

## **The Doctrine of the Church as revealed to the Apostle Paul.**

*"There is One Body and One Spirit," Eph. 4: 4*

Also Included is.....

**The Last Days of the Church**

**The Unity of the Spirit**

**Principles of Gathering**

I trust the following remarks on this momentous subject may be found useful at the present time, and that an ever gracious Lord may vouchsafe His blessing on the perusal of them to many of His people, causing them to realize this most important truth, and linking their souls practically to the divine principles set forth therein.

The Lord has been most graciously working in many places in these last days. Souls have been new-born to Him and brought into the liberty of His grace through the Gospel. Souls thus set free from the bondage of sin and Satan have also found freedom from the trammels of the sects and parties in the professing church. They have, in many cases, begun to act upon their privileges and, as the disciples of old (Acts 20: 7), have assembled themselves to break bread and thus show forth the groundwork of their redemption and liberty in that which calls to mind the Lord in His death. Difficulties have arisen and many have found that they still wanted a divine principle beyond this to guide them, and yet possibly feared to go deeper into these things, lest they should be led into something which perhaps they had been told to avoid. The confusion in which things are and the sad failures of ourselves and of our brethren have often been the means of driving timid souls away and causing them to shrink from inquiring more deeply into the divine principles revealed in the Word.

In such a state of things the enemy, as ever, seeks to keep the soul from learning the truths of God. Satan's successful effort at the first was to seek to blot out in practice, if he could not do so in fact, the great ever-living truth named at the head of this paper. The vessel, Paul, who communicated it to us through his inspired epistles, had to say at the close of his ministry "All they which are in Asia are turned away from me" (2 Tim. 1: 15). Ephesus was the capital of that proconsul province and in it was an assembly of God, to which those high truths of the "mystery which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed" were written. God has been pleased of His own sovereign grace to revive out of the rubbish of centuries this wondrous truth which

has lain so long dormant. Many have learned it and have sought in their weakness to walk therein. They have, through evil report and good report and failings innumerable, sought, in reliance upon a gracious God, to glorify Christ in the pathway of obedience to the revealed will of God.

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The enemy seeks to keep the Lord's people from learning this, His leading truth for the interval or period in which we live. What then I desire is, that the eyes of my brethren's understanding be enlightened by the Spirit's teaching to discover what they really are before God, namely, members of the one body of Christ united together by one Spirit, and that they may act accordingly.

It is quite impossible that, as a Christian, I can be a mere individual at the present time. I am a member of the body of Christ as well. And while seeking as an individual servant to serve my Lord, I find I have, in common with the rest of the body, a corporate responsibility to Christ, the Head of His body, the Church. I seek not, then, to evade this responsibility by looking at the failures of others, or by finding an excuse in the truth of Christ's lordship over me as a servant.

The Epistle to the Romans is that in which the Spirit of God treats us with the most distinct individuality, first as guilty sinners and then as justified persons, justified by faith. And yet when He comes to the duties and walk which flow from our individual blessing and position, He at once turns us to our corporate responsibility, so that we cannot dissociate these things. No one can read Romans 12 without discovering this. As an individual I am exhorted to present my body a living sacrifice, my reasonable service; to be transformed by the renewing of my mind in order to prove that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. Then, as to my corporate place in the exercise of gift or otherwise, I am to exercise it with respect to the body. "For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office; so we being many, are one body in Christ and every one members one of another. Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us," we are to put them in exercise and use them for the benefit of the other members.

I desire that my brethren, having discovered what they are, may own the truth and carry it out practically, walking therein with those whom the Lord has called and privileged to do likewise. Of this I am persuaded, that no one ever learned a truth after a divine manner till the soul was using practically what it had learned. Then its true power has been felt; so that to talk, as many do, of the body of Christ and never to have really acted upon this truth, is but to prove that the truth has not been received into the conscience and soul, while, no doubt, enough has been seen of it to guide the steps thereinto. With this desire I pass on to my subject.

