

**SIMPLE PAPERS**

*.. on the ..*

**CHRISTIAN ASSEMBLY**

*.. with ..*

*Some Practical Considerations as to  
Christian Testimony in the  
Present Day*

*.. by ..*

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## FOREWORD

These simple papers are sent forth in the hope that they may prove useful as stepping-stones to a clearer vision of some of the things which relate to the Christian Assembly.

The writer hopes they will be especially useful to young believers, affording them at least a measure of help in some practical matters in these difficult days.

—JOHN BLOORE.

SIMPLE PAPERS  
*on the*  
CHRISTIAN ASSEMBLY

I

The following outlines of truth concerning the Assembly are put forth with the hope that they may not only be helpful but lead to further and more detailed individual study.

First, the truth concerning the Church, or assembly, of God is of abiding significance to the Christian. It furnishes him with the knowledge of God's eternal purpose and present work in grace, gives wisdom for his path in the world, and shows principles which are of continuous application, no matter how great the failure which has come in. Let us first consider the assembly in the aspect of the ONE BODY, to which every believer belongs.

As to its beginning it was not whilst Christ was here, for He says, "I *will* build My assembly" (Matt. 16: 18).\* When and how it began, we see in Acts 2: 1-4; and 1 Cor. 12: 13 says, "By one Spirit we have all been baptized into one Body." That this is the same as the Church, or assembly (though there is quite distinctive teaching connected with these different terms), is evident from Eph. 1: 23, "the Church, which is His Body" (Rom. 12: 4, 5; Eph. 5: 30; Col. 1: 18, 24).

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\*The quotations throughout are from the J. N. D. Trans.

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From Acts 2: 47 we see there is continual adding to this company of true believers in the Lord Jesus. So the apostle can say "we"—referring to the Corinthians, himself, and others, who were not present at Pentecost; all are participants in this baptism, all having "been given to drink of one Spirit" (1 Cor. 12: 13). Now this primarily is the unity of the Spirit, for there is but one Body and one Spirit (Eph. 4: 3, 4).

That every believer belongs to, or is part of, this one and only Church, or assembly, or Body, is clearly stated in 1 Cor. 12: 12, 13—the Body is composed of many members, and "by one Spirit we are all baptized into one Body."

Since all true believers are joined together into one Body, let us inquire, What was it which they believed? The answer is given in 1 Cor. 15: 1-4: "I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; by which also ye are saved . . . how that Christ died for our sins . . . was buried, and that He rose again according to the Scriptures." So with the Ephesians, having heard the gospel, they trusted and believed Christ (Eph. 1: 13). Likewise the Colossians (1: 4-6) and the Philipians (1: 4-7). Thus Christ and Him crucified was the great basic truth of their faith (1 Cor. 1: 21, 22; Gal. 3: 1). Should we consider the subject of what the gospel comprises, however, it would be needful to bring in many other features of truth. So also with the Thessalonians, they received the gospel, and became followers of those who preached it and of the Lord (1 Thess. 1: 5, 6); their faith in Christ and

suffering for His sake became an example to other assemblies (spoken of in the plural here, assemblies, of which we shall speak later). We have noted the time and manner of the Church's beginning, of whom it is composed, and what it is which introduces into it. Let us now ask, What is the character especially belonging to the Church?

First, this may be gathered from the term itself. The word *ecclesia*, or assembly (rendered uniformly "Church" in the Authorized Version, except in Acts 19: 32,39,41), means a "called out" company. The Spirit of God has adopted this word to designate the company of believers united together and to Christ in heaven by the action of the Holy Spirit. It clearly suggests separation. But from whom and from what? The distinct place of this company, hence its separateness, is intimated in the threefold division of 1 Cor. 10: 32—"Jews, Gentiles, and the Church of God." This is further emphasized when we know that this Church, or assembly, is composed of believers from amongst both Jews and Gentiles (1 Cor. 12: 13; Eph. 3: 6 with 2:11-22). They are thus separated, called out, from their natural relation and position in the world to be in this new Body inaugurated on the day of Pentecost. The Lord prophetically speaks of this in John 10. He would lead out His sheep from the Jewish fold, and bring His other sheep (Gentiles) and unite them in one flock (ver. 16). Further, it is separated from the world not only by being thus called apart from it, but also by the fact that it is united to Christ in heaven, and the Holy Spirit here is

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witnessing to His exaltation while rejected by the world (John 16: 8-11). And by the Spirit the assembly is linked with its Head, Christ in glory. This at once shows its character. In position, relation, and destiny, it is heavenly, separate from the world and its course, for so is Christ.

Concerning this called-out company many descriptive terms or expressions are used in Scripture which we may profitably consider, and hope to do so in a brief way. Then there are precious truths as to worship, testimony and fellowship which are to be given practical expression by this company. To give this in days such as the present calls for much exercise of heart and conscience in all lowliness, meekness and forbearing love. We must ever remember too, that those who form this company are bound together in the bond of divine life and are subject to the divine order and government which pertain to this divinely formed company called the assembly. Then there is the relation it bears to each of the Divine Persons—Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Another interesting part of this subject—the Church—is the way in which it is typically presented in the Old Testament. There is nothing, however, in the Old Testament types to present the Church as the Body of Christ. This aspect belongs entirely to the New Testament.

Again, various names are given to those who compose the assembly; each of which has a meaning worthy of our careful consideration. Here are some of them which suggest both the privilege and responsibility belonging to the Christian:

- Believers—Acts 5 : 14.  
Disciples—Acts 9 : 1.  
Christians—Acts 11 : 26.  
Saints—Eph. 1 : 1, etc.  
Strangers and Pilgrims—1 Pet. 2 : 11.  
Members of one Body and of one another—  
1 Cor. 12; Rom. 12 : 5.  
Living stones—1 Pet. 2 : 5.  
Sons, Children—Rom. 8:14,16,19; 1 John 2 : 1,  
etc.  
Priests—1 Pet. 2 : 9.  
Fellow-citizens—Eph. 2 : 19.  
Soldiers—2 Tim. 2 : 3, 4.  
Servants—Rom. 6.  
Friends—John 15 : 15.  
Sheep, Lambs—John, chaps. 10 and 21.

## II

We have emphasized several prominent facts in reference to the Church, or the assembly. Now let us consider its relation to each of the Divine Persons.

There is an exceptional expression in the Thessalonian Epistles—"the assembly...in God the Father." From this we would gather the thought of moral relationship in life. It suggests the character of the life which pervades the assembly. Its existence is in the power and blessing of God known as Father, the source of all to His people. Hence its fellowship is in the knowledge and the relationship which this implies. If fellowship is "in God the Father," it will be unworldly, as shown by 1 Cor. 1, for the world is not of the Father (1 John 2: 15, 16). This puts the assembly apart from the spirit and ways of the world—a company where God rules by His

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Word. This should search us out, both individually and as companies, for we profess to hold and act according to the truth of the assembly as found in Scripture.

There are special terms used in connection with the assembly which point to special aspects of its relation to the Divine Persons. Let us briefly take these up.

