the Lord is one Spirit" — (1 Cor. 6: 17), anoints him — seals him — baptizes him with all other saints into one body (1 Cor. 12: 13, 2 Cor. 1: 21). Hence union with Christ is by the Holy Ghost dwelling in the believer's body, and uniting him to Christ in heaven, since the accomplishment of redemption.

This union neither existed, nor was it even contemplated for the Old Testament saints in the counsels of God. If we turn to John 7: 37-39, we find the line drawn with great distinctness between what is now, and what was then. The Lord Jesus in the chapter cannot show Himself to the world: because His brethren, the Jews, did not believe in Him; and so He cannot bring in the Feast of Tabernacles, which is always used as a figure of the kingdom. The kingdom is then put off till another day, and instead of that, going up in secret He stood in the last day of the feast and cried, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink. 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)." The gift of the Holy Ghost to dwell in believers is thus brought in, and the kingdom which had been refused, is put off till another day.

The disciples were told by the Lord after He rose from the dead, to remain at Jerusalem for the promise of the Father, which they had heard of Him. (See Acts 1: 4-5.) This promise was made at length in John 14: 16, 17-26, ch. 15: 26. The Holy Ghost — the "other Comforter" was to be given, and to this end it was positively expedient that Jesus should go away (ch. 16: 7), otherwise He — the Holy Ghost — would not come. The Lord tells them in Acts 1: 5, "John truly baptized with water; and ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost, not many days hence." The Lord was seen of them for forty days after He rose from the dead (Acts 1: 3), and there was an

interval of ten days from His ascension, till the day of Pentecost (or fiftieth day) was fully come. When it came (Acts 2) the promise was fulfilled; and Peter tells the Jews (verses 32, 33), "this Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we are all witnesses. Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear."

One Body, formed by the baptism of the Holy Ghost.

We have found that the Lord's promise — "Ye shall be baptized by the Holy Ghost not many days hence," was brought to pass on the day of Pentecost. The little band of disciples, at first some 120 (see Acts 1: 15), then about 3,000 (Acts 2: 41), increased largely afterwards (Acts iv, 4), were baptized of the Holy Ghost, according to the Lord's promise; but still this was only the Jewish side of the blessing. In Acts 10 Peter opens the door to the Gentiles, bringing them into the same position and privileges, not merely as individuals, as one with those who had been thus baptized by the Holy Ghost. When they of Judea heard of this (Acts 11), Peter was called to account for what he had done, and he rehearsed the matter from the beginning to them.

Thus we have in the clearest way, the Jew and Gentile formed into one Body by the baptism of the Holy Ghost.

We have already seen that to Paul alone of all the Apostles was the revelation of this "mystery" committed (Eph. 3: 6, etc.) which had heretofore been "hid in God." (v. 9) — His eternal purpose. "That the Gentiles should be joint-heirs, and a joint body (with the Jews), and joint-partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel." — Thus should the passage be read.

He describes at length this Body in 1 Cor. 12: 12-27, where he says, "For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is (the) Christ. (This name, "the Christ," is here applied to the members and head, as to Adam and his wife, jointly, in Gen. 5: 2). For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free, and have been all made to drink into one Spirit, for the body is not one member, but many, etc., etc. Here both Jew and Gentile lose their places, as such, and are brought into one body, and united by the Holy Ghost to each other and to Christ, the Head, a Man glorified.

Now this body is in the world, as is the Holy Ghost, whose presence constitutes it. It is not in heaven. The Head is in heaven, and the members

have a heavenly position in union with Him; in fact, they are in the world. This body has been passing along through the world; its unity maintained as perfectly as the day in which the presence of the Holy Ghost first constituted it. Nothing has ever marred its unity. True, the outward manifestation of this body, by the oneness of those who compose it, is gone; true that the "house, of God," as it first appeared in the world, has drifted into what is likened to a "great house" (2 Tim. 2: 19-22), true that all that was thus committed to man's responsibility has, as ever, failed. But the body of Christ was in the world then — was here through the dark middle ages — is now in the world; remaining all through the ruin of the professing church; its unity perfectly maintained by the Holy Ghost, who, by His presence and baptism constitutes it; for He as ever maintains the unity of the body of Christ!

Let me put a figure before my reader, which will convey simply the fact that the entire number of saints in the world at any given time (just as you read these words, for instance), indwelt by the Holy Spirit, is that which is recognized of God as the Body of Christ. Let us suppose a regiment of soldiers, a thousand strong, goes to India, and serves there for many years. All those who compose that regiment die off, or are slain in battle, and their places filled up by others — the numerical strength of the regiment is kept up — after years of service, the time comes for it to return home — not a man who went out is in it now, and yet the same regiment returns without change of its number, or facings, or identity. Thus with the Body of Christ. Those who composed it in the days of Paul, are not here, yet the body has passed along, through the last eighteen centuries, the members of it dying off, and the ranks filled up by others, and now at the end of the journey the body is here — the Holy Ghost who constitutes its unity, being here, as perfect in its unity, as it ever was.

Now it is quite true that all the saints between those two great events are of the body of Christ — of it in the mind and counsel of God. But those who have died have lost their present actual connection with the body, having passed away from the sphere where, as to personal place, the Holy Ghost is. They have ceased to be in its unity. The bodies of the saints who have died, once the temples of the Holy Ghost, are now in the dust, and their spirits are with the Lord. Their bodies not being yet raised, they do not now enter into account of the body as now recognized of God. As those on the retired list of an army, they have passed into the reserve, or freedom from service, as it were, out of the scene now occupied by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven. We read, "If one member suffer, all the members suffer with it," etc. (1 Cor. 12: 26), the dead do not suffer. The passage treats of those who are alive here, in a place where they may do so.

Thus the body of Christ, as now recognized of God, embraces all believers here upon earth, at the moment I write, as at any given moment. 1 Cor. 12 treats of the church of God upon earth; healings, etc., are not set in heaven.

The difficulty with many is not reading Scripture as God's mind at any given moment — speaking of a thing before His eyes. The Apostles spoke of a thing before their eyes; they never looked for a long continuance of the Church; they looked for the Lord's coming. All was viewed as contemplating this, though prophetically ruin was predicted, and felt as it came in.

What an amazing truth! Although the oneness prayed for by the Lord Jesus in John 17 has almost vanished away; and man's unfaithfulness, yea the unfaithfulness of God's people, under the highest blessing ever vouchsafed to them in this world, has been shown in the almost entire obliteration of that oneness which the Son demanded of the Father. Although all that men could do to mar it has been done, still there is that which never changes, never fails, and never is spoiled; because (are we not ashamed to say it) it is not in our power to do so, for it is kept, as it is constituted, by the presence and baptism of God the Holy Ghost — the body of Christ, in the world!

How blessedly do we find Christ's prayer for their oneness answered in Acts 2, 4. We read there, they lifted up their voices with one accord. "The multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul." His prayer was answered for the little moment, "that they all may be one," as in practice they were. But soon, indeed, did this oneness of practice fail. Then we find, in chapter 9, Saul of Tarsus, afterwards Paul the Apostle, called out to reveal to us something that could never fail — the unity of the Spirit — the body of Christ.

The difference between oneness and unity is important; because we are exhorted "to endeavour to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." To endeavour to keep practically that which exists in fact, by the presence of the Spirit of God. Not to make a unity but to keep, by the bond of peace, that unity which exists by the Holy Ghost.

The Lord's Supper.

The Apostle Paul received, as we have also seen, a special revelation with respect to the Lord's Supper. He was the vessel chosen of God to reveal to us the mystery of Christ and the Church. He alone of all the sacred writers speaks of the Body of Christ. We read in 1 Cor. 10: 16, 17, "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, one body; for we are all partakers of that one bread" (or rather "loaf"). Here we learn that the Lord's supper is the symbol or expression of the communion of the body of Christ. (Of course we speak of it now as the Lord's table in the truth of the divine revelation, concerning it.) There is immense importance in this truth. Because we learn that although the professing church has distorted the Lord's Supper into a means of grace, and a life-giving sacrament, and a fresh sacrifice, in fact almost everything but what it is, still, if the Lord's table is spread according to God's mind, and as such, it expresses the communion of the one body of Christ, which is here in the world.

If only two or three Christians in a place are gathered together in the name of the Lord Jesus as members of the one body of Christ, by one Spirit, to eat the Lord's Supper, they are a true, even though feeble expression of the one body. It is as in the communion of the one body, they break the one loaf, which is the symbol of the fellowship of the whole body on earth.