### ***Distinctive Positions of Jews and Gentiles in Old Testament Times***

It will be well to consider the distinctive positions which the Jew and the Gentile occupied in Old Testament days before the formation of the body of a risen and ascended Christ was revealed. The quotation of two Scriptures will make this distinction plain.

As to Israel we 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 time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; that at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and 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 then gave, were confined to the elect nation of Israel, and that to partake of these blessings a Gentile had to come in and be subordinate to the Jew, in whom they were vested as the vessel of blessing.

Our next Scripture is 1 Cor. 12: 12, 13, where we read, "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 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." 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 it. It was not sufficient that the wall 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 and elsewhere.

The prophets had spoken of a day of which it was said, "Rejoice, ye Gentiles, with His people." But even in such a state of blessing, Gentiles remained Gentiles, and His people remained His people. The prophets never spoke of this "body," where Jew and Gentile alike have lost their national and social positions, where there is neither Jew nor Gentile,

neither bond nor free. At the present time there are three classes before God in the world. Paul speaks of them in 1 Cor. 10: 32. They are "the Jews," "the Gentiles" and "the Church of God." In the last mentioned both Jew and Gentile have ceased to be such before God; believers from amongst both having been incorporated into this body of which we speak. The prophets spoke of the time when that which we call the millennium, or more correctly the Kingdom, will have been established on earth; when 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 the Lord, being a Jew, should ask drink of her who was a woman of Samaria, for the Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans ( 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. 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 enmity, even 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 the work of redemption, was the removal of the wall of partition which until then had existed between Jew and Gentile. It was the basis or groundwork for the formation of this body and for the reconciliation of a people to God, taken from both Jews and Gentiles, both having access by one Spirit unto the Father. The Father is 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 elect nation of Israel.

All this, however, does not constitute a "body." It only removes the hindrance. Redemption has been accomplished; the hindrance is removed; what is now wanted is to have the Head of the body in heaven, raised up from the dead — a glorified man.

### ***Christ, the Head of the Body, in Heaven***

The remarkable quotation of the 8th Psalm by the Apostle Paul in Ephesians i, will be helpful to us in understanding this. There we read (verses 19-23) , "According to 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, far above all principality and power and might and dominion and every name that is named, not only in this world but also in that which is to come; and hath put all things under His feet [quoted from Ps. viii], 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 8th 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 (Rom. 8: 19-23). This headship is given, as Psalm 8 tells us, to a "Son of man." And we discover who this Son of man is in Hebrews ii, where the Apostle, quoting the psalm, tells us that we do not yet see the grand result of all things being subject to Him. "For in that He put all in subjection 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 man." Thus we find who this "Son of man" is. It is Jesus. This brings us back to Eph. 1, where Paul quotes the same psalm. So we learn that Christ, as Man glorified, has been raised by God from the dead and seated in the heavenlies far above all principality and power and above every name, with all things under His feet, and has been made "Head over all things to the Church which is His body." There He is waiting for the manifest assumption of this Headship, as well as for the manifestation of His other glories.

We have now the Head of the body in heaven, a glorified Man, as well as the wall of partition removed. But before going further to consider the formation of the body, we must turn aside for a moment and see what Scripture says of

### ***Union with Christ***

In Old Testament times the saints were new-born, but they were not united to Christ: they possessed life, although the doctrine of it was not made known. The Abrahams and Davids were all saved — 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 Christ had

not come and there was no man there to be united to. Even when Christ was here, a Man amongst men, there was no union between Him and sinful men: there could be none. 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, in grace, enters 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 whereby God can bring believers 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 and 1 Cor. 3: 16). He makes the body of the believer His temple (1 Cor. 6: 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 unto 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, 22) . Hence union with Christ is by the Holy Ghost dwelling in the believer's body and uniting him to Christ glorified in heaven.