In relation to *God* we find the assembly spoken of in various ways. It was in God's eternal purpose, but remained unrevealed ("hid in God"), until given to and made known by Paul, the apostle to the Church (Eph. 3: 3-9; Rom. 16: 25, 26; Col. 1: 25,26). Further, the Church is the means *now* of making known the all-various wisdom of God to principalities and authorities in the heav- enlies (Eph. 3:10). This truth, then, was a secret contained in God's purpose, a part of His eternal counsels, and revealed for the first time through Paul. In it is a revelation of God to heavenly beings as well as to us, the administration of which was confided to Paul, made an apostle of Christ from the glory for the purpose. How highly we should value such a revelation, which is not for time only, but for *eternity*, when God shall "be glorified in the assembly in Christ Jesus unto all generations of the age of ages" (Eph. 3: 21).

The relation of the assembly to God is spoken of under the following terms.

*His Household* (Eph. 2: 19). This term occurs in two other passages which help to define its meaning, Gal. 6: 10; 1 Tim. 5: 8. It is the company of those who are of faith, for which pro-



vision is made by Him to whom all own relationship, that is, God. If the source of the life of the assembly is expressed in the passages from Thessalonians, here it is the fact of *who* provides for and exercises care over the saints that constitute the Church; hence, it is to Him, to God alone, we must ever look for all supply. With this in view we may well consider what we are independent of, ever remembering Him upon whom we are absolutely *dependent*.

*His Habitation* (Eph. 2: 22). The company of saints who compose the assembly are looked at as God's dwelling-place through the Spirit. With this we might especially associate the thought of *privilege*, as with the household that of *provision*. To gain some idea of what this term implies for us we may think of the Tabernacle, of its materials and structure in their typical meaning. It was built for the Lord's dwelling-place—"That I may dwell among them." A study of its details will give a wonderful conception of God's thought as to His habitation, realized as this is in Christ and the Church united together, forming the mystery of God now revealed.

*His House*. This is a little different from the idea conveyed by "habitation." In the latter, *dwelling* is very distinctly before us, while the "house" may contemplate other things, as *rule* and *display*, besides dwelling, and we may link with it *responsibility*. Whether present or absent, in his own immediate charge or not, the owner of the house expects and rightly requires that all connected with its order and arrangement shall be according to his expressed mind. This

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is certainly true of the house of God which is the assembly (1 Tim. 3:15). Peter calls it, "A spiritual house" (1 Pet. 2:5), and immediately follows this with another phrase descriptive of God's people, "a holy priesthood," which gives the thought of their privilege as to worship in the Holiest (Heb. 10), and their responsibility as to holy order and service in relation to God's house. The place given to, the order connected with, and the activities belonging to the priesthood as given in the books of Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers, furnish much instruction concerning the priesthood which now pertains to all Christians. A study of the typical teaching of the priesthood and its regulations in these books along with the teaching of the Epistles, particularly those to the Corinthians, will give us the mind of God as to the order, arrangements, and service, as well as the character and manner in which all is to be conducted in God's house. Man's will, wisdom, or expediency have no place here. God's thoughts and ways must rule in connection with the assembly, which is *God's* house. What righteousness and holiness, as well as blessing and joy, will then be realized.

*His Assembly.* This you may have noticed was associated with the apostle's reference to the house in 1 Timothy. We have already mentioned that this term is descriptive of *the company* to which it is applied. It is God's *called out* company. This means separation to Him who has called us. As in Israel the stranger must not come nigh, so also in the circle of the assembly. While observing this, let us not forget how we are

enjoined to treat the stranger who may come among us, as to which both the Old and New Testaments give instruction.

Note that the apostle says, "the assembly of the *living* God." What a different character this truth gave to the Christian company as compared to the Gentiles and their dumb idols! It is blessed to realize that we serve "a living and true God" (1 Thess. 1:9). This links with what we began in this very epistle—the life and character of the assembly is formed by the knowledge of God the Father and our relationship in life with Him.

*His Temple.* Sacredness, reverence, and *worship*, are ideas which cluster around this name of God's people who constitute the assembly. The temple of old was the place of the Lord's manifested glory, where all contributed to recall His people to Himself. "In His temple doth every one (or, every whit of it, *margin*) speak of His glory" (Ps. 29:9). The assembly, then, is to give expression to the truth concerning God's character. "The temple of God is holy;" and again, "Ye are the temple of the living God" (1 Cor. 3:16,17; 2 Cor. 6:16). Consider the context of these expressions; holy and precious instruction is in it.

If we keep in mind what God's thoughts are concerning His people as gathered out to the Lord's name, their blessed Centre, according to God's mind, we shall not treat with lightness, or lack of reverence, any company seeking to represent and set forth the truths of which we have been speaking.

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Next, what is the Church's relation to Christ? First, He speaks of it as "My assembly" (Matt. 16:18), intimating a special relationship into which He would bring all His own, from the time of the Spirit's coming until the building by Christ is complete. This would be at His coming again.

The foundation-rock of the Church is the truth confessed by Peter, revealed to him by the Father. From this we learn that not only is Christ *the Builder*, but that the gates of hades (the world of the unseen in which are found great fallen spiritual powers still in active opposition to God's blessed purposes) shall not prevail against the assembly, because "the Rock" upon which it is founded is the Son of God.

The fuller revelation as to the assembly's connection with Christ, the Son of God, is given through the apostle Paul, the chosen minister for the revelation of the mystery (Col. 1:25). Notice that he begins his ministry with the truth that Christ is the Son of God (Acts 9:20), linked with His resurrection (Rom. 1:3, 4), which is the demonstration of His triumph over Satan and all his associated powers. If *He* is the Builder, well may we be sure that none shall prevail against His assembly.

Plainly, therefore, the Rock cannot be Peter, as some would have us believe; for how could Christ's assembly, on such a foundation, be secure from the powers which the gates of hades represent? The Rock must be essentially divine to secure His assembly from such adversaries. Founded on a mere man it could not be. But it is on Christ, *the Son of God*, and this is trium-

phantly declared in His resurrection. The fact that those powers may use all their resources unavailingly, clearly shows who the Rock must be. Chaps. 1-3 of Ephesians unfold the marvels of this grace toward the assembly.

The Church is linked with Christ, not only as its Founder and Builder, but also in life and union, as intimated by the Lord's words to Paul at the time of his conversion (Acts 9: 1-5). The Church, therefore, is not as a building extraneous to its Builder, but those composing this spiritual building are in vital union with Himself. This forms the basis of the "one Body" of which He is the Head. Therefore we are "one Body in Christ, and every one members one of another" (Rom. 12: 5), and our very bodies are spoken of as "the members of Christ" (1 Cor. 6: 15). This Body of many members is called by His name (1 Cor. 12: 12); and, as we have previously noted, this unity is formed by the Holy Spirit. We are members of Christ and members one of another (Eph. 5: 30; 4: 25). Of this the human organism, in its many parts and functions, is made the spiritual figure. Thus Christ is spoken of as the Head of the Body, the Church (Eph. 4: 15; 5: 23; Col. 1: 18; 2: 19); and He is in the glory of God. His place as Head is taken when seated at God's right hand in heaven (Eph. 1: 19-23). The assembly is associated with Him there. As being His Body it must participate in all that belongs to the Head. This is not, therefore, a revelation of Christ simply during time, but for eternity, when full growth shall have been reached, even the measure of the stature of the fulness of the

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Christ. Until then there is the constant ministry of the Head to the Body for the meeting of present needs (Eph. 4: 11-16; Col. 2: 19).