Many have thought that they could now come together as individuals merely, to break bread. But such a ground is unknown in Scripture, since the revelation of the truth concerning the Church of God, through the Apostle Paul. The ground of the unity of the Spirit of God in the body of Christ is the only one we can take, except in ignorance or in disobedience to the revealed will of God. I must either own what I know to be here — to exist in the world — as a fact, i.e., the one body of Christ, formed by the one Spirit of God; or I must disown it, which is indeed a very solemn matter.

Coming together as disciples has been done in ignorance of these divine principles; and the Lord is very patient with us, in waiting upon us in our slowness to learn His mind. But when I learn the truth, and have my understanding opened to see what I am before God, a member of the body, by one Spirit, it is not taking up new ground in our mode of meeting together; but rather defining in its full sense what we really are, and discovering with this, all the responsibilities attaching to such a wonderful truth. I learn my responsibility to own and recognize all others who are thus owning and acting upon (however weakly it may be) the grand truth of one body, by one Spirit. It gives me a divine resting-place for my feet in the midst of the confusion of Christendom; a reality which will keep my soul steady in the midst of every ruin. It is the only thing which can do this.

Coming together as individual Christians merely to break bread, is simply impossible in obedience to the Lord. If done in ignorance, well — but with the knowledge of this unity, to do so would be the disowning of God's

highest truth, next to Christ. How far from reconstructing anything is all this; for the body of Christ does not want reconstruction from my hands. The Spirit of God constitutes it, by His presence and baptism, and its unity has never failed. I therefore merely own in practice what I know to be here in fact, but I cannot do it as an individual where there are other members of the body of Christ. Both must be together, if grace is given for it, as the body, i.e., on the ground and principle of it. Besides all this our being together, and our owning this, does not pretend to manifest anything. This would be towards the world. I seek not to manifest, but to express what I am in common with all the other members — the body of Christ — in the symbol of its unity, the breaking of one loaf.

"Endeavouring to keep the Unity of the Spirit."

"I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all." (Eph. 4: 1-6.)

There is an expression which is used often to convey a right thought, but which you do not find in Scripture, i.e., "the unity of the body." "There is one body," the unity of which is constituted by the Holy Ghost Himself; and we are exhorted to endeavour to keep this "unity of the Spirit (not 'unity of the body') in the bond of peace." If we were exhorted to endeavour to keep the unity of the body, we would be obliged to walk with every member of Christ, no matter in what association he might be found, or whatever his practice might be — no evil whatever would give us a warrant to separate from him. The endeavour to keep the unity of the Spirit necessarily keeps in the company and association with a divine Person here upon earth.

If the Church of God were in a healthy state, there would be no difference practically in the expressions "unity of the body" and "unity of the Spirit." The Holy Ghost Himself dwelling in the Church constitutes its unity, and practically embraces all the members of Christ. If the Church was walking in the Spirit, the healthy action of the whole would be unimpaired. Still the unity remains, because the Spirit remains, even when the oneness, and healthy practice of the body as a whole, is gone. The unity of a human body remains when a limb is paralyzed — but where is the oneness? The limb has not ceased to be of the body, but it has ceased to be in the healthy articulation of the body. Hence many Christians, while members

of the body of Christ, are not endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

How then, is the unity of the Spirit to be observed? What is "endeavouring" to do so? What is faithfulness to the nature of the Church, Christ's body, in an evil day? It is first by Separation from Evil. My first duty must be to "depart from iniquity." It may be moral, or doctrinal evil, evil assuming many shapes; I separate myself from it, to Christ. Thus separated, I find myself in the fellowship of the Spirit of God. Associated with the Holy Ghost here upon earth. He glorifies Christ, and disassociates me from everything contrary to Christ: associating me with that which is according to Christ. Thus it ceases to be a question of Christ's members altogether, and becomes entirely a question of Christ, and of the Spirit of God, whom He glorifies. The notion that I may be wittingly associated with an evil principle, or doctrine, or practice, and undefiled, is any unholy notion. I may be perfectly free from it myself, as not having imbibed it; but by practical association with it, I have left the fellowship of the Holy Ghost.

Thus separated into fellowship of the Holy Ghost — the Spirit of holiness and Spirit of truth, we find others who have done the same, and so we can be together happily in the unity of the Spirit of God.

The primary step then must be, "Let him that nameth the name of the Lord depart from iniquity." (2 Tim. 2: 19.) Members of Christ are mixed up with much evil on all sides. I must separate myself from such, to walk in the fellowship of, and unity of, the Spirit, who keeps me in company with Christ, the Head.

In an evil day, when the faithful endeavour, through grace, to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, the practice of the fellowship and unity of the Spirit is necessarily a narrow pathway, entirely apart from evil, and excluding evil from its midst, while, in the breadth of its principles, it contemplates the whole Church of God. Wide enough in principle to receive every member of Christ, all over the world; narrow enough to exclude evil most carefully from its midst. Anything short of this breadth is a sectarian principle, and ceases to be of the Holy Ghost; while the breadth of the principle contemplates every member of Christ. Those gathered thus in the unity of the Spirit, necessarily are jealous, with godly jealousy, lest anything should be admitted, either of doctrine or practice, or witting association with such, that would put those who admitted it practically out of the fellowship of the Spirit.

Now this "endeavour" does not confine itself to those only who have come together thus in separation from evil, and fellowship of the Holy Ghost. It is not observed merely one towards the other. Its aspect is

towards, and has in view, every member of Christ, in whatsoever association he may be — even those not thus gathered in the fellowship of the Spirit. Those who are thus maintaining the truth, are by this showing their truest and most faithful love to those who are not practically with them. Abiding in the light, in uncompromising fidelity to Christ, and fellowship in the Spirit of God, is their truest love to their brethren. They do not compromise the light and truth of their position by leaving it for the darkness; but, if they have grace, they win their brethren into the light, to walk with them in the truth likewise.

Through the Lord's great mercy, this "endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" has been accorded to His saints, and many have had faith, in seeing the pathway, to embrace it. When such exists, the effort many have made to take a place outside, and independently of those who have been thus led of the Lord, is merely the self-will of man, and to be treated as such.

If the simplest saints, as has frequently been the case, have been drawn together in the Lord's name — even without any intelligence of what the ground of one body, one Spirit, is — of necessity it binds them to all those elsewhere, who have been before them in the way, because subjects of like action of God's Spirit, and who may have learned the more fully Divine ground of gathering. They may slip away very easily from it, and get linked up with evil, if not watchful; and the enemy works incessantly to this end. But it is utterly untenable to suppose that they can intelligently maintain a divine ground of gathering, and ignore what the same Spirit has wrought amongst others before them.

Scripture admits of no such independency. To maintain an independent position, is to accept one which puts them practically out of the unity of the Spirit. Very probably such had come together at first in the energy of the Holy Ghost, in all simplicity, as a gathering in the name of the Lord. By falling into such a course they slip away from the company and fellowship of God's Spirit. They had begun in the Spirit, and have ended, or are on the way to it, in the flesh.

Walking in the fellowship and unity of the Spirit, involves distinct separation from all who are not in practice doing so likewise. This tries the saints much at times. The enemy uses it to alarm the weaker saints. The cry of want of charity is at once raised. But when it becomes a question of being in the fellowship of the Spirit of God, it ceases to be a question of brethren merely. If those who are otherwise holy in practice will not walk therein; and others have had light and grace to do so, it must involve separation on the part of the latter. To the flesh this is terrible. But human love must not be mistaken for divine love; and fellowship of Christians, for the fellowship in the Holy Ghost.

The Holy Ghost will not bend Himself to our ways, or be in fellowship with us; we must bend our ways into practical fellowship with Him. Therefore Peter bids us to add "to brotherly kindness, love" (2 Peter 1: 7). Brotherly kindness will sink into mere love of brethren, because we like their society, if not guarded by the divine tie which preserves it as of God. God is love, and God is light; and, "if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another." To exact brotherly love in such a manner as to shut out the requirements of that which God is (and He dwells in the church by His Spirit), and of his claims upon us, is to shut out God in the most plausible way, in order to gratify our own hearts.

I beseech my brethren, as they value and love the Blessed One, who gave Himself for His Church, to judge every position in which they may be, which practically puts them outside the unity of God's Spirit. The Lord Jesus gave Himself to redeem you; and not only so, but He died, "that he might gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad" (John 11: 52). It ought to be on our hearts all day long, that that is scattered which Christ died to gather. He will surely gather them in heaven; but He died to gather them together in one, now. It can be but in keeping the unity of the Spirit of God; and if not thus, it is not what He died to effect. If it is not gathering with Christ, it is scattering, however plausible and well it may look in the eyes of men. God is working graciously in many places; and the enemy is working, too, to try and mystify souls just emerging out of darkness, and link them up with the principles of neutrality, indifference, and independency; anything but the truth.

The Discipline of the Assembly.