This union neither existed, nor was it even contemplated for the Old Testament saints: it was not in the counsels of God for them. If we turn to John vii, 37-39, we find the line drawn with great distinctness between what is now and what had gone before. The Lord Jesus, in the chapter mentioned, could not show Himself to the world, because neither the Jews nor His brethren believed in Him, and so He could not 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 the Lord goes up to the Feast "as it were in secret." In the last day of the Feast He stood 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 announced, and the Kingdom which had been refused, is put off till another day.

The disciples were told by the Lord, after His resurrection from the dead, to remain at Jerusalem for the promise of the Father, that is, the Comforter, the Spirit of truth, which they had heard of Him, as related in John 14, 15 and 16. The Holy Ghost, the other Comforter, was to be given and to this end it was positively expedient that Jesus should go away, otherwise the Holy Ghost would not come. The Lord tells them in Acts 1: 5, "John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence." The Lord was seen of them during forty days after He rose from the dead, 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, the promise was fulfilled, and Peter told the Jews,

**"This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are 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 seen that the Lord's promise, "Ye shall be baptized with 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, then about 3,000 and increased largely afterwards, 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 by the baptism of the Holy Ghost. When they of Judea heard of this, Peter was called to account for what he had done. In answer, he rehearsed the matter from the beginning and declared that the Holy Ghost had acted with the Gentiles in a similar manner to that on the day of Pentecost with the Jews (Acts 11: 15).**

**Thus we have in the clearest way the Jew and the Gentile receiving the baptism of the Holy Ghost; as to which it should be noted that this baptism is only used with reference to the corporate body of saints upon earth: by it individuals are brought into a corporate relationship to each other and to Christ.**

**We must now turn to Paul, for to him alone of all the apostles was the revelation of the "mystery" committed. He speaks of it in Ephesians 3 and says it had been "hid in God," not even in "Scripture," but "in God," in His eternal purpose. This "mystery" is expressed in the words, "That the Gentiles should be joint-heirs, and a joint-body, and joint-partakers of His promise in Christ by the gospel" (thus should the passage be read, that is, joint with the Jews).**

**Paul describes this body and how it is formed in 1 Cor. 12: 12-27, where he says, "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 the Christ." (This name "the Christ" is here applied to the head and the members, in the same way as the name "Adam" is applied to him and his wife jointly in Genesis 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." Here both Jews and Gentiles lose their distinctive places and are brought into one body and united by the Holy Ghost to each other and to Christ, the Head, the Man glorified.**

**In verse 27 the Apostle recognizes the assembly of God at Corinth as the body. "Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular" (or**

in part: it is the same word as "in part" in ch. 13: 9, 10). That is, in the principle and ground of their gathering they were the body of Christ, but in themselves they were "members in part," part of a whole.

Now this body is in the world: it is not in heaven. The Head is in heaven and the members have a heavenly position by faith; while in fact they are in the world. This body has been passing along through the world, its unity as perfect as on the day in which the descent 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 become like the "great house" of 2 Timothy 2: 19-22: true, that all that was committed to man's responsibility has, as ever, failed. But the body of Christ which was in the world then, is still 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 composed that regiment die off or are slain in battle and their places are filled up by others, so that 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 nineteen 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 ever it was.

### *The Church as a Building growing into a Temple and as a Habitation of God*

In Ephesians 2: 21 and 22, we get two aspects of the Church of God.

Verse 21 says: "In whom all the building fitly framed together, groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord." Here we find a temple or building growing but not yet finished, that is, it is growing up day by day into that which it will be finally when in glory, a holy temple in the Lord.

Verse 22 says: "In whom ye also [the saints and believers in Christ Jesus] are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.