### II.

From this truth of the one Body united to Christ spring many practical injunctions. Consider, for example, Rom. 12: 3-16; 1 Cor. 6:15-20; 10: 14-17; 12; Eph., chaps. 4, 5. It is a relation not only implying life, but identification with Christ in glory, in community of interests with Him and with one another. This truth should govern our present Christian fellowship.

Another relation of the assembly to Christ is as His Bride. This we have in Eph. 5: 22-32. It looks forward to future glory. The marriage relation, applied to Christ and the Church, symbolizes the indissoluble bond and affections which are to characterize our eternal relationship to Christ.

Another relation of our Lord toward us is that of Shepherd. We are of the "one flock" of which He speaks in John 10. He accounts us His peculiar people by right of redemption (Titus 2:14).

Finally, the local assemblies are spoken of as "the assemblies of Christ"—each as the *local representative* of the Body of Christ. This implies that in each such company there is to be the expression of the character of the Body at large, the one Body, that is, the truth of it is to practically govern their fellowship, both individually and as assemblies.

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Let us now briefly consider the relation of the assembly to the Holy Spirit.

We have already seen that the beginning and the formation of the Body of Christ, which is the assembly, is connected with the coming and personal presence of the Spirit in the world. This fixes Pentecost as the commencement of its history.

As thus formed and established, it is the unity of the Spirit, not only because He forms it, but because He dwells in every member of it; and not only for their individual blessing and direction in their special privileges, responsibility and walk, but also as uniting each member to every other in mutual dependence, interest, and ministry for the good of the whole. He is the sole power for and director of its activities (1 Cor. 6: 19; 12: 4-27; Phil. 3: 3).

Not only is the individual believer spoken of as the temple of the Holy Spirit, but the local assembly is given that place also. "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile [or, destroy] the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is *holy*, which ye are" (1 Cor. 3: 16, 17). Thus the company of God's people is viewed as God's temple by reason of the Spirit's indwelling, and the evil workman who destroys the character of this temple by his wicked work, shall suffer God's judgment. Holiness is emphasized in both the individual and collective applications of the figure of the temple (1 Cor. 6: 15-20; 2 Cor. 6: 14-18). This should be given the most serious consideration, for He who dwells

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in us is the *Holy Spirit*. We are called to perfect holiness in the fear of God (2 Cor. 7:1). This not only implies personal purity, but also that the assembly must be so characterized, and what is unholy is to be judged. This brings in the important subject of discipline and government in their various forms, which we must leave for later consideration.

Another scripture links with our present theme: "Ye also are builded together for a habitation of God *through the Spirit*" (Eph. 2:22). The thought is similar to that of God's dwelling in the Corinthians. Clearly all here is spiritual, not material as it was with Israel. And since it is by the Spirit's presence that the company thus spoken of is God's habitation, it is there that the Spirit's power and leading are to be realized. *He* is to rule—not man. *His* fruit is to be manifested—not the works of the flesh. The assembly is the sphere for His activities in service and worship, not for human display or leadership. The flesh and its desires, the world in its way and wisdom, have no place in such a temple. In the exercise of both mind and heart each individual must accord the Holy Spirit His place of full control; and, in waiting upon Him, set aside fleshly impulses or restlessness of mind. How subduing to soul and spirit is the thought of the Holy Spirit's presence and indwelling, whether it be when we come together in the assembly, or in the daily course of life. May the Lord grant us a deeper apprehension of this sanctifying truth. Of course the Spirit's activities are by means of the saints as His instruments, both within and



without the assembly. It is He who uses whom He will to God's glory and man's blessing, not human expediency or man's wisdom. Then it is the Word of God which the Spirit uses. It is "the sword of the Spirit;" the source of *food* for God's people, and the *light* for our guidance. How needful therefore to grow in acquaintance with it!

### III.

Having briefly set forth the assembly as the Body of Christ, and also in its relation to each of the Divine Persons, let us now look at the ways in which the term *ecclesia*, or assembly, is used in connection with the Christian company.

The word itself has various applications. It is used of the tumultuous crowd gathered in the theatre at Ephesus (Acts 19:32, 41). The town clerk speaks of "the regular assembly;" that was the company of those called together for specific civic interest. Stephen uses the word when speaking of the congregation of Israel (Acts 7:38). The Lord uses it of the company that was to be formed—"My assembly;" and in the Acts we learn who they are to whom the word is distinctly applied, *i. e.*, to all believers. We also find certain differences which are made clear in the epistles. To these I wish, briefly, to call your attention.

First, it is applied to all believers of this present period, from Pentecost to the Rapture. Neither Israel as a nation (though the term *ecclesia* is used of the congregation), nor even the true children of God in that nation, nor Gentile believers in past dispensations, form part of, or share in the distinctive blessing of "the assembly" of

this period. The Body of Christ (the Christian assembly) is a divinely constituted unity, first formed at Pentecost, but revealed only later through the apostle Paul. Those forming it, whether Jews or Gentiles, are no longer considered in those natural and earthly relations, but are a new unity, with a heavenly calling and peculiar blessings in connection with Christ. Though the Church was in God's eternal counsel, it was not manifested until Pentecost, and its full meaning did not come out until revealed through the apostle Paul, the minister of the assembly (Col. 1: 24, 25). It embraces not only all true believers now on the earth, but also those who have died and are now with the Lord. At the Lord's coming this separation will be done away. Then our gathering together unto Him in glory (2 Thess. 2: 1) will be accomplished, and Eph. 3: 21 will be realized. Then the assembly, brought to its completion and perfection, shall share with its blessed Head in the administration of the fulness of times, and in the display of God's glory for ever.

Secondly, the term "assembly" is used in a narrower sense than that just mentioned; it is used to designate all believers *living on the earth* at any one time (Acts 2: 47; 1 Cor. 10: 32; 12: 28; Gal. 1: 13; 1 Tim. 3: 15). In this aspect of it the apostle writes to Timothy that he may know how to behave himself in it. Clearly, such injunctions and such ministry as 1 Cor. 12 and Eph. 4 contemplate can only be considered in relation to a company of saints *on the earth*. This aspect of it should have a very large place in the hearts and ways of Christians, for it is not something

mystical or invisible, but a living body of believers united to Christ and to one another, among whom as gathered together and acting together there is to be given visible expression to the truth of the "Body," and also of the assembly as the house of God. Those members of the assembly that have gone before are with Christ, waiting for us on whom now rest the privileges and the responsibilities to maintain the testimony for the Lord upon the earth.