I would for a moment refer to the divine competency of the saints thus gathered in carrying out the discipline of the Assembly; to keep outside everything not of the Spirit of God.

We read, "What have I to do to judge them also that are without? Do not ye judge them also that are within? But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person." (1 Cor. 5: 12-13.) Now this divine competency remains unchanged. Nay, it is binding on the saints. The Lord holds them responsible for this. The thought has occurred to some, "Is not this putting out from the body, if we are gathered together as such, i.e., on such a ground?" I reply, it is not. Scripture makes no difficulty in the matter whatever; it says "from among yourselves," not "from the body" — which could not be done. Otherwise there would be no means left to exclude evil from the midst of the two or

three men gathered together in the name of the Lord Jesus. Paul could, by the Lord's authority, deliver the evil person to Satan, for the destruction of the flesh; the Assembly's duty is to put out from amongst themselves, and goes no further than this.

The Apostle addresses to the Corinthians this responsibility, binding it upon "all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours (1 Cor. 1: 2); recognizing them (1 Cor. 12: 27) as gathered together on the ground and principles of the one body of Christ; and unless we can remove that Scripture (1 Cor. 5) from the word of God, the divine competency and authority for this remains unchanged.

The Reception of the Brethren.

The simple and blessed title to be at the Lord's table is, Confession of, and membership of Christ, with holiness of walk. There is no other — no inner circle. The intelligence of those received, while good in its place, has nothing whatever to do with their reception. Those that receive should be intelligent in what they are doing, and that those whom they are receiving are members of Christ. The moment they look for intelligence in those who seek communion, it is they who cease to be intelligent. But there is a distinction to be observed in dealing with those who have had to do with evil associations, in jealous care for the Lord's name; those who are wittingly associated with evil, and those unwittingly linked up with it. We read, "of some have compassion, making a difference, and others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire, hating even the garment spotted by the flesh." (Jude 22, 23.)

The basis and principle of the unity of the Spirit, thus contemplated, embraces the whole Church of God. The fact of those who have been mixed up with evil, or worldly systems, seeking fellowship, shows that they are separating themselves to the Lord. This should meet with a ready response. The more deeply the saints are conscious of the divine character of the place they have been called into by the Lord's grace, the more ready will be the response of the heart towards all Christ's members. At the same time they will grow in the strength and conviction of the holiness that belongs to God's habitation through the Spirit; and, by His grace, will watch against the wiles of the enemy in the seeking to let in that which would grieve the Spirit of God, and hinder the Lord in manifesting His presence in their midst.

The Lord in His mercy keeps His saints and faithful ones true and devoted to Him in these evil days. They may be but a remnant; but there are two things which ever marked the faithful remnant at any time, 1st,

Devotedness to the Lord; 2nd, Strictest attention to fundamental principles. We find, too, that they were ever the objects of His special attention and care. Their very feebleness drew this forth the more strikingly. It was with them He identified Himself most specially. They have but a "little strength" — but through His mercy they have used it; and it has brought them into the spot where He is. The Lord give them to keep His word, and not deny His name — to hold fast that which they have, that no man take their crown. Amen.

Note. — In the Apocalypse, we find certain local Assemblies addressed; but never the "Assembly of God."

"The House of the Living God." (1 Tim. 3.)

The testimony in which the faithful are called to walk, in the last days, has a twofold character: — first a witness to the unity of the body of Christ, formed by the Holy Ghost sent down at Pentecost. And secondly, the whole church having failed, the character of a remnant in maintaining this testimony; and this too in the midst of a great Baptized House — the responsible body on earth, commonly named "Christendom." This testimony can never aim to be more than one to the failure of the church of God as set up by Him. The more true to Christ the remnant of His people are, the more shall they be a witness to the present state of the church of God, i.e., what it is; but not to what it was, as first displayed.

Now there is found in the Word of God, for their example and comfort, a faith which counts upon Him, and His divine intervention, when the failure of man is there: a faith that finds itself sustained by God according to the power and blessings of the dispensation, which answers according to the first thoughts of His heart, when He had set all up in primary power.

He connects that power, and the Lord's own presence, with the faith of the few who act on the truth provided for the present moment, even though the administration of the whole is not in operation according to the order which God set up. For example: the blessing of Asher ends with those lovely words — "As thy days, (so shall thy) strength be." (Deut. 33: 25.) and all went to ruin, as the history of Israel unfolds; yea at the first coming of Christ, when the godly, pious remnant of His people were "waiting for the consolation of Israel;" the Simeons and Annas of that day, we find one of that same tribe. "Anna a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Aser; a widow of about fourscore and four years, which departed not from the temple, but served, with fastings and prayers night and day," in the enjoyment and power of that blessing of Moses — as he says, "so shall thy strength be," and the Lord Christ Himself became identified with

that obscure remnant, of which she was one; as those whom His Heart could own, and who were ready to receive Him when first He came.

The returned remnant of Judah too, in all the weakness of those who could pretend to nothing but occupation of the divine platform of God's earthly people; to them we find those comforting words addressed, "I am with you, saith the Lord of hosts: according to the word that I covenanted with you, when ye came out of Egypt, so my Spirit remaineth among you: fear ye not." Their faith is recalled to that mighty day of power, when the Lord of Hosts "bare them on eagle's wings, and brought them to Himself," and removed their shoulder from the burdens of Egyptian bondage. Undimmed in power, He was with them, just the same, for faith to claim and use. No outward displays were theirs; but His Word and Spirit, which proved His presence to faith, wrought in that feeble few; to them is revealed the shaking of all things (of Heb. 12: 27,) and the coming of Him who would, make the "latter glory" of His house greater than the "former." They are thus the link between the Temple of the palmy days of Solomon; and that of the day of coming glory, when He shall sit "a Priest upon His throne," and the counsel of peace shall be between Jehovah and Him, and he shall bear the glory. (Zech. 5: 12, 13. Hag. 1. 2.)

He would "overthrow the throne of kingdoms," (Hag. 2: 21-23,) and shake the heavens and the earth, thus identifying all His power with the least remnant of His people who walked in company with His mind. He would make all come and worship before their feet, and to know that He had loved them.

Thus, too, those who answer to the calling which suits His mind, as presented in Philadelphia (Rev. 3); who are true to that, which though not a perfect state of things, is suited to the state of failure which He contemplates — He makes them the link, the silver cord, between the church of the past as set up at Pentecost (Acts 2) and the church of the glory. (Rev. 21: 9.) The overcomer would be made a "pillar in the temple of His God," in the "new Jerusalem" on high.

Let me here remark that there never was, and never can be a moment, when that which answers to this calling (Phila.) can cease, till the Lord comes. In the moral picture presented in these two chapters (Rev. 2 and 3), we find all the seven features together, at any moment (as they were when He sent the messages,) and remaining so, as long as the scriptures there abide. In the dark ages, and those of more light in later days; and now at the end, before He comes, all, everywhere, who answer with perfect heart to the measure of truth which He has given them, such are morally Philadelphia. Others may have more light; but the true heart that walks with Christ in what it knows, is known of Him, and is what is contemplated in Philadelphia.

Historically there is an unfolding — as the Lord did delay — in the state of each of the seven churches — each larger feature coming into prominence, and presenting the salient features of the professing church, till the church becomes a remnant in the message to Thyatira; which then develops into those which follow.

But morally Philadelphia represents those who answer Christ's heart at all times and in all circumstances, since the Lord gave those messages, till His threat is finally executed — "I will spue thee out of my mouth." Philadelphia may, in the historical view, come in after Sardis, and be exhorted that He comes quickly, as her resource, and to let no man take her crown; but as long as His voice is heard by faithful souls, such form, now, as ever, and wherever found, the link between the church at Pentecost, and the church — the Bride the Lamb's wife in the days of the glory. (Rev. 3: 12.)

Like the seven prismatic colours of the rainbow — the pure single ray of colorless light being broken up into its component parts; these seven churches are not merely actual addresses to seven existing assemblies at the moment; nor are they merely a historic development of the whole period of the Christian interval, while Christ is hidden in the heavens, and the Holy Ghost is here, but they have a moral signification (no view being of greater importance than this,) in which all the seven features, and moral states are found, at any given moment, from the day of the utterance of the messages, until the day when He who spoke them comes again. Like the rainbow, in which all the seven colours are seen, though one or other may become prominent at any moment. Every moral state in all the seven messages remains from the beginning to the very end. There are at this moment, as at the beginning, those who have left their first love; and those who suffer for Christ; and those who are faithful where Satan's seat is, and so on to the conclusion of the whole.