**This gives us what the entire number of saints now or at any moment constitute corporately in the world. They are a habitation or dwelling-place of God through the Spirit.**

**These two thoughts may be illustrated by what has gone before. When Jehovah was passing through the wilderness from Egypt to Canaan, He dwelt in a tabernacle which in itself was perfect in all its parts and furniture, a complete thing. It moved along through the wilderness towards the Land of Promise and was the habitation of God. But when at last Israel was settled in the land, Jehovah had a temple, a magnificent structure in dimensions and appointments far beyond the tabernacle which had been His dwelling-place on the journey.**

**Thus, with those two verses in Eph. 2; verse 21 shows us what God will have in the Land (in heaven itself) when the temple now growing under His workmanship will have attained its full proportions and be in glory; while verse 22 tells us what the saints are meanwhile, namely, God's dwelling-place, His tabernacle or habitation through the Spirit.**

**This may serve to illustrate in some measure, and bring home to our hearts and consciences for our practical walks what we are as a present thing. How responsible, then, we are, in observing such a truth, to act upon it; to cast our purposes, our aims, our all into it. Not merely to know it as some nice truth or doctrine, but as a living member of it, to walk in it, to link my soul on to the practice of it, with those who are observing it albeit in weakness; to separate myself from all that in practice disowns it; to act upon the living, abiding truth, that which occupies the mind and purpose of God; that which is now made known to the principalities and powers in heavenly places, who see in the Church the manifold wisdom of God (Eph. 3: 10). How solemn, on the other hand, to disown it or put it aside as something that does not concern us!**

**Although the oneness of which the Lord Jesus spoke to His Father 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 desired 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 the Holy Ghost.**

**How beautifully do we find Christ's prayer for their oneness answered in Acts 2 to 4! We read there, "They lifted up their voice to God, with one accord." "The multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul." His prayer was answered for a little moment, "that they**

all may be one," as in practice they were. How soon, indeed, did this oneness of practice fail! Then in chapter 9 we find Saul of Tarsus, afterwards Paul the Apostle, called out to reveal something that could never fail the unity of the Spirit in the body of Christ.

This unity is what we have to keep. 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. Not to make a unity, but to keep by the bond of peace that unity which exists by the presence of the Holy Spirit in the One Body.

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

I would put the question to many — In what state do you suppose things were when Ephesians was written? Oh (they would probably reply) when things were going well! The Church of God was all going on well: the church was in a proper state and ready for such truth. To which I should be obliged to reply — You are all wrong! Things were totally ruined. The "Church of God at Ephesus" is not addressed (even supposing we admit the words "in Ephesus" into the first verse, which is doubtful, and questioned by many). That there was such a thing as "the Church of God" at Ephesus, we are told by Paul's own lips in his address to the elders there, in Acts 20: 28. But at the time he wrote this epistle, he was a prisoner for two years in Rome and had lived to see the ruin of what he had set up on earth as a "wise master-builder," and watched over as a father and as a nurse, with all the solicitude and energy of his devoted heart.

This circular letter 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 begun already to scatter the flock? Be that as it may, there was no "Assembly of God at Ephesus" addressed, but "saints and faithful ones in Christ Jesus." From that moment to the end therefore, does this letter afford a divine ground for faith, be the days never so evil.

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 the "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.

### The Unity of the Spirit

#### Ephesians 4: 3

*This pamphlet is a sequel to the one entitled "The Doctrine of the Church as revealed to the Apostle Paul." Many souls have, more or less, apprehended the truth of "One Body and One Spirit," but have not yet grasped the force of the exhortation to connect their practice with this fundamental truth.*

*It is hoped that in the Lord's rich mercy this further paper may be helpful to souls.*

*"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 longsuffering, 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.*

Here we find that there are unities connected with the Spirit, with the Lord and with God. I treat here of the unity of the Spirit, as being specially connected with the object of this paper. The observing of this unity is our responsibility: the others fall into their own places accordingly.

I would here remark upon the use of an expression which is often used to convey a right thought, but which is not found in Scripture, namely, "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 the "unity of the Spirit." If we were exhorted to keep the unity of the body, we should 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 us in company and association with a divine Person here upon earth.