Thirdly, "assembly" is used in a still more restricted sense in its application to a local company of believers (*e. g.*, Acts 8:1; 13:1; 1 Cor. 1:2; 1 Thess. 1:1; Philem.2; Rev.2 and 3). Every such company is a part of the whole which it locally represents, and is expected to manifest the characteristic features which pertain to the whole. The apostle says to the assembly at Corinth, "Ye are [the] Body of Christ"—not of course exclusively, as though other similar assemblies were not part of the "Body," nor as though each such assembly could appropriate the title so that it might be said, "There are many Bodies of Christ," but they are so spoken of as being part of the "one Body," as being *locally* responsible to express the truth of the "Body," and thus the name of the whole is given to it. In a similar way the thought of the assembly as the house of God applies to the whole and to the local company.

Fourthly, we find this term used in the plural—"assemblies." But while geographically and of necessity separate, they are one before God, and one in the Christian fellowship. Let us note that

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nowhere is independence of local assemblies, or of the assemblies of a province or country, contemplated in the epistles. The intimations are all to the contrary, fellowship of assemblies with assemblies, and letters of commendation given and received, being the order which prevailed (see 2 Cor. 3:1,2; Acts 18:27, etc.). Anything else would be a practical denial of much precious truth.\* That such unity prevailed is suggested by 1 Cor. 1:1,2; 11:16; 14:33; 16:1; 1 Thess. 2:14.

In view of what we have said as to the relation of the assembly to God and to Christ it is significant now to note the expressions, "assemblies of God," "assemblies of Christ" (Rom. 16:16; 1 Cor. 11:16; 1 Thess. 2:14). This places the local assembly in the place of responsibility to act according to the character of these Divine Persons. We do not find "assemblies of the Holy Spirit" for an obvious reason. He it is who takes the things of Christ to show them unto us, and He directs the saints not to Himself, but to Christ as the Object of our worship and Centre of gathering. The Spirit being with and in us, is identified with our place and activity in worship and gathering to Christ.

Finally, the term is used as to the gathering together of the Lord's people, as for example to remember Him in His death, or for meetings, as in 1 Cor. 14—"When ye come together in assembly" (1 Cor. 11:18). Note the use of this term in 1 Cor. 14. This fact leads up to the consideration of the order of service and worship which should prevail in such an assembly, and the government or discipline pertaining to it.

#### IV.

We may now speak of the activities connected with the assembly. This company may meet in a brother's house (Phile. 2; Rom. 16:5) or have a more public place of assemblage. It is not the place, however, but the *company* upon which God's eye rests; and this company is responsible to display the characteristic features of the assembly, which is the Body of Christ, and of which He is Head; His Lordship must be kept before us, whatever the activities in which we engage. "There are distinctions of services, and the same Lord" (1 Cor. 12:5).

Service has the widest possible range. It is not by any means confined to public ministration, as preaching and teaching, but comprises every form of service we may render to one another as fellow-members of the one Body: our giving (or showing mercy), paying honor, distributing to necessities, speaking the truth, provoking to love and good works, encouraging one another — all this and more, as serving the Lord in the joy of love after the character of Romans 12.

Our service takes in the whole compass of human relations. The household of faith has first claim, but we are not to forget all men, we are to be doers of good toward *all*, and thus be imitators of God, as dear children. Our service also includes intercessions for all saints, for the ministry of the Word, for those who minister, for rulers, for all men (Rom. 12:7-17; Eph. 4:25; 5:1, 9-21; 6:18-20; 1 Tim. 2:1, 2; 1 Pet. 4:7, 8; Heb. 10:24,25; 13:16; Gal.6:10; Col. 1:10; 3:23).

Central to the whole circle of our activities, whether as assemblies or individuals, is the remembrance of the Lord in the breaking of bread. This spiritual feast is called the Lord's Supper. In eating the bread and drinking the cup, we announce the death of the Lord. To do this in an unworthy manner makes us guilty in respect to the body and blood of the Lord: carelessness, levity, unjudged sin, conformity to this world which crucified our Lord, do not become those who take part in this holy service (1 Cor. 11: 17-34).

Along with all the tender and sacred memories which should be awakened on this occasion, because of Him whom we are called to remember, there is also a witnessing, by the *one* loaf of which we partake, that we are *one Body* (1 Cor. 10: 17). How this links together the members of the one Body in all the various forms of activity which characterize their fellowship as fellow-members! Hence this gathering is central to all relations and service. Participation in it is not *for* salvation, but because we are saved (having faith in Christ), our fellowship being with His precious blood shed for us, and His body given for us.

The enjoyment and spiritual blessing of this memorial feast depends upon our spiritual state. There is constant need for self-judgment and care as to godly walk and associations, since we are identified with the Lord's table and the holiness which becomes it. How else could we engage in a right way, either in our spirits or audibly, in worship which belongs to this occasion? Worship

must be in spirit and truth (John 4:23), and "by the Spirit of God" (Phil. 3:3). Thus man—in his wisdom, energy, desires of the flesh, or what would please him according to nature—is set aside. Nothing of this kind is to rule or be given any place. This judgment of man in the flesh is what the apostle's statement means, "We are the circumcision," in Phil. 3:8.

Christian worship is not under human authority or direction. To put it there brings in—has brought in—the worst confusion, since it practically denies the Holy Spirit His place and prerogative, hindering Him from using whom He will in the assembly, in which *all* are priests and worshipers, free to take part as the Spirit may lead, in accord with the scriptural limitations, which are in fact of that Spirit. Therefore, clerisy, ritualism, or adoption of human expediences in connection with the worship of the assembly, is contrary to the Lord's mind and a grief to the Holy Spirit.

1 Cor. 14 instructs us as to the order of the Christian company gathered in assembly. Human presidency has no place. The general principle is, "Let all things be done to edification." Who like the Spirit of God knows what is needed, and who like Him can select and use those who shall do what is needed, even if it is only the utterance of five words? Any departure from our dependence upon Him can only result in weakness and failure. The path for the people of God is that of faith. We depart from this when ways and means, or persons, take *first* place. God is never the Author of confusion, but of order; it

of the gospel of Christ in its life and by the proclamation of the Word.

Now as to the idea that deacons, bishops, or elders (the latter two terms referring to one person, as we have seen) are to be ordained, and that in the manner now in vogue throughout Christendom, it must be said that there is not the slightest scriptural warrant. The instances of appointment to this work among the saints of the New Testament give no authority or guidance for the continuation of the procedure. To continue it we must fall back upon our own plans and wisdom. This we should never think of doing in carrying out the order of God's house. What then is that order? First, that such action was only carried out by the apostles, or their delegates, as Titus and Timothy. We never hear of bishops or deacons appointing their successors, nor of the assemblies doing it, nor have we any direction for it; none were designated to take the place of the apostles or their delegates, in such work. Neither ordination nor succession as taught and practised in Christendom have any scriptural foundation.