Besides all this, we should never forget that, John is watching over the decay of that which Paul unfolded; and telling us what Christ will do with that which bears His name. For our own path we get no directions but to "listen" — to "hear what the Spirit saith to the churches," for we do not find church ground unfolded here. It is not John's province to treat of this: John never gives us corporate things, but individual, and never speaks of the church of God. When we are therefore grounded and settled in that which never fails — the unity of the Body of Christ, maintained by the Spirit of God on earth, as taught by Paul, we may turn with deep profit to John and these messages, and learn what Christ will do with all that bears His name on earth. But from Paul alone can I learn what I am to do, in the midst of such a scene; and how I am to be an "overcomer" according to

the mind of the Lord, which never can be by abandoning that which His Spirit maintains on earth.

How important therefore to be thoroughly grounded in the truths of the church of God, which remain as long as God's Spirit remains, and His Word abides, "Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man; unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." (Eph. 4: 13.)

I turn now to examine another side of the truth of the church of God, as unfolded in Paul's doctrine — not that of the Body of Christ — united to her Head in heaven, and maintained by the Holy Ghost on earth in unity; but that of the "House of God" the "Habitation of God through the Spirit."

On the day of Pentecost the aggregate number of disciples which were baptized of the Holy Ghost, and thus formed into the Body united to Christ in heaven: were also on earth, a "Habitation of God by the Spirit." Each was coterminous, with the other. Both terms embraced the same people. Those who composed the Body composed the House, and none else.

But to each relationship a different thought pertained. In the Body there is the absolute union between Christ and His members — He the Head, they the Body, of which, when persecuted, He could say, "Why persecutest thou Me?" In the House there is no thought of union at all, and this is most important to apprehend.

One dwells in a House; but the walls are not in union with him; so that he may not speak of them, "Me," and for this reason the Holy Ghost is not said to dwell in the Body, while He does dwell in the House.

During the early part of the Acts of the Apostles, there was a sort of tentative dealing with Israel once more (chaps. 3-7,) to offer that Christ whom, they had slain, would return with the "sure mercies of David." At the same time He who knew the end from the beginning, knew the result of this fresh offer. Nevertheless it was needful in His purposes, to bring out fully the responsibility and guilt of that ruined people, in the final rejection of Christ in the glory. Behind all this, God was working out His "purpose of the ages," in the church of God.

When Israel finally refused their glorified Messiah the martyred Stephen's blood bearing witness that all was over; Saul of Tarsus was "standing by, and consenting to his death, and kept the raiment of them that slew him." But Stephen had prayed a prayer at the moment of his death, which was wonderfully answered in this man. "Lord" said he, "lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep." (Acts 7: 60.) Saul of Tarsus was the answer to this prayer! But the divine floodgates of grace

once opened in righteousness through the cross, could not now be stayed, and the stream which had flowed into "the city of the great King," up to this moment, having been finally refused; its course was diverted, and it flowed onward to Samaria.

The Lord of the harvest, had said at this place a few short years before — "Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest." Samaria is now conquered by the gospel, and the old enmity between "this mountain," and "Jerusalem," is blotted out by its peaceful waters, at least in the souls of those who accepted the water of life, thus freely flowing to them. But Philip must leave his prosperous labour, and follow the stream, if needful, to the "ends of the earth."

The sandy desert near Gaza becomes the channel of the grace of Jesus. A child of the cursed race of Ham, the father of Canaan: an Ethiopian Chamberlain of Queen Candace, is sitting in his Chariot reading the Prophet Isaiah. He had come from the heart of Africa to worship at Jerusalem, and with an unsatisfied heart, was returning. The day of Jerusalem's visitation was past. The words of the weeping Jesus might re-echo once more when He exclaimed, "If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things (which belong) to thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes." (Luke 19: 42.) But he who is a "rewarder of them that diligently seek Him" follows this "dry tree," and after a few short words from Philip, evangelizing Jesus to him, he receives the message from the God and Father of Jesus, and the Ethiopian "went on his way rejoicing" — carrying this knowledge of Jesus into the abodes of the race of Cush.

The whole Assembly is broken up at Jerusalem; and "all (were) scattered abroad, except the Apostles." Stephen's prayer ascended as incense before God; and "Saul yet breathing slaughter against the Lord" — is converted in the height of his mad career, by the words from Christ in glory, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?" He was a chosen vessel to bear Christ's name, whom he persecuted "to the Gentiles, the kings, and to the children of Israel."

But God had, as Paul the Apostle tells us, made him "a wise master builder" — to unfold in his doctrines, the mystery of Christ and the church. He laid the foundation, and others built thereupon. To man then; to His servants was committed the administration of this House of God — composed of those who were received into the place where the Holy Ghost dwelt. On the one side, the divine work of God in forming and maintaining the Body of Christ progressed. It was constituted by the baptism of the Holy Ghost. On the other we have the administration of the House put into man's hands: and those who entered, came in by the baptism of water.

At the first, as we have seen, God constituted it by taking up His abode in the disciples at Pentecost, as His House, or Habitation. Then, all who accepted the testimony were received into the place where the spirit dwelt. The Apostles and those who were thus constituted the House at the first, were never baptized: they were not thus received into what they were already. But all who came after were thus received; professing by baptism, that they were "buried" to the "death of Christ." (Rom. 6.) Peter on that day insists that all that came should come in by the appointed way; "Repent, and be baptized every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." (Acts 2: 38.) The nation was about to fall under judgment — guilty now, with all other guilt, of their Messiah's blood. But there was one hallowed spot left, into which the slayer of Blood could flee: the House of God — (no more the Temple) stood ready to welcome all whose hearts were pricked with their guilt, and who now were welcomed into the House of God, built in His name.

The promise was unto them and to their children, and to all that were "afar off" "even as many as the Lord our God shall call." How blessed for the poor Jew to know that he was thus entering into God's House, that his children were not to be left behind, in a world of which Satan was god and prince. What an echo of the day of Moses, when God brought them out of Egypt long before, that their houses, and all that pertained to those who were delivered, were to pass into the place of privilege and blessing; not one should be left to separate them — not one should be left behind. Pharaoh thought, as Satan ever does, to separate them with the word — "go ye that are men." But Moses refuses to change the demand, "we will go with our young and our old; with our sons and with our daughters . . . for we must hold a feast unto the Lord." (Ex. 10: 9-11.) And we read how they "were all baptized unto Moses, in the cloud and in the sea." (1 Cor. 10: 2.) As said to another before this, "Come thou and all thy house into the ark."

Soon after many more were added to this House of God (Acts 4: 4,) but all were Jews: God took this mode of saving the remnant of Israel.

Samaria falls under the sound of the Gospel, and the enemy who first began "within," through Ananias and Sapphira, now seeks to introduce evil persons from "without:" "tares amongst the wheat were sown while men slept." "Wood, hay, and stubble," were introduced into the House of God and Simon the Sorcerer is received in the flush of joy which filled many hearts in Samaria, (Acts 8). Thus the house, coterminous at first with the Body, began already to enlarge itself, while committed to man's responsibility, disproportionately to the body, which was maintained of God intact within it. But the Spirit of God did not leave the House, nor has

He left it even to this day, though it has enlarged itself into what we see around us, into that which is likened by Paul to "a great house," containing "vessels of gold, and of silver, of wood and of earth; some to honour and some to dishonour." (2 Tim. 2.)

As Israel in the desert stood in an ordinancial relationship with Moses in that dispensation; they were all baptized to Moses in the cloud and in the sea; and did all eat the same spiritual meat; and did all drink the same spiritual drink. So all now who profess Christ's name — in like manner stand in ordinancial or sacramental relationship with Him, as in the analogy drawn, in 1 Cor. 10: 1-11.

In the midst of this scene, scattered outwardly within it, is found that which should always have been outwardly one, as it is inwardly maintained so by the Holy Spirit — the Body of Christ.

Years ago one said to me, when speaking of ministerial labour, a sentence which I never forgot: "Our business is to bring Christians into the consciousness of their position, in the midst of a great baptized house," i.e., to make them conscious that there is a church of God on earth, a body of Christ, of which they are living members. This sentence was one full of meaning and power to my own soul.

We will turn now to Scripture to examine more fully the unfoldings of this truth of the House of God — an intelligent grasp of which is so needful for our path and service to the Lord.

In the first Epistle to the Corinthians we find two greater divisions. 1st, Chapter 1 — 10: 14; and 2nd, Chapter 10: 15 — 16. In the first division he has the House before him; in the second the Body. (Chapter 12 connecting both though distinguishing them too.) And here it may be of use to say that the word "assembly" applies to both, though having a distinct application to each. If we look on high at Christ in glory, the "Assembly" is His "Body" (Eph. 1: 22, 23); and if we look below where the Spirit dwells the "Assembly" is His "House" — See 1 Tim. 3: 15.