Here I would note that which surely is so plain in the Word as to make one almost ashamed of having to insist on it, that is, the personal presence of a divine Person — God the Holy Ghost — here upon earth; not only in each individual believer, but also in the Church of God. The

individual believer is indwelt by the Spirit of God, anointed, sealed, baptized with all other believers into one body. The baptism of the Holy Ghost does not leave him an isolated person. Its action connects him with all other believers, so forming a body of which Christ is the Head. The promise of the Lord as to the Comforter was that He should not only be with them but in them. The Lord was with them: the Holy Ghost in His absence would be both with them and in them; consequently the Holy Ghost at Pentecost not only "filled all the house," but "there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire and it sat upon each of them and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost" (Acts 2: 2-4). He not only filled each one, but later on (in Acts 4: 31), at the gathering for prayer, He manifested His presence in their midst by shaking the place where they were assembled.

The saints are the body of Christ by one Spirit; but they are also the "habitation of God through the Spirit" (Eph. 2: 22). God dwells amongst them, as we read in 2 Cor. 6: 16: "I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God and they shall be my people." In being obliged to insist on this truth, we have almost come to the state of the men at Ephesus (Acts 19: 2) who, in answer to the Apostle's question, "Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?" said: "We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost" [or "We have not even heard whether the Holy Ghost has come"]. The state of things prevailing to-day makes it necessary to call attention to this important truth concerning the presence of the Holy Spirit both in the individual believer and in the Church of God.

If the Church of God were in a healthy state, there would be no practical difference between the two 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 the body. If the Church were 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 its 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 kept? What is "endeavouring" to do so? What is faithfulness to the nature of the Church, Christ's body, in an evil day? It is *Separation from Evil*. My first duty must be to "depart from iniquity." It may be moral or doctrinal evil, because evil assumes many shapes: I separate myself from it, to Christ. Thus separated, I find myself in the fellowship of the Spirit of God. He glorifies

**Christ and dissociates me from everything contrary to Christ; associating me with that which is according to Christ. The notion that I may be wittingly associated with an evil principle or doctrine or practice and yet be undefiled, is an 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 Spirit.**

**When we have separated from evil and are walking in the fellowship of the Holy Ghost, Who is the Spirit of holiness and the Spirit of truth, we find others who are walking in the same way, and so we can be together happily in the unity of the Spirit. If there is a spot upon earth where the Lord can be in unhindered blessing, it is amongst those thus together, where nothing is allowed that is inconsistent with His presence in the midst or that can grieve or hinder the Spirit of God. It is not a question of how the saints may be together, but of a place where the Lord Himself may be in free and unhindered blessedness, to manifest His presence amongst those who seek to be faithful to Him in an evil day.**

**The primary step 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 the Spirit, who keeps me in company with Christ. To Philadelphia Christ speaks of Himself as "He that is holy, He that is true" and the Spirit of God is the Spirit of holiness and the Spirit of truth. Holiness will not do without the truth, nor the truth without holiness. The absence of either is not of the Spirit of God.**

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

**The effect of this "endeavour" is not confined to those who have come together in separation from evil and in the fellowship of the Holy Ghost. Its aspect is towards, and has in view, every member of Christ in whatsoever association he may be. Those who are maintaining the truth are thus 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 in the fellowship of the Spirit of God — this 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.

A word here to my beloved brethren who have been called and honoured of God to occupy such a place in these last evil days. How deeply responsible are they that all their words and actions may so fully bear the test of the light and truth of God, that no occasion of stumbling be found in them to hinder their brethren in any wise. Let there be such simple blessed devotedness to Christ and His glory seen in them, that their brethren who are seeking God's path in the labyrinth around, may be drawn towards the truth and the place where Christ can freely be with His people. Let them be found in such a place in an evil day; let the character of their walk be simple and fervent devotedness to Christ; thoroughly dependent upon Him as conscious of their weakness; thoroughly devoted to Him and to that Church which He loves. I believe, if they were walking in the power and grace of the position they have been called to, that not alone their brethren who ought to be with them, but the world itself would have to own, "If aught be true on earth, that is!" The counterfeits of the enemy, too, would expose themselves. Let them ever be prepared to make much of Christ and of the path into which He has called them in special association with Himself, in His unspeakable grace; so that He may say to them: "Thou hast kept my word and hast not denied my name." There would then be a savour and a power in the simple fact that Christ was everything amongst them.