In every way the assembly is left to a path of faith, in which dependence upon the Holy Spirit is to be constantly exercised, His authority alone recognized and His guidance ever sought. This will necessitate the exercise of patience, lowliness, and self-judgment among those, in whose midst the Spirit's presence and ministry are to be realized. With Him present in and among God's people, and the completed Word of God in our hands, though having neither apostles nor apos-



tolic delegates; we are fully furnished (2 Tim. 3: 14-17) for all responsibility as to ministry, worship, and government. We are simply to recognize and own what the Spirit manifests. That which is of Him will surely fit in with and be according to the Word which is the truth, and He is the Spirit of truth.

Now as to government in the assembly, it takes various forms. Let us briefly consider them.

The exercise of government may be considered to commence with reception to the company of those who are endeavoring to give practical expression to the truth of the assembly. Those of whom we have been speaking, whose work is oversight, have first responsibility in reception, and should exercise it in visitation of and inquiry concerning those who desire to take their place among the saints. Reception, however, is not by individuals, but by the company gathered out to the Lord's name. It is a matter of concern to all, and so opportunity should be given to all to be satisfied. There should be confidence in the person, that there may be the full exercise of Christian intercourse. For this one must confess the faith once delivered to the saints, live in a manner becoming the gospel of Christ, and be free from associations contrary to the principles and teaching of Scripture.

Once received, we are under the government and subject to the order of God's house, which, as we have previously noted, is applicable to the company of those gathered according to the truth.

First, there should be continual care for one another, for we are members of the one Body,

and of one household. This maintained in holiness and love would prevent the development in many cases of what calls for the exercise of other forms of care or discipline.

These other forms may be briefly noted in the following order.

1.—*Disorderly walk* (1 Thess. 5:14; 2 Thess. 3: 6-16). Here it is individual, not assembly action, though that which necessitates withdrawal from a brother as here enjoined may lead to such a result, for ways of idleness often lead to graver evil. Exhortation or admonition is, of course, first. If this fails, there is to be the faithful and loving testimony to the conscience in the withdrawal of one's company. One point to guard that the disorder involved is not a matter of one's own judgment, but that it is such in the light of Scripture. The Word alone must be our guide all.

2.—*Makers of divisions and occasions of falling* (Rom. 16:17,18). Here action may be still only individual, though the necessity so develop as to involve all in an assembly in the form of action required. There are added features here not mentioned in Thessalonians where it was a question of being honorable in making suited provision for present needs (1 Thess. 4: 10-12). In Romans it applies to a teaching contrary to the doctrine we have learnt, bringing in fleshly, carnal ways; from such persons we are to turn away. Obedience in this would effectually check divisions among God's people, and prevent that which stumbles many. A division-maker could not effect division without followers.

3.—*One taken in some fault, or trespass* (Gal. 1, 2). The thought here is “a stumbling, a lse step.” It is not the question of a course of il, but rather some overt act, “a conscious viola- n of right, involving guilt.” Here restoration confidence is sought, and the work necessary r it carried on in meekness and self-judgment, aring at the same time the burden which the ring one bears.

4.—*A man that is an heretic* (Titus 3: 10, 11). his closely links with those referred to in Rom. ). “ is not the question of false doctrines, or the rs i being fundamentally unsound, though this ig develop, but of one in self-will pressing his v) opinions or specious teaching, forming a us around himself in separation from his ren. “Putting away” is not prescribed here, dmonitions. If these are not heeded, he is e shunned, “have done with such.” “Per- d” implies a spiritual pride which turns out t the way.

5.—*Rebuke before all* (1 Tim. 5: 20). Here it seems evident that the sin is such as affects the estimony, which calls for public conviction there- ore, to produce a due sense of the holiness which becomes the house of God. Perhaps an illustra- or of this may be found in Paul’s withstanding a Peter before all (Gal. 2: 11-14). As that chap- er shows, his action seriously affected the truth of the gospel, and led others in like dissimulation.

6.—*Personal trespass* (Matt. 18: 15-18). In his case let us first be sure that the trespass is not of a nature which love would lead us to for- give and pass over rather than take up. Every

trespass is not such as demands to be so dealt with; for in many things we *all* offend. Evidently it is sin of such a nature as may affect the fellowship of the assembly, to which the matter may finally be referred according to the Lord's words. 1 Cor. 6:1-8 may serve as an example. They were aggravating the wrong by going before the unjust, instead of their brethren, as Matt. 18 directs. In any case the object is to recover the brother, and produce self-judgment. Should such a matter be carried to the assembly and nothing result, the case becomes a serious one, calling for that personal attitude that the Lord enjoins. It should be plain that the Lord has in view sin which may finally call for rebuke before all.

7.—*Putting away* (1 Cor. 5). This presents what is final as to assembly action. It is a proved course of evil which is dealt with, being brought to the attention of all by some overt act. In any case it is what is established by competent witnesses, after careful investigation. The extreme action here contemplated is taken for the good of the whole company, to preserve the purity and sanctity which belong to God's house, and in view of the recovery of the person so dealt with.

Without question this applies to the judgment of wicked doctrines as well as moral wickedness. That which undermines the foundation of our holy faith must be rejected by dealing with those who promulgate, or maintain association with, what is antichristian (2 John 9-11).

8.—*Restoration*. Forgiveness and restoration, when the circumstances warrant them, are by the assembly, even as was reception. It is the loosing

what was bound by the act of discipline. 2  
r. 2: 1-11 furnishes us with the example.

From this very brief survey of the truth as regards the assembly we may learn what godly care and responsibility rest upon the saints gathered to the Lord's name, in separation from various religious orders and their worldly arrangements which are according to man's thoughts, rather than God's.

Do we realize and act according to the essential difference between being gathered to the Lord's name alone, and being a member of some purely human organization called a "church?" Even supposing the organization may be sound in doctrine (though the many are not), *who* is the centre? *Who* has control? *Who* is counted upon to use whom he will for the edification of God's people? One man ministry, control of service and worship among God's people, is a usurpation of the Holy Spirit's place, a sin against Him, and a fruitful cause of much disorder and the introduction of merely human worldly wisdom. It is destructive of both faith and obedience. It contributes to the Lord's dishonor, and the breakdown of divine order in every way. If *you* are gathered to the Lord Jesus as the Head of the assembly, see to it, dear reader, that anything which in your heart or in your ways would hinder or prevent fellowship with your Lord, the Head of the assembly, be confessed to Him and separated from, that the Holy Spirit, our Comforter and Guide, be not grieved. Each one of us must either be a help or a hindrance to our joy and fellowship in the Lord's presence as gathered together.

V.

*The Christian Meeting for Worship*

First Corinthians instructs us concerning the character and order of the assembly of God's people.

In chap. 11: 23-34 the apostle teaches us about the meeting which is of chief importance to the assembly. That meeting is for the remembrance of the Lord in His death, the observance of the Lord's Supper. We have already referred to this, but may well give it further consideration.

Note how all is connected with the title "Lord" (vers. 20, 23, 26, 27, 29, 32). It means that we are to act as under *His* authority, ever recognizing *His* supremacy, since He has promised to be in the midst of His assembled people (Matt. 18: 20). No individual has the right to any official position among them, nor should any one be given the place of supremacy, for true rule is exercised in a lowly spirit and loving service, not in lording over them as though they were one's own possession (1 Pet. 5: 1-3).