In Paul's address to the Corinthians we find a most comprehensive breadth of thought. "Unto the Assembly of God which is in Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called Saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both theirs and ours." (1 Cor. 1: 2.) In this comprehensive address we find him writing to the professing Church. He assumes of course that all are true and real, unless proved to be otherwise. But all who profess Christ's name are addressed; calling on the name of the Lord having this meaning in Scripture. The simply calling on His name not proving their reality; but reality having to prove itself in those who have called. Now the professing

church having thus been addressed; the whole professing church, at that day, being assumed primarily as real, another thing comes in when ruin has set in. The professing church has now enlarged itself to what we term Christendom, nevertheless the professing church is bound by what Paul wrote. This makes all plain.

The wisdom of the Spirit of God foresaw and forecast all this for us: for if we turn to 2 Tim. 3 we find what was prophetically provided for the "last days," which at once began when apostolic gift was removed from the church. The epistle is divided into three parts. First (chap. 1: 1-14) a preface. Second (chap. 1: 15 — 2) takes up what had already supervened in the lifetime of the Apostle, in the words "This thou knowest," etc. And third (chap. 3. 4) commencing with "This know also:" in which division he foresees what was about to be. Let us hear his words, "This know also, that in the last days, perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, truce breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away." This then is his description of the profession of Christianity: this the sphere in which the faithful would find themselves; this, the platform where the servants of Christ would now have to work. And in such a sphere, with such materials before him was the servant Timothy to "do the work of an evangelist." (2 Tim. 4: 5.)

How deeply solemn is this prophetic truth then! To find that instead of the habitation of God on earth, being the answer to the glory of Christ in heaven, as produced by the Spirit of God, it had so dishonoured that blessed name, as to be described with words, almost similar to those used to describe the Heathen, out of which the Church had (with the Jew) been called. The only striking difference being this, that when the heathen are described (Rom. 1: 28-32), the words "having a form of godliness" were not used: but are added to similar words (2 Tim. 3) to describe a worse state, because existing under the name of Christ!

It needs not that I should examine more. We might recall the words of Paul in Philipians — "All seek their own, not the things of Jesus Christ:" and "many walk of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ, whose end is destruction, whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things." Colossians too, and Galatians, and even Ephesians, refer to those evils which had entered in, and against which the faithful are warned. The tendency too in the saints, to sink down into an abnormal state of soul, below the common level of all, at the first. Those varied states around us now are the speaking witness that in the House of God there are numbers

of those who are really Christ's, but who are not in the consciousness of Christian state — in union with Christ in glory.

Yet the Spirit of God abides. He still inhabits God's house on earth. He remains there till all those who are Christ's are called by His grace: till the Lord Himself comes again. And still is that name — the House of God — applicable, in responsibility, to that which is His habitation here below; though it is the abode of evil too; just as Jesus spake of — "My Father's House," of the Temple of old, though it had been made a "den of thieves" by man. So the House of God remains such, as long as God's Spirit remains there. Then it is given up, as a "cage of every unclean and hateful bird."

Now it is evident that the two essentially Christian Sacraments, as we may call Baptism and the Lord's Supper, apply to a very different state of things. The former being the rite observed in the reception of those who came into the House of God on earth. The latter being the symbol of the unity of the Body of Christ. By the first, not only was the person received, but administratively his sins were washed away. Doubtless this was the case actually before God with Paul at his conversion; but still he is told by Ananias to "Arise and be baptized, washing away thy sins, calling upon the name of the Lord:" as Peter told the Jews at Pentecost to "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." (Acts 2: 38.) But the person once received, it never could be repeated. Now suppose, as in many cases around us now, it was done informally, yet it was done in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and in vain would be the thought of repeating it: such could not be.

How could one unchristianize themselves, or get outside the profession of Christianity, to come in again as they think more correctly, but by blotting out a historic action in their previous life — no matter when performed? It is simply impossible. The thing was done, and there it remains; even though done informally. The responsibility rests on the person who did it; not on the person to whom it is done. For baptism is the act of the baptizer — not of the baptized. "Go and disciple all nations, baptizing them," etc., not, "go and be baptized." This commission was given by the Lord in resurrection only, not in ascension — from whence He sent the Holy Ghost; as the glorified Head of His body. It was given to Peter and the others on earth, and the House was formed, and this work of reception followed, long before Paul was converted. When he was, he was received, as any other into the House of baptism. Yet he distinctly states that "He was not sent to baptize." He finds it there, not set aside by his subsequent and heavenly commission, and he thus uses it at times, to receive some (as — "Crispus and Gaius, and the house of Stephanas,") making no more of it than was necessary, though it was not comprised in his mission.

Now the Lord's supper is "As often as ye eat" — "ye do show the Lord's death, till He come." Unlike Baptism, it was revealed afresh by Christ in glory to Paul, and received through him fresh features unknown before, as first instituted by the Lord. It becomes, when partaken after the divine thought, the symbol of the unity of the Church of God here below. The great ostensible center too, of the gathering together of the church of God on earth. There, in a special way the presence of the Lord Himself "in the midst" is realized. (Matt, 18: 20.)

It is that moral center, in view of which each member of Christ judges himself that he may eat thereof worthily, in a manner suited to the holiness and truth of Him to whom he is united by the Holy Ghost given him. It is that with respect to which the partaking, or otherwise, shows that the person is confessing and professing the reality of his portion in Christ. It is with respect to it that, in failing to judge himself and his ways, the assembled saints must deal with the failing one, and put out "from among themselves that wicked person." It is in view of it, that when the individual has failed to judge himself, and it has fallen to the responsibility of the assembled saints to do so; or when the assembled saints have failed (as at Corinth) to deal with what was unsuited to Christ, and to the table of the Lord; the Lord Himself had, as over His own House, acted, removing some by death; and had laid His chastening hand on others, by sickness and weakness of body: for many amongst them were "weak and sickly, and many slept." (1 Cor. 11.)

It is, in fact, the great moral symbol and centre, outwardly and expressly, of the existence of the Church of God here below.

It is, too, yet more blessedly, when partaken of in the power of an ungrieved Spirit, the most touching of all the "services of faith" of the people of the Lord. Where the presence of the Lord is more sweetly realized at the moment which neither God nor His people will ever forget; when He gave Himself up for His glory, and for our eternal salvation.

The ministry of the gospel from God's heart to the world: is sweet to the soul. Souls are blessed, and the Spirit's power is felt, and God is made known in a world which knows Him not. The ministry of Christ, too, for His saints; feeding them, and building them up, and producing worship in their hearts for all His unspeakable goodness, is touching to the soul, searching to the conscience; and the freshness of His love, is thus shed abroad in the heart. All these and many more, are good and blessed. But at the supper, the soul and God meet, as never otherwise: the heart of the saint, and the sufferings of Christ Himself are together; His love is tasted, His perfections fed upon; in short, the Lord Himself is there in a way, that next to heaven itself, there is nothing like it here. Man is not before us at

such an hour. All this is put aside in the presence of a greater, who leads the praises of His own.

Should we not therefore, seek to ascertain God's own mind about this feast? Should we not seek to divest it of every thought and practice, that might mar the true blessedness which He, the Lord, has meant it to be to us. We shall sit down by and by at the marriage supper of the Lamb. We have no description of this scene. The Holy Ghost uses but one word to describe it: "Blessed!" "Blessed are they who are called to the marriage Supper of the Lamb." and He adds, "These are the true sayings of God."

But here at the "Lordly Supper" one sits down with others like himself, still in bodies of humiliation, though saved by grace, and made meet for glory, to feed afresh upon Christ in His death. The night when all the world was against Him, and God forsook Him, as well as His own who loved Him truly. When Satan's power and glamour were over men's souls, and our perfect blessed Saviour passed through that night, His last with His disciples; and ate that Paschal Supper of which He speaks in those touching words "With desire ("earnest, yearning longing," as the word means,) have I desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer." (Luke 22: 15.)

From that Paschal feast, and the institution of His own Supper, He passes to His agony in the garden, where He receives from His Father's hands His cup of sorrow. Bearing it (as it were,) in His hands, He is betrayed by His "friend": he who had eaten bread with Him had lifted up his heel against Him.

He passes onwards, and He is "denied" with oaths by one who thought no power could make his love for his Master fail. Then after His "good confession," He is mocked and arrayed in the scarlet robe and crown of thorns. From thence He passes into other hands and is scourged and condemned. At last came the cross of a malefactor, where He is numbered with the transgressors, and the things concerning Him had their end.

Forsaken now of God, we find Him in the darkness of that scene, where no ray of light penetrated to relieve His soul; He cries to God at the "hour of prayer" — the "ninth hour" and is "not heard." What soul depths were expressed in that unheard cry! But He, who in view of all this, when instituting the feast could twice "give thanks," knowing the light and love that was behind it all; the depths of that love of God the Father, whose love He shared from past eternity.