Through the Lord's great mercy, this endeavour to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace has been accorded to His saints, and many, seeing the pathway, have had faith to embrace it. When such is the case, the effort that some have made to take a place outside and independent of those who have thus been led to 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 the ground of the one body, they are of necessity bound with all those elsewhere who have been before them in the way and who may have learned more fully the 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 no such independency, especially when it is coupled with the profession of the truth of one body and one Spirit, without the practice flowing from such a truth. 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, simply gathering in the Name of the Lord. By falling into an independent position, 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 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 who have had light and grace given to them, do walk therein; this 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 in the flesh for the fellowship of the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost will not bend Himself to our ways or to our fellowship; we must bend our ways into practical fellowship with Him. Therefore the Apostle bids us 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 pause before accepting a position which must practically put 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 what Christ died to gather is scattered. He will surely gather them in heaven; but He died to gather them together in one *now*. It cannot be but by keeping the unity of the Spirit; 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.

God has in His grace gathered many saints together in the unity of the Spirit to the Name of the Lord, and has sustained them in the pathway through evil report and good report. To accept ground independent[ly] of

that to which God had already recalled souls to walk in and act upon, is to forfeit the place in the unity of the Spirit which has been accorded of the Lord and to slip away from the fellowship of the Spirit of God.

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

The Lord in His mercy keeps His faithful ones true and devoted to Him in these evil days. They may be but a remnant, but two things have ever marked the faithful remnant at any time: *Devotedness to the Lord*, and *Strict 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 grace they have used it and have been brought into the place where He is. May 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.

## Appendix

### Principles of Gathering

The resource for faith amid the confusion around is Matthew 18: 20: "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." But this cannot be pleaded to the exclusion of the truth of the unity of the Spirit in the body of Christ. To come together pleading the promise of Matt. 18: 20, and at the same time disowning the ground of the body of Christ, is a misapplication of the promise. This promise was given before there was any failure and before the truth of the one body was revealed. It embodies a fundamental principle and is the resource for faith when the manifestation of the one body by the visible oneness of its members, has failed. Faith in the unity of the Spirit in the one body as existing here on earth, is what we need the more. And then, when we cannot restore the state of things in Acts 2 to 4, because the oneness of the members is no longer in evidence, we have Matthew 18: 20 as a resource to be counted upon by faith. It needs but little discernment to

see that the Spirit of God constitutes the body in unity by virtue of His presence therein; and that He Himself would be disowning this, did He gather disciples apart from the principle of the one body or on any other ground.

Such being the ground of gathering, how solemn is the position of those who have attempted to set up another table claiming to be the Lord's (sad to say, this has been done in some cases) and gather together another assembly in a place where the Lord's table has been already spread in the communion of the body of Christ. If done in true-hearted ignorance, well: the Lord bears with such in patient grace and instructs those who have a single eye. But if done knowingly, nothing can justify such an act. Nothing could alter the principle of those who are already gathered on the ground of the one body of Christ, unless something arose in their midst which denied the foundation truths of Christian faith, such as false doctrine touching the person or glory of Christ, or which showed indifference on such a subject, or which would be a denial of the truth of "One Body and One Spirit."

One has to bear with mistakes, and to seek, with grace and patience, to bring our brethren aright, if they have erred in judgment. But unless an assembly accepts as its line of action anything which would subvert the foundation truths of faith, it has its claim on me as an assembly of God. To set up another is to break practically, as far as I can, the unity of the Spirit, which I am exhorted to keep. If we have grace for it, let us labour, Nehemiah-like, to bring our brethren into the consciousness of their position, that they may "walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work and growing by the knowledge of God." And let us not by any act of ours render confusion more confounded.