There are several points to emphasize. First, when we "come together in assembly" (ver. 18, *New Trans.*), we are to act as a company which expresses the truth of "the assembly of God" (ver. 22). The Corinthians were failing to do this in a proper manner. Hence the apostle reproves them in this epistle for their worldly principles, carnal ways, sin allowed in their midst, and for turning the holy occasion of remembering the Lord into a fleshly, feasting time, each

taking his own supper, or groups doing so, instead of acting in holy unity as members one of another and of the Body of Christ.

Further, being those who come together in assembly, we are responsible to conduct ourselves, not only on that special occasion, but in our entire manner of life, in accord with God's thoughts concerning those who form His assembly.

This means that we must learn what His thoughts are from His Word. That is our only guide, our only book of instruction. In it He tells us how to behave, what order to maintain, how we are to care for one another as being fellow-members. He tells us we must be separate from this evil world, and not be unequally yoked with unbelievers, and we are to walk in a holy manner (2 Cor. 6: 14—7: 1). If any one called a brother is guilty of sin such as mentioned in 1 Cor. 5, he must be put under discipline as there directed. The assembly is to be kept clean for the Lord. Then the Holy Spirit is to be recognized as the leader. In our hearts and minds we are to wait upon Him to lead us in worship. No single brother has the right to leadership in this, like a minister or clergyman, for no such office or presidency is authorized in Scripture. Each brother has the privilege to take part as subject to the Holy Spirit, whether it be in giving out a hymn, reading Scripture, offering praise, or breaking the bread and blessing the cup at the table.

In the second place the apostle says that he received from the Lord that which he delivered to them. He then speaks of the Supper instituted by Him before His death. Paul did not know the

Lord until years after the crucifixion. The Supper was inaugurated with the disciples upon the night of betrayal. But Paul, evidently, received his directions as to it from Christ in glory. This may well teach us that, though now in the glory, our Lord still has the same desire to be remembered by His people. He who expressed this on the night of His betrayal, spoke of it from the glory to Paul, the special minister of the assembly. Thus it is our joy to know that in remembering Him now in the manner instituted before the cross, we fulfil His *present* desire. This blessedly links the occasion upon which we fulfil it with His suffering and death at the cross and with Him in the glory of God. We assemble, as it were, on resurrection-ground. We worship Him as the One who went into judgment and death for us, but also as the One who is now on the throne, appearing in the presence of God for us (Heb. 9: 24).

The third point is that He says, "This do in remembrance of *Me*." This suggests the thought of communion. In fulfilling His desire we are called to think of Him, not of ourselves, nor our present needs, nor our circumstances, nor our various activities. We may be engaged entirely with Himself. We are to occupy our heart with what He has done for us and is to us through His death, in which His body was given and His blood shed as a sacrifice for sin, accomplishing eternal redemption. Assembling together on this occasion, all our activities are to be connected with the special object before us—the remembrance of Himself, and the showing forth or announcing



of His death (vers. 24-26). As the former thought suggests *communion*, so the latter brings in the idea of *testimony*. Both have their place in this memorial feast, but in the order indicated. This is important, for it will be found to govern the spiritual tone of our activities. That a good testimony springs out of true communion is a principle governing throughout for the Christian.

It follows that, in the meeting which we are considering, our hymns, our prayers, any word we speak, or scripture we read, should bear directly, chiefly at least, upon the immediate purpose of our being assembled together. It is hardly appropriate, for example, to pray as we would in our prayer-meetings. Our prayers should rather be made up of praise to God our Father, and to Christ our Lord and Saviour, for the marvelous love shown in the cross, giving thanks for the wonderful place we have as now privileged to worship in the holiest, rejoicing in our perfect acceptance through believing in the Lord Jesus, so that in the spirit of sonship we draw near to the Father by the Holy Spirit. This, surely, is the line of things which should engage our hearts, and find expression in the hymns given out, the prayers offered—in fact, in all we do. How happy for us to forget ourselves and our circumstances, so that with our blessed Lord, who loved us and gave Himself for us, as the supreme Object occupying our hearts, we may rejoice in the wonderful place we have as “accepted in the Beloved” (Eph. 1: 6, 7), standing, therefore, on the resurrection side of the cross.

The next thing to consider is that we are to do

this in a worthy manner. If we do it unworthily, we eat and drink judgment to ourselves because we thus fail to discern the Lord's body. This means failure to rightly appreciate the meaning of *that* body having been given as a sacrifice for sin so that all unsuited to God's presence might be judged according to His holy nature and righteous requirements. Apprehending this, we judge ourselves, excluding what is unworthy of the Lord, and behaving in a manner which becomes the holy character of the Supper. The Corinthians had failed in this. They were guilty of misconduct when they came together. "For this cause" the Lord had chastened them in various ways. He had been judging them, since as His people they were responsible to sanctify Him in their midst. The assembly of God's people must maintain holiness, individually and collectively, for the remembrance of the Lord is holy. Otherwise He must correct by judgment. Thus He connects His government over His people with their assembling together to remember Him in His death.

The apostle gives simple directions to us individually. That we may eat worthily, he says, "Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat." The believer is to judge himself regarding anything unsuited to the presence of the Lord by first getting into that presence alone to confess and have forgiven (1 John 1:9) whatever may be unworthy of Him and His holy Supper of remembrance. Then, when he sits down at the Lord's Supper, he will be doing so in a worthy manner as far as he individually is concerned. This sug-

gests that we are to cultivate a right attitude of mind and an exercise of conscience as to our daily behavior in all things, in view of properly enjoying our happy and holy privilege. This concerns our enjoyment. But our title to be there is not personal worthiness, but what He has done for us. Clearly only those who have accepted Christ as their personal Saviour can remember Him in the breaking of bread.

One other point—we do this “till He come.” Thus the blessed hope of the Lord’s coming is suggested in relation to the remembrance of His death. We are called to wait for the Son from heaven (1 Thess. 1: 10), and in the meantime to show forth His death in the breaking of bread, and to serve God with reverence and godly fear (1 Thess. 1: 9; Heb. 12: 28, 29).

From Acts 20: 7 we see that the early Church came together on the first day of the week to break bread. This gives the example we should now follow. Then from 1 Cor. 16: 2 we would gather that at the same time the saints gave of their means to support the Lord’s work or minister to various needs existing among God’s people. The collection is an offering to the Lord. Surely it is a suitable time for us to give to Him who gave Himself for us, for now all that we have and are belong to Him.

“Were the whole realm of nature ours,  
That were an offering far too small;  
Love which transcends our highest powers  
Demands our soul, our life, our all.”

We are no longer our own, but bond-servants of Jesus Christ.

*Some Practical Considerations as to  
Christian Testimony in the Present Day*

I

Sometimes it is asked, What steps should be taken to show a Christian in one of the denominations, who is exercised about his position, what is his right place? First, it may be remarked that persons in different conditions of soul require different dealings, so that it is needful to present the truth from the view-point suited to the condition. Thus both wisdom and grace must be exercised according to the case in hand. There are, however, certain well-defined features which may be emphasized.