These are some of the features which come before us as we remember Him. We could not "remember" one we knew not; we remember One we know. We know Him but in poor small measure: but it is the Lord who

loves us we know and remember in the hour of His death and shame; the result of His first coming to this world of sin.

Now although simplicity as to the line in which the Spirit of God would lead the gathered saints, in this "service of faith," is what should characterize them, that is, in the remembrance of the Lord at that night of His betrayal, there is no special character of remembrance to be looked for from the saints.

Still we must remember that "In the midst of the assembly (says the Lord) will I sing praise unto thee." We should therefore look for His presence most specially at such a time. But when Christ leads the praises of His own, we should not find many thoughts about our former state: our sins, our deliverance therefrom. It is Himself we remember in death; and all that this remembrance would embrace. I would dread much therefore to see souls thinking too much of their own blessing, their own side of things. It would seem to me that they have not come together with true thoughts of the Supper in their souls.

We know happily, that the "babes know the Father" it is the Spirit of adoption that characterizes them; they rejoice more in their own blessing, than in Him the Blessor. The fathers in Christ know Him. I am sure too, that in the Lord's Supper we have every chord touched that every heart, blessed through Christ, can feel and rejoice in. No string has ever been tuned in any heart which does not find its answer there, and while every soul who comes together to eat the Lord's supper is doubtless in a different spiritual state, the chords in each are divinely strung, and when Christ is before the soul they must yield harmony.

Just as in the varied aspects of Christ in His perfect life, His death, and sin-bearing, and all, are presented in the offerings (see Lev. 1 — 7) many offerings to make the one blessed Christ. So in the supper, there is found that which meets the song of every heart, even though the note struck may sound more of its own side of things in some who surround Him who leads their praises.

Still I think true worship always has Him as its food and its object: "they worshipped Him." He reveals and displays the Father; and when the Father is worshipped in the Son, the Son reveals Him, and "the Father seeketh such to worship Him." When God is seen in Christ the Son, and the Father known in Him, and the Spirit in us is free to unfold His things to us, then worship has its true and proper level, and He dwells now in the praises of His church; as before, Jehovah dwelt in the praises of Israel!

We find that that which prefigured the communion of the church of God (the Peace offering) came third in the order of the five offerings in

Leviticus, to show us that the worship of the saints is grounded upon what Christ was to God as a Burnt offering, and his Meat offering; both of these being offerings of "sweet savour." They pointed to all that Christ was to God in His devotedness to death for God's glory; bringing glory to His nature as to sin, in the place where sin was; and yielding Himself wholly up to God; this the Burnt offering typified. And this was accompanied by a meat-offering called his "meat-offering" ("the burnt offering and his meat-offering"). This was Christ's person in its purity and grace, and was bloodless and not atoning, though it accompanied that which was, and the memorial was offered to God and all its frankincense. Then where the ashes of both were, on the altar of Burnt-offering, there, was the Peace-offering (or its memorial) burnt (see Lev. 3: 5). The fourth and fifth offerings were what Christ was made for us — not what He was in Himself personally; and they come after the Peace or communion offering (chap. 3.).

Has this no voice for us? Can we not see that he who best can enter upon what Christ was to God as the Burnt-offering and his Meat-offering, in His sweet savour, can best sustain and lead the worship of the assembled saints, for he is on the true ground of the soul's power of worship to the Father.

It is a cause of deep joy, and never to be forgotten, to know that Christ bore our sins, and brought us into this place of blessing, but it is not the prominent thought in praise. Was the prodigal thinking much of the far country, and his rags and misery, and of the change that had come, when he ate the fatted calf with the Father? His father's heart and house and joy silenced him. It would have no kindred note in his father's merriment, to have reminded him of his rags, and of the debt he owed his father. He must joy in his father's joy, be that what it may. These and such like praises are those which Christ can sing, and lead in the midst of His assembled saints.

Could a soul, uncertain of its salvation, have its place at such a feast? Nay. In conscience and in faith we stand alone. But when sealed with the Spirit, He leads our souls into communion with the Father and the Son and with each other in the light.

But all converted souls are not there. Surely not. — Many souls are quickened but not at peace. The very life they have makes them feel their sins; feel their misery; but when they have believed, God seals them with the Holy Spirit of promise. (Eph. 1: 14, etc.).

Until then they are not "members of Christ," not in union with Him — Head of His body in heavenly places. How needful then to see that the person has received the Holy Ghost since he believed." (Acts 19.)

The Supper therefore is for such only — members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones.

It is celebrated according to Scripture by such, as the expression of the whole body of Christ on earth.

The table must be spread as the Lord's table, and those who partake of it must be gathered to His Name, to express this. Tables of the varied sects and parties in the professing church could not be owned as "the table of the Lord": they are not so. A sect with a system has its own dogmas, and rules and creeds, and ministry — generally framed for the world or the unconverted as well as the saved. Perhaps a human ministry is there, or some one person, who absorbs all the functions of the members of Christ's body, professedly in himself. The free action of the Spirit of God is shut out in the members. These and such like preclude the godly from its communion, and proclaim it as not the Table of the Lord.

But when the Lord's table is spread according to God it must be: —

First, the expression of the whole body of Christ on the earth: in the breadth of all.

Second, there must be nothing knowingly allowed there, amongst those gathered, which would hinder in a doctrinal, or moral way, one single member of Christ on earth being there. To have it so would make it cease to be the "Table of the Lord," and only the table of a sect or party in Christendom. It is not that each there is compelled to see and understand all and every truth and doctrine with others; not in any wise: this would be to make the intelligence of the members of Christ and their unanimity in doctrine, a term of fellowship instead of this — that they are members of that one body, and sound in faith and morals. Nay: the great foundation truths of God's holy Word must be held aright.

These would be such as the pure and holy Person of Christ, the Son of God, His incarnation; His atoning work; His resurrection and ascension; His eternal Sonship; His coming in flesh. The doctrines, too, of Eternal punishment, of the Holy Ghost's presence in the church, of the Trinity of the Persons in the Godhead, all such would be clearly defined in the soul. The babes in Christ know all these things, and when the Holy Spirit dwells in a saint, he has received the anointing which teaches him all these things. He is sensitive too as to these things: touch Christ in any way and you touch the apple of his eye. Let him be true in the faith of Christ's person, and you may depend that in the main he is right in all the rest. Let him be false in his thoughts of Jesus, and his whole soul will more or less be filled with error. He is the true test; the touch-stone of true faith. All this

assumes that he is at peace with God, and possesses His Spirit dwelling in him.

Third, the "first day of the week" is the day of its celebration; as of all the great gatherings of the members of the church's risen head. When she was first formed at Pentecost, His members continued daily with one accord in the temple and "broke bread at home praising God," etc. But when the Assembly was broken up at Jerusalem (Acts 8) and was no more found connected with the Jewish centre of things, the Spirit of God led them together habitually on the first day of the week for this distinct purpose. "And upon the first day of the week when the disciples came together to break bread." (Acts 20: 7.) And this was endorsed by the Apostle abiding there to be with them at this feast.

How sensitive is the spiritually minded saint at this wondrous centre of the church's gathering! How spiritual one needs to be, to venture in the Lord's blessed presence to lead in the worship of God. The more he thinks of the presence of his Lord and Master, the more careful he is lest one word, one note he strikes should not be in keeping with the Lord's own heart, in communion with which the present Spirit leads His people's songs. How the heart feels a discordant note at such a moment; when the ear of the soul is watching for the note to strike truly in the hearts of saints with the Lord's. A hymn ill-chosen: the music unsuited to the words of the spiritual song. The haste of one the tardiness of another: the lengthiness of some. What exercise of soul do not these things produce, and how they mar the meeting which should refresh and feed the soul. How frequently too the judgment of self is neglected until the moment when the Lord's presence is felt; and then for the first time the soul feels that it is not in spiritual power, and it must think of self instead of Christ!

O that my brethren might ponder these things, and that poor and feeble though we are, we may grow in the sense of what it is to gather around our blessed Lord; to realize His presence; to forget ourselves; to wait on Him; to renew our strength; to carry clean though empty vessels, into His presence; to find them filled and overflowing by Him whose fulness is inexhaustible: so full that the overflowing cup returns to Him, as living waters refresh the weary soul, and find again their level in His presence, and the presence of the Father.

I feel sure too, that at times there are many there whose hearts would refresh their Lord and their brethren with "five words" of praise, hold back, and "quench the Spirit," forcing some other to speak out of the true order of the Spirit of God, (because forced upon him) and lose much for their own souls as well as for the souls of their brethren.

The heart yearns to see the Assemblies of God's saints filled with the Spirit, and in such freshness of power and worship which sets man aside, and gives place only to Christ, or what is of the Spirit of our God.