### The Last Days of the Church

#### *"The Church of the Living God" (1 Tim. 3: 15)*

The testimony in which the faithful are called to walk in the last days, has a two-fold character: first, a witness to the unity of the body of Christ, formed by the Holy Ghost sent down at Pentecost; 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 here on earth, commonly called "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 will they be a witness to the *present* state of the Church of God and not to its state as first displayed.

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

For example, the blessing of Asher in Deut. 33: 24-25, ends with these lovely words: "As thy days, so shall thy strength be" and all went to ruin, as the history of Israel unfolds. Yet, at the first coming of Christ, when the godly pious remnant of the people were "waiting for the consolation of Israel," we find one of that same tribe, "Anna a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Aser [Asher], a widow of about fourscore and four years, which departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day," in the enjoyment and power of that blessing of Moses; "so shall thy strength be." And the Lord Christ Himself became identified with that obscure remnant, of which she. was one, a remnant 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 the occupation of the divine platform of God's earthly people; to them we find these 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 Jehovah "bore them on eagles' wings and brought them to Himself" and removed their shoulders 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 (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. 6: 12, 13; Hag. 2: 7-9).

He will shake the heavens and the earth and over throw the throne of kingdoms (Hag. 2: 21-23), thus identifying all His power with the small remnant of His people who walk in company with His mind. He will make all to come and worship before their feet and know that He has loved them.

Thus, too, those who answer to the calling which suits His mind, as seen 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 will 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, will 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. 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 in the state of each of the seven Churches, each larger feature coming into prominence and presenting the salient characteristics of the professing Church, till the Church becomes a remnant in the message to Thyatira and develops into those which follow. But *morally* Philadelphia represents those who answer to Christ's heart at all times and in all circumstances since the Lord gave those messages, till His threat — "I will spue thee out of my mouth" — is finally executed. In the historical view, Philadelphia comes in after Sardis and is exhorted to "hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown"; but as long as His voice is heard by faithful souls, such, wherever found, form the link between the Church at Pentecost and the Bride, the Lamb's wife in the day of the glory. 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, and "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 instructs us as to the Church of God, although fully recognising its existence. When we are therefore grounded and settled in that which never fails — the one Body of Christ, formed and 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. 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 remains as long as God's Spirit remains and His Word abides: "till we all come in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." (Eph. 4: 13)

*The Church: A Habitation of God through the Spirit.*

I turn now to examine another side of the truth of the Church of God as unfolded in the doctrine taught by the Apostle Paul: not that of the Body of Christ, united to her Head in heaven and maintained by the Holy Ghost 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 who were baptized by the Holy Ghost and thus formed into the Body united to Christ in heaven, were also on earth a "Habitation of God through the Spirit." Each was conterminous with the other. Both forms embraced the same people. Those who composed the Body composed the House, and none else.

During the early part of the Acts of the Apostles there was a sort of tentative dealing with Israel once more, an opportunity being given to them that if they would repent and be converted, they might receive Jesus Christ who would be sent to them. At the same time He who knows the end from the beginning, knew what would be the result of this fresh offer. Nevertheless it was needful in His purposes to bring out fully the responsibility of that guilty people in their final rejection of Christ in the glory. This took place when they murdered Stephen, who not only bore witness to their rejection of the Messiah but also to their rejection of the Holy Ghost. 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, was diverted in its course and 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" (Samaria) and "Jerusalem" is blotted out by its peaceful waters, at least in the souls of those who accepted the living water 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 the Lord Jesus. A child of the race of Ham, an Ethiopian, Chamberlain of Queen Candace, is sitting in his chariot, reading the Prophet Isaiah. He had come from distant Africa to worship at Jerusalem, and with an unsatisfied heart was returning to his own country. The day of Jerusalem's visitation was past. The words of the Lord Jesus, when he wept over Jerusalem, might have been heard again: "If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto 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," who after hearing a few words from Philip, God's messenger, evangelizing Jesus to him, receives the message and goes on his way rejoicing.