1. To be associated with a denomination involves adherence to a party-name, to a form of creed or teaching, usually with some particular tenet to which special emphasis is given. Such a position practically denies the unity formed by the Holy Spirit—a unity not made by joining an organization or any particular section of the Church—that unity is the Body of Christ, into which all God's children now are baptized by the Spirit, and so united to Christ as the Head.

There is no name to own, therefore, but that of Christ; no creed to subscribe to but the word of God; no special doctrine to enforce, but all Scripture owned and bowed to as the only standard to

govern our life, our doctrine and fellowship. (See 1 Cor. 12: 12-20; Eph. 4: 1-12; Rom. 12: 4, 5).

2. Then, as already mentioned, the concentration of ministry in one man who is given control for worship and service (as is usual in the denominational organizations) is a practical denial of the Holy Spirit as the Director of, and Leader in, the activities of God's people; individual Christian liberty in worship and service is shut out, though enjoined by the Word (1 Cor. 14: 36). It is the prerogative of the Holy Spirit to lead the saints, apart from human presidency or expediency.

3. Necessity is made, in denominational organizations, that all ministry of the Word and direction of worship be through a *humanly ordained and authorized person*. This is a denial of Christ's authority and power to give distinct gifts to His members here, manifested and accredited by the Spirit's leading, apart from human authorization, though owned and recognized by the Church as such when manifested (Eph. 4: 7-16).

4. The promiscuous fellowship which characterizes denominations, against which no guard is maintained but rather all that is possible done to promote it, denies, or nullifies, the teaching of the Word as to the *separation* of God's people from the world, its principles and ways. It was the admixture of Israel with the nations and their ways that wrought ruin in Israel; the admixture of the world with the Church is a greater evil, and works a correspondingly worse ruin. Scripture has especially warned us as to it. See 2 Cor. 6: 11-18. Coupled with these things, evil teach-

ers are suffered, while there is an end to the government and discipline which becomes God's house.

In this connection we may well consider Rev. 2: 14. It is one of those many instances in Scripture in which the things written aforetime for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come (1 Cor. 10: 11), are taken up and made of present application. The doctrine of Balaam consisted in the counsel he gave, directing the women of Moab and Midian to seduce the people of Israel into association with them in their idolatrous festivities, with which there was a practice of gross moral evil (Num. 31: 16). Israel was caught in the snare of those friendly advances, which had behind them the enemy's purpose to destroy the character of God's people as called to "dwell alone," in separation to God, whose holy ways and worship had been revealed to them. Doubtless, the seduction was intended to deprive Israel of her distinctive position and favor with God, which Balaam had been compelled to proclaim.

God's thought was that His people should be *separate* from all the abounding evil of the nations. Balaam's doctrine was that a *mixture* should be effected between them and the Moabites. Fleshly lusts and false religious activities were the instruments used.

This history has been repeated in the relations established between the Church and the world. In the apostolic period the evil of idolatry and its moral corruption touched every sphere of life. As a result, the early Christians of necessity with-

drew very largely from all the social and festive activities in which moral evil abounded, and in which they had formerly taken part (1 Pet. 4: 1-4). This brought against them much persecution and evil-speaking. In those days, to partake of the idol sacrifices came to signify the recantation of Christianity.

But things changed; the world became friendly and sought association with the Church, and, like Israel, she was snared into evil practices. *The doctrine of mixture prevailed*, and this destroyed the true character and testimony of the Church in the world. Expansion, by compromise with the idolatrous world, became the policy of its leaders. Features and practices of heathendom were incorporated into its life, both publicly and privately. Church history gives evidence that with certain parties formed in it, there was a literal fulfilment of those abominable evils. But to-day we do not think of this, because idolatry, as then prevalent, has passed away. Nevertheless it has its lesson for us. This same principle of *mixture* assailed the returned remnant in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah. It wrought havoc and caused much sorrow. It is one of our great, if not our greatest, dangers. The idols' feasts, whether social or religious, with their open immorality, are not about us to-day as they were in the days of the early Church; but there are still idols to keep from, and fleshly lusts from which to turn away. With the light and knowledge we have, whatever displaces God, or gives us One different from what He is now known to be as revealed in Christ, or that changes His truth, can-

not be followed without some form of moral failure resulting. Truth refused, perverted, or neglected, is accompanied in some degree by moral laxity and spiritual decrepitude. Remember the word: "Covetousness, which is idolatry" — *i. e.*, going beyond the true bounds to attain any object which should not engage us, is idolatry.

These considerations should show us that both as to position and character human organizations in the Church displace and dishonor Christ as the Head and Centre of His people, the Holy Spirit as the One who forms and dwells in the Church, and the Word of God as the charter and guide for the Christian company.

Other points might be mentioned specifically, such as the displacement of the Lord's Supper, the seeking of money from the unconverted, and in some, the public place of leadership given to women.

## II.

Many of my readers, no doubt, are in those companies of the Lord's people gathered *out* of mere human organizations to the name of Christ alone. Others may be exercised as to these organizations, and desire to know God's mind as to where they should be.

First, we are not to be ruled by our own ideas, or by what may seem to be the most expedient in view of the confusion of Christendom. We must get God's viewpoint, His thought as to the gathering of His people, and, in obedience and faith, take our stand upon it, even though those



who seek to express it in days of ruin like the present be subject to men's derision, and sometimes to their open attack, having, too, much failure and weakness to confess on their own part.

The religious natural man wants numbers, a ritual, a display—what pleases the eye, and gratifies the flesh with a religious cloak cast over it, because he loves the things of the world. The great buildings, pretentious movements, sacramentalism, sacerdotalism, and whatever makes a fair show in the flesh, please him.

Nearly 100 years ago God, through faithful men, restored to us a knowledge of much precious truth, truth buried, as it were, under much rubbish since shortly after apostolic days—truth which the great Reformation of Luther's time did not bring out. It is that body of truth then given back to God's people that should be *our* chief concern to treasure in our heart, and to "hold fast" as a sacred trust. It is truth bought at a goodly price in those early days referred to, and must not be cheaply sold by us. Let us hold fast this "crown" that no one rob us of it.

The testimony of God is the matter in question, though it be with the two or three, compared to the multitude which follows the principles of "man's day." Should we expect it otherwise in such a world? Does inspired history show it to have been different at any time during man's course? Consider the days of Seth, of Noah, of Abram, of the Judges, of Elijah, of Ezra and Nehemiah, of Malachi, of John the Baptist, of the Church in John's day, and now our own. All give one consistent witness.

Let us ask ourselves, Have we understood and rightly valued this testimony, this truth, in identification with which we may profess to stand, in which some of us have "grown up," as we say? Are we in any danger of thinking we have "outgrown" the "old paths," and must seek new ones more in accord with the spirit of the times? There is a spirit of *lawlessness* abroad, and to go against its rapidly increasing current means something, and will mean more, if the Lord delays His coming. The call is to endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ, not to seek the soft and easy path; faithfulness to our Lord forbids it.