What comfort to know that every "first day of the week" brings us another seven days nearer to that glorious day, in view of which we show forth the Lord's death till He come. How sweetly the first coming of the Lord is before the soul in this feast, as well as the second. When that day arrives and when we see Him, He shall see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied; and every spiritual desire and longing will in us, as well as in Him, find its answer, and we shall enter that scene of which it is said: "They rest not day and night, saying, Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come." It is His holy being which touches the heart even in that scene, and leads those who surround His throne to forget their own blessings, and their own glory; to leave the one, and divest themselves of the other, in the sweeter occupation of enjoying His; and to say, "Thou art worthy, O Lord." (Rev. 4). "Blessed are they that dwell in Thy house: they shall be praising Thee to the ages of ages." (Psalm 84: 4.)

Chapter 3.

The Last Days. "As Jannes and Jambres, withstood Moses, so do these also resist the truth." (2 Tim. 3: 8.)

The last words of any servant of God, must carry with them a feeling of deep solemnity; and especially so, when we think of them as written or spoken at the close of their earthly service, the fruit of their varied and lengthened experience, and with the solemn judgment of all, which intercourse with God for years had given. With how much greater power must they come to us, as the words of inspiration given by the Spirit of God, as these last words of Paul to Timothy — his own son in the faith.

The Scriptures of God speaking generally, contain Truth revealed for Eternity: they also contain Truth for Time, which will have no application when Time has passed away; yet the issues of what they teach — though not for Time, will have their bearing on the eternal history of all, to whom addressed, or to whom they were spoken. Such is Paul's Second Epistle to Timothy. Such the last words of this man of God. Eternal in the issues unfolded, they were written for time, and have their special application now, before time has passed away.

How solemn too is the thought that in every case when the last words of the great leaders of God's people have been heard in Scripture, we

invariably find the total decay and absolute ruin of all that surrounded them: that which the heart laboured for and loved, had fallen — never to rise again; and while a pathway for faith is sure to be found; marked out of God in the midst of it, there never is a hope of recovery. The eye is turned to the Lord — dissatisfied with things here, and it looks for His intervention — His return, as the only joy and resource, and hope left.

See the close of Moses' career, and read the touching narrative at the end of his path — closing with his prophetic song; and learn somewhat of the heart and feelings of this man of God, before he passed away to be no more seen. (Deut. 31, 32.)

So also David's last words, and his songs when the wreck of hopes lay strewn around him, his heart turns to that morning without clouds — to that Just Ruler over men, whom he saw by the Spirit; the ideal Christ of God, as far as could then be known.

What too must have been the feelings of Paul, in the midst of the corruption of that which was best — the best thing ever seen on earth next to the only Perfect One. Would that one's heart, by God's Spirit taught, might approach these last words of Paul (2 Timothy), with somewhat of those feelings that filled his soul, as he wrote to his beloved son in the faith: the one of whom he could say "I have no man like-minded," with him. When we look around at the carnal, worldly ones, whom we meet day after day in His church; carnal and worldly though His: we little wonder at his anguish of soul, and the growing and deepening preciousness of Christ "whom he had believed." As he turns away from all on earth in which his heart lived, and for which he laboured and toiled for so many long years; laboured and toiled with sufferings unparalleled in the history of one man; and turns to Him who alone was worthy of all his heart's devotedness, to say "I have fought the good fight; I have finished the course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them that love His appearing."

Hear too the cry that came forth from the inmost soul of the Lawgiver, when God had said to him "Get thee up into this mount Abarim, and see the land which I have given unto the children of Israel. And when thou hast seen it, thou also shalt be gathered unto thy people, as Aaron thy brother was gathered." (Numbers 27: 12, 13.) "Let the Lord," said he, "the God of the spirits of all flesh, set a man over the congregation, which may go out before them, and go in before them, and which may lead them out, and which may bring them in; that the congregation of the Lord, be not as sheep which have no shepherd." (verses 16, 17).

How the heart re-echoes the spirit of such a cry! How it more distinctly turns to the Lord, that He — the Shepherd of His sheep, may act in keeping with His nature and character, and ways. How Paul's heart turns to the Lord who stood by him, and strengthened him; who delivered him, and would deliver; and the heart of the aged servant goes out to Timothy, at such an hour as is before us in his Second Epistle to his dearly beloved son; before he was "poured forth," (Chap. 4: 6), as the time of his "release" was at hand.

There is something striking in the opening words of this Epistle; and that which is not the general testimony of his other writings, in that he speaks of himself as an "Apostle, according to the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus." He refers more largely to this life — "Eternal life, promised before the world began," in his earlier letter to Titus. But here too he is an Apostle according to this "promise of life in Christ Jesus." This has marked significance in the Epistle, the whole way through. The exhortations here become more intently individual too, as things had reached the ruin which is now before us; and as this striking notice of life is so prominently pressed.

Now the tendency of the soul of man — of saints — is ever to go from one extreme to the other, almost in everything; and in hardly anything more than in spiritual things. Many who longed for truths; having found that which had delivered them from systems of men in the professing church, have been pained and disappointed at the failure and weakness of those, who with themselves had sought and found it, and walked in the divine truths of the Church of God, calling on the Lord out of a pure heart; have been disheartened at all further hopes of corporate perfectness being possible, and have leaped to the other extreme, that all being now so broken and ruined, there is nothing left but individual godliness, and a path of units drawn together by their common spiritual need.

Have we not heard it said at times, Well, the corporate testimony is over, but we have the Word, Matt, 18: 20, to fall back upon — the misuse of the passage, "For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." All such thoughts are the cry of unbelief. So that when we get discouraged about things in the church of God, we prove that we are not, or never were, on right ground in our souls.

It is the constant tendency of the soul to get occupied with evil, and to sink down under the thought that it is greater than good. To do so is to suppose that it is greater than God! It is a great thing to count upon Him: to feel that He is over all, and would fill our hearts with the strength of His grace that is in Christ Jesus. In no Epistle do we find such varied power of evil recognized as in Second Timothy, and yet in no Epistle is boldness and courage more pressed upon the servant, in the midst of it all, than in

it. "Be strong in the grace that is In Christ Jesus." "Be not thou ashamed of the testimony of the Lord." "Be thou partaker of the afflictions of the Gospel." "Hold fast the form of sound words." "Endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ." "Watch thou In all things, endure afflictions." "Make full proof of thy ministry," etc., etc.

But I would now examine first of all, this thought of "life," which is so much before his mind. He speaks of himself as an Apostle according to the promise of life which is In Christ Jesus. We get back here to what was, before the world was: "eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the ages of time," but brought forth by the Gospel while time was there, and when man had been fully tried and found wanting. God "Hath saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works," — that is, our responsibility, according to which judgment was earned; "but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus, before the ages of time. But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life, and incorruptibility to light through the Gospel."

Here we have the "ages of time," during the first man's history, passed over in silence; given before they began, and brought out when his history was past, though displayed and unfolded in the Person, and path, and appearing in this scene of Jesus Christ. The eternal life that was with the father was manifested in the Son — a Man on earth. A life of which every motion and expression was a life of communion between His Father and Himself.

One will alone — the Father's will, was done, by One alone who was the will-less, yet the One whose will, ever perfect, was surrendered, and never done: "The will of Him that sent Me," was His life. Beautiful path of light and blessing, in a world departed from God, through the will of man, instigated by the enemy. In death and by death, the perfection of obedience, without which, all the rest were imperfect.

He annulled death; He in whom there was no necessity to die, went down to death: capable of it, for in grace He became a Man, He yields that perfect life in obedience to His Father's commandment — taking upon Him in spotless purity of person, His people's sins: the wages of which is death. But more than this; bearing all the claims which God's Holy Being required for vindication against, and because of sin; He changed death from being its wages, into a pathway into life; annulling its office as the precursor of judgment to come.

Body and soul, were under its power; and instead of the death of the soul, and the corruption of the body, He brought the life of the one and incorruptibility of the other to light, by the glad tidings of His victory! This

life was promised before the ages; manifested in Him, as Man on earth, and now has shined forth in the Gospel.

"Faithful is the word" to His own — "if we have co-died with Him, we shall also co-live. If we suffer, we shall co-reign. (Chap. 2: 11.)

And again "All that desire to live godly in Christ Jesus, shall suffer persecution." (Chap, 3: 12.) In Paul's life we see a pattern of this in a striking way. And now at the end of such a course he can turn to Timothy and recall it in the words "Thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, charity, patience, persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me at Antioch, at Iconium; at Lystra; what persecutions I endured: but out of them all the Lord delivered me."

I would remark here that these Scriptures (2 Timothy 3 and 4), are the forecastings of the Spirit of God, as to the state of things which would intervene at once when the Apostolic service in the church would end.