The whole Assembly at Jerusalem is broken up and "all were scattered abroad except the apostles." Saul, the persecutor of the Church, is converted at the height of his mad career by the words of the Lord Jesus in glory: "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?" and then and there becomes "a chosen vessel unto the Lord, to bear His Name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel."

Saul, the persecutor of the Church, becomes Paul the Apostle and is made a Minister of the Church (Col. 1: 24, 25) to unfold the wondrous mystery, "even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to His saints: to whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory."

Then in 1 Corinthians we find Paul "as a wise master builder" laying the foundation "which is Jesus Christ," and others "building thereupon." So the work goes on. On the one side the divine work of God in forming the Body of Christ by the baptism of the Holy Ghost; and on the other we have the administration of the House put into man's hands. 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 by baptism into the place where the Spirit dwelt. The Apostles and those who constituted the House at the first, were never baptized: they were not thus received into the place where they were already. But all who came after were thus received, professing by being "baptized unto Christ Jesus that they were baptized unto His death," and were "buried with Him by baptism unto death," (Rom. 6: 3, 4). 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": "while men slept, the enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat." "Wood, hay, 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. Thus the House, conterminous at first with the Body, began to enlarge itself 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, which is likened by Paul to "a great house" (2 Tim. 2: 20) containing "not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour and some to dishonour."

We will now turn 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 1st Epistle to the Corinthians we find two greater divisions: 1st, ch. 1 to ch. 10: 14; and 2nd, ch. 10: 15 to ch. 16. In the first division the Apostle has the House before him; in the second, the Body. Chapter 12 connects both. And here it may be of use to say that the word "Church" or "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 (Eph. 2: 22: see 1 Tim. 3: 15 where both are put together).

In the Apostle's address to the saints at Corinth we find a most comprehensive line of thought. Unto the Church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called [to be] saints [that is, saints by calling], with all that in every place call upon the Name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and Ours." In this address we find him writing .to the whole 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: the expression, "calling on the Name of the Lord," having this meaning in Scripture. The simply calling on His Name does not prove their reality: this has to be proved in those who do so call. Now the whole professing church at that day, being assumed as real, another thing arises when ruin has set in. The professing Church has now enlarged itself to what we term Christendom, but it is nevertheless bound by what was revealed to the Apostle Paul and contained in his inspired writings.

The wisdom of the Spirit of God foresaw what would happen; 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 (ch. 1: 1-14) a preface; second (ch. 1: 15 — ch. 2) takes up what had already supervened in the

lifetime of the Apostle, in the words, "This thou knowest"; and third (ch. 3 and 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 themselves, 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 the description of the profession of Christianity: this is 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! To find that instead of the habitation of God on earth being the answer to the glory of Christ in heaven, as the Spirit of God meant it to be, 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 is this, that when the heathen are described (Rom. 1: 28-32), the words, "having a form of godliness," are not used: they are added to similar words in 2 Tim. 3 to describe a worse state, because existing under the Name of Christ.

There is no need for one to examine more. We might recall: the words of the Apostle in Phil. 2: 21, All seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's"; and (ch. 3: 18, 19) "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 God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind [set their minds upon] earthly things." Colossians, too, and Galatians, and even Ephesians, refer to those evils which had entered in and against which the faithful are warned. There is, too, a tendency in the saints to sink down into an abnormal state of soul below the level of that which prevailed at the first. The 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 the Christian standing — 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 the Lord Jesus spoke of the Temple at Jerusalem as "Father's House," though the people had made it

**a "house of merchandise" and a "den of thieves." So the House of God remains such, as long as the Spirit of God abides there. When He departs from it, it becomes, as we read in Rev. 18: 2, "the habitation of devils and the hold of every foul spirit and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird."**