But what is this testimony, this heritage of truth, which our predecessors have left to us? They began by owning the complete ruin of the Church as set up in this world. Whether considered as to its organization, government, fellowship, or doctrine, grievous departure from Scripture marks it as a whole. The Reformation only changed this in measure as to doctrine. But nothing was brought out as to God's thoughts concerning the Church. Now this needs to be owned and confessed in the spirit of Daniel and of Nehemiah, as much to-day as ever before, even by us who form part of the professing Church; and to this we must add the sad fact that its condition is worse than 100 years ago, because of the great inroads of evil teaching and worldly practice. A true confession of this will go far to strengthen us in the place of separation from the confusion, as to which our separated position witnesses.

What is that place of separation?—for this is of chief importance. It is obedience to the directions God has given in His Word for His people who belong to the assembly, the truth of which we have considered in the outlines with which we commenced.

1.—It is to own no name but that of Christ (1 Cor. 1: 12, 13); to gather to Him alone. It is to refuse membership in any so-called Church organization of human devising, because Scripture speaks of one only membership in the Body of which Christ is the Head (1 Cor. 12: 13), which is the true and only Church.

2.—It is to recognize that the Lord's Supper is the feast which must be kept holy in character and associations; where the Lord by His Word is to rule; therefore separate from what refuses His order, denies the truth, or would link us with such things.

3.—It is to recognize the presence and guidance of the Holy Spirit, refuse man-made authority over God's people, refuse human ordination to office and ministry. Acknowledging these things, it is to practise them in separation from what denies them, and in the simplicity of apostolic days exemplified in the Acts, and as taught in the Epistles.

4.—It is to recognize and walk with all who confess the faith, live godly, and are free from associations which are contrary to the principles of the Word which we are enjoined to keep, gathering to *the Lord* as our Head and only Centre, in obedience to the truths above mentioned, which such are responsible to practically exhibit amid

the general departure and ruin—not with pretension of being “the people,” but in humility and confession of weakness and failure.

Companies gathered after this fashion have the responsibility and authority to act for the Lord within the limits of His Word. God’s house is holy, and His people are responsible to maintain God’s holy character in His house—not that they embrace all in that house, but because they are to represent Him according to their responsibility.

As to service we are to engage in it according to the ability which the Lord gives. Gift, of whatever kind, is not to make us independent of the assembly, but rather bring us in communion with it, as “fellow-members” with one another, “endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace,” not occupied with, not thinking of our own gifts and service, but rather with that of others.

As in the place just outlined, we are also to be earnest and persevering in *gospel activities*. As maintaining both the assembly and gospel testimony we are privileged to gather the unsaved *for Christ*, and then lead them into the blessing of being gathered *to Christ*, in which place alone true liberty and joy are found as to both worship and service. As thus saved and gathered to the true Centre for God’s people and their fellowship together around Him, apart from mere human organizations, it is possible to enjoy a practical expression of the order, government, and worship indicated in the New Testament for God’s assembly. In our *priestly* character our faces are turned to the Lord, in separation from

the world; or, if considered as God's house, we are responsible to maintain His truth and character, remembering that holiness becomes His house forever. In our *gospel* testimony our faces are turned toward the world, and our appeal is to it, beseeching that men be reconciled to God. This has the character of Levitical service rather than priestly. As priests we go into God's presence; as Levites we bear the heavenly things toward, or in the presence of, the world. Let us note that the Levitical service depended entirely upon the priests accomplishing their part first (Num., chap. 4).

We need, then to have both these aspects of Christian character and service. Both are to be maintained—not as independent of each other, but rather as going hand in hand continually. The evangelist therefore is not to consider himself any more independent of the assembly's testimony than the other "gifts," as pastors or teachers. For they are all given "for the perfecting of the saints; with a view to the work of the ministry, with a view to the edifying of the Body of Christ" (Eph. 4: 11, 12). The evangelist is not only to have the salvation of souls in view, but also the relation of his work to the assembly where the converts are to be nurtured in the ways of the Lord, for their perfecting and edifying. And those who go forth to fill a public place in this way are to do so not as ordained of men, nor yet as self-ordained, which is still worse, but as sent by the Lord, from the assembly which recognizes them as fit for such work (Acts 13: 1-3; 14: 26; 15: 40). Again, if the work of the evangelist has

in view not only preaching to the sinner, but also what Eph. 4 teaches, does it not imply that he needs to have a measure of experience and understanding of what will help to perfect and edify? This it would seem could only be obtained by a period of association with an assembly, during which a real knowledge of the ways of the Lord may be acquired. In such association, one gifted as an evangelist would certainly manifest his calling in activities along such lines which would mark him as gifted for it. Then, if wider fields of service are open, he goes forth commended by and with the fellowship of the saints.

The ways and means adopted to carry on evangelical work ought also to be considered, not only from the view-point of how best to reach the people, but also from the view-point of what is consistent with the assembly of Christ. What others may do who give little or no place to this aspect of the gospel, can be no standard for those who desire to shape their course in view of the full truth revealed. This, undoubtedly, may limit us in some ways; but if it be the limitation which comes from obedience, we shall be blessed in accepting it without murmuring.

There are many lines of gospel work which may engage us beside that of preaching, such as tract-distribution in near-by districts, and the visitation of public institutions, hospitals, prisons, etc., in which a regular gospel testimony could be maintained. Then those who live in the larger towns or cities, while giving first attention to the immediate district around their meeting room where a regular gospel testimony should be main-

tained, might arrange also to reach outlying sections, not spasmodically, but in regular systematic manner. We are to persevere and abound in the work of the Lord. How many opportunities may be found to speak a word for Him, and interested souls may be attracted to our meetings. Let such be always given a cordial welcome, and made to feel that we have a *heart-interest* in souls.

If some of our young men are led to give all their time to gospel work, and have the commendation of the saints in so doing, what vast fields of *unworked* territory are on every hand, not to mention the great foreign sphere. What distances there are between many of our gatherings! Devoted young men could go to new places, do house-to-house work in a town or village, seek an opening for meetings, and while thus seeking souls for Christ always keep in mind the gathering of them and others to Christ. This may be humble work, with none of the glamor or propaganda of so-called modern evangelism; with nothing to make much of man, but rather much to humble the servant. Be it so; it is fellowship with Christ in seeking the perishing, and a sharing in a small measure of His reproach. Then Sunday School work should not be neglected, for it not only furnishes opportunity to instruct the children of those families connected with the assembly, but should extend to outside children as far as possible, and through them seek to interest the parents of such in our meetings.

These closing days are in many respects difficult times. Let us not grow weary. May the Lord

stir all our hearts with more fervent desire to carry on His work in the gospel, with the young, and in the gatherings, and in every field, whether home or foreign, according to the ability the Lord gives to each. Let us look at things in the light of the day of manifestation. The Lord may sovereignly bless His Word wherever and by whomsoever He wills, but apart from this we want His approval of our ways, methods, and associations in serving Him. This will bring us constant exercise, but it also has its recompense. Not only the quantity of work, but the quality of it is to be considered.

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