"The last days" at once began when Paul was gone. John who outlived him could tell us "Little children it is the last hour" (1 John 2: 18). So James, "Ye have heaped treasure together in the last days." (James 5: 3.) "The Judge standeth before the door." (Chap. 5: 9.) So Peter, "Ready to be revealed in the last time." (1 Peter 1, 5.) "The time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God." (1 Peter 4: 17.) "There shall come in the last days scoffers." (2 Peter 3: 3.) "The last days" is not merely the time in which we live, in the close of nineteen centuries. It is an expression technically used by all the Apostles descriptive of the then moral state that had come or was just coming in.

But now mark what comes next. This life in Christ — possessed by His own: "Christ is our life," would be opposed by the "form of godliness," in the ruined, professing body. We have already cited his words (2 Tim. 3) as to what men would become under His name; the "form of godliness" possessed — the "power" denied: from such the true-hearted would "turn away." Distinct positive departure from all that bore not the impress in practical power, of this life, lived and expressed.

This resistance of the truth would be seen in a remarkable way, by an imitation, a counterfeit which would go far to deceive. The aged Apostle reverts to the first moments of Israel's history when they were in Egypt, before deliverance. When they were still captives under Satan's power.

God had sent Moses to deliver them, and Aaron was to be his mouth-piece and prophet. They went in to speak to Pharaoh, as the Lord had commanded, and Aaron cast down his rod, at the demand of Pharaoh to show a proof of their divine mission; and Aaron's rod became a serpent.

The rod (the sign of power) had become Satanic, and under this the people were held captive. Just as in the profession of Christianity the form of godliness had all its power from the enemy, and was without the power of life by the truth. Moses fled before it, when first it was shown him by God in the desert; and now the faithful would also flee, or turn away.

Pharaoh calls now the wise men and sorcerers; the Jannes and Jambres of that day, who resisted the truth; and they cast down their rods, which also became serpents. Thus the Testimony of the Lord was frustrated by Satan's power. "And Pharaoh's heart was hardened."

Again the Lord presents further signs of power. Aaron, at His commandment, takes his rod and stretches it out upon the waters of Egypt; and the waters were turned to blood.

What was the sign of refreshment to man, became that of judgment and death. All this points to that terrible second enacting of these things, when the "Second angel pours out his vial of the wrath of God upon the sea, and it became as the blood of a dead man: and the third angel pours his vial upon the rivers and fountains of waters, and they become blood." All became deathful, not only the masses of nations and men; but the springs and issues of all human things in that day. How solemnly are all running up at the present moment to the end — the ocean of judgment that comes upon the earth.

Another sign is given in the plague of frogs. "Stretch forth thine hand with thy rod over the streams, over the rivers, and over the ponds, and cause frogs to come up upon the land of Egypt. And Aaron stretched out his hand over the waters of Egypt; and the frogs came up and covered the land of Egypt." Again Satan's power is put forth; and we read, "The magicians did so with their enchantments, and brought up frogs upon the land of Egypt." Then the respite came; and at the intercession of Moses the plague was removed, and "when Pharaoh saw there was respite he hardened his heart" still more. How striking that the only chance of the removal of the plague rested with Moses before the Lord: those who wielded Satan's power were helpless before it, and under its power.

Now here we have this persistent and terrible resisting of the truth; not with open persecution or power; but in a way which does more to destroy it than any other. It was by initiation — by presenting a counterfeit of the true. God's servants produce a proof of their divine mission; at once this is counteracted by the enemy. Jannes and Jambres imitate the miracle, and the onlooker is confounded. Satan and God were at one, it appeared, and Israel would not be allowed to go apart from Egypt. Thus it is at the present hour. What do we hear on every side? Oh, they say in the world-

churches around us, we have quite as good a gospel as that from such an one; there is no need to come apart as separatists to hear that, and so the enemy succeeds. We find that the truth of the presence of the Spirit on earth is spoken of, in such and such a church. No necessity, then, is there, to move from one section of the professing church to hear that: so also the doctrines of the church of God; of the coming of the Lord; each distinctive thing is taken up — first revealed to form His people, by the Lord, then the world-churches take them up, and the hearer — the onlooker is deceived by the counterfeit of the enemy; his conscience lulled to sleep, and the form without the power is the soporific used.

At last came another sign. "Say unto Aaron," saith the Lord, "Stretch out thy rod, and smite the dust of the land, that it may become lice throughout all the land of Egypt. And they did so: for Aaron stretched out his hand with his rod, and smote the dust of the earth, and it became lice in man and beast; all the dust of the land became lice throughout all the land of Egypt. And the magicians did so with their enchantments to bring forth lice, but they could not" (Ex. 7: 16-17.)

Yes my reader mark well, that last triumph of God; evoking the word from the mouths of Satan's instruments "This is the finger of God!" Their folly is made manifest unto all. The power of Satan's deception; his specious counterfeits, are worthless, in the presence of life — living realities speak for God more than all. They could go no farther than this. Imitation might be inimitable: counterfeit might be so near the truth — so like, that all were deceived. But the life of Christ to be lived on earth — Christ living in his own, producing the deep reality of that which no imitation can ever reach, and the folly of all is made manifest as theirs also was.

This "manner of life" was seen in Paul — a man of like passions as we are. He was the exponent of his own teaching. His "purpose, faith, longsuffering, love, patience, persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra; what persecutions I endured: but out of them all the Lord delivered me." Such was the course of this man. Such was a course which would put to silence the spurious imitation which was resisting the truth: ever learning but never able to come to the knowledge of it.

If ever there was a time when the godly should live to Christ, it is now. It is the only way in which they will put to shame the counterfeits of the enemy, in which even His own are ensnared; and force the enemy, and the world around which he leads and governs to say, "This is the finger of God." God alone can produce life, and give the power and grace to live it here below. It alone is fragrant in His sight. "The life of Jesus made manifest in our body." May we be stirred to the depths of our souls with the thought of this victory, which we can indeed give Him over the enemy,

even our faith; overcoming the world which He has passed through in His own perfection. "I have overcome the world." It is a beaten foe. Our faith in Him keeps us dependent and "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." (1 John 5: 4.)

Thus "life," which walks with God, and waits for Christ, and serves Him while it waits, is the subject initiative in his teaching here. (2 Tim. 1: 1.) It was promised in Christ Jesus before the world was: exhibited in Him on earth; (2 Tim. 1: 10), brought to light by the glad tidings of His work and victory. (2 Tim. 1: 10.) Those who have died with Him shall also live with Him, if we look onward to the future. (2 Tim. 2: 11.) It was seen in Paul as a present thing, as he walked and served continually. (2 Tim. 3: 10.) The enemy would frustrate it by his counterfeits but be brought to shame by a lowly, unworldly, devoted and separate walk with God. (2 Tim. 3: 8, 9.) And all that would thus live godly in Christ Jesus would suffer. (2 Tim. 3: 12.)

Still, the servant was to "continue in the things which thou hast learned, and been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them." Never would there come a moment when such were to be abandoned; "Paul's doctrine" was the last revelation ever given; it was God's secret to those that fear Him who had an ear to hear. Until we all come in the unity of the faith, it would abide; because the Holy Ghost on earth remained. It has been the last truth restored to the church of God, as it was the last given; and when it was lost at the first, complete ruin supervened; and now when refused, or abused, by taking it up in the form without the power, it sounds as the tocsin to all further progress in those who are thus beguiled of the enemy.

The Scriptures of God are completed by the doctrine of the church through Paul. "Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for His body's sake, which is the assembly; whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given unto me for you, to complete the Word of God." (Col. 1: 24, 25.) A segment of the complete circle of revelation was wanted when Paul was called, and by his doctrine all is told; there is no advance beyond it. John may unfold what was already spoken of, but no further truth is revealed. To go beyond it, and the Scriptures completed by it, is the spirit of error; of antichrist. John can tell the elect lady and her children "that many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not Jesus Christ coming in flesh. This is the deceiver, and the antichrist." (and) "Whosoever goes forward and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God."

How completely does the Spirit of God pronounce against all advance, all development; and all that would not abide in what was "from the beginning," i.e., from the complete revelation of the truth in Christ,

unfolded through His Apostles by the Holy Ghost, John could say again "He that knoweth God heareth us: he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error." (1 John 4: 6.)

God has cast His people over on the Scriptures, in the last days. "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), said the Apostle to the elders at Ephesus, where "grievous wolves were entering, not sparing the flock." "Continue," says he to Timothy, as to all of us, "thou in the things which thou hast learned, and hast been assured of, knowing from whom thou hast learned them; and that from an infant thou hast known the Holy Scriptures." "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 every good work." (2 Tim. 3: 14, 16.)