

THIRTY-SECOND THOUSAND.

T H E

# Church of God

AND ITS MINISTRY.

By WALTER SCOTT.

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# The Church of God and its Ministry.

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The word "Church" or "Assembly" is not here used of any denomination of Christian people. We have employed the word as in Scripture to designate (1), the whole company of the saved on earth; (2), the professing body of believers on earth; (3), a local congregation of professed saints.

Most of the quotations are from the Revised Version.

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## THE GENERAL STATE.

**A**POLOGISTS for the Bible are ruining the cause of Christianity. Christians of plain and bold speech are greatly in demand. Men who blush in presence of infidelity and oppose its reasonings with a feeble "I think differently" are not worth their salt. We need men and women of mettle, of backbone—persons imbued with the spirit of John's epistles who shall boldly and unhesitatingly say: "We know Christianity is true; we know it in the depths of our being; we know it for it is part and parcel of ourselves—from the crown of the head to the soles of the feet." The time has come when a corrupt Christianity must be discarded, and the sappers and miners of our most holy faith, altho' dressed out in pulpit or official robes, be regarded as infidel in name and character and sternly shunned by all honest Christian people. Make all and every effort to recover such men, then leave them alone, if needs be, in their sin and shame. Judgment is impending.

In late years the professing Church has been steadily drifting from bad to worse. There is no use disguising the fact that *the moment* is one of extreme peril. The Church, as God's public witness on earth, is as a vessel labouring in the trough of the sea. A few more wild plunges, a frantic effort to keep her afloat, and then the last wild hurricane of rationalism, the last wild plunge and all is o'er. *Individual* salvation and *corporate* ruin are clearly taught in the Word.

What is destroying her is not attacks from *without*. From these she has ever emerged stronger than before; but her professed friends, wolves in sheeps' clothing, are her destroyers, her enemies—men who have sold conscience, honour, and truth for a mess of pottage. Professors in our ecclesiastical colleges, and learned doctors of divinity paid for teaching Christianity to our future ministers and religious guides are yet base enough and mean enough to pocket their salaries while labouring indefatigably to undermine and overthrow the faith they swore to defend and uphold. The honesty of these men is on a par with their soul-destroying work. We detest dishonourable conduct in all, but oathe it especially when practised under lawn-sleeves and the professors' gown. Truth is the pillar of heaven and of the Church. We heartily wish all such men would go over boldly and honestly to the enemies' camp, so that, at least, we would know our friends from our foes. While we heap indignant scorn and withering contempt on the conduct of these men, who, in pulpit, press, platform and theological hall are bent on destroying Christianity (as if that were possible), while refusing to relinquish their salaries, stipends, and preferments, yet we pity them with all our heart as our eye rests on those solemn words of Scripture; "If any man defile (or *corrupt*) the temple of God, him shall God destroy" (1 Cor. iii. 17). To do the devil's awful work in the centre of that wherein the Holy Ghost dwells, and to be liberally paid by Christians for doing it, is a frightful state of things.

The line of demarcation between the Church and the world used to be sharply drawn. The walls of separation no longer exist, and we are on the eve of that grave consummation prophetically decreed in Rev. xviii., when the horror of horrors shall be reached—the professing Church, *now* the dwelling place of the Holy Ghost, *then* "become the habitation of demons, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird."

The Church is rent into innumerable divisions, hence "a house divided against itself cannot stand." The Church is attacked from within by the assaults of "the higher criticism." The Bible is being torn in pieces

amidst the congratulations of the mass, and the expostulations and tears of the few. The Church is a fashionable institution: its pulpits and pews being crowded with the unsaved from the plebeian class to the upper ten, and it can now successfully vie with the world in supplying entertainment and in furnishing amusement. The Church has become the devil's play-ground. Bazaars, Concerts, Raffles, Dramatic and other performances (and to our personal knowledge *worse still*) are being recognised as a necessity to raise money for Church purposes. Is it possible that the Name of the Holy One is ostensibly owned in all this, and all done under His professed sanction and authority! Little wonder that godly people are getting seriously alarmed at the intense and increasing worldliness. That many pious clergymen and ministers deplore the state of things and seek to stem the torrent is a hopeful sign. May God greatly increase their number and lead on to yet deeper faithfulness to God and His Word.

Blessed be God, there is a bright side. The Church which Christ builds is impregnable and "the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matt. xvi). The Church, too, as Christ's body and bride—the *nearest* and *dearest* of all to Him—is being nourished, cherished, sanctified, cleansed and loved with an eternal love and awaits her presentation to Christ in spotlessness and in glory (Eph. v. 25-32). The Church in *this* aspect is secure now and for ever; and is loved, too, now and for ever. On the divine side all is bright and certain. Not a member of the body of Christ shall perish. Every soul who has sailed with Paul shall without doubt reach the heavenly shore—even if the cordage be rent, the sail in shreds, and the ship in pieces (Acts xxvii. 44).

If the Church in its outward character lies shivered and broken "What is to be done?" If the house of God has become a scene of corruption, and Christianity in general profession like to the paganism of early times (2 Tim. iii. 1-5: with Rom. i. 28-32)—"What is to be done?" we ask with increasing earnestness. We answer:—(1). Do not despair. Do not fold your arms and sit down in the midst of evil in sullen indifference. (2). Do not set about the impossible task of reconstructing the

Church ; all such pretentious work is the denial that *you* have sinned and have had your share in bringing about the present ruin. *Your* hands and mine are not clean and God will surely blow upon all attempts to repair the Church-wreck. (3). While you cannot separate from the Church-universal, or purge yourself from the house of God, yet the call to separation from all that is unholy therein is imperative. Prompt, vigorous, decided action is demanded on the part of all calling upon the Name of the Lord (2 Cor. vi. 14-18; 2 Tim. ii. 19-21; 1 Peter i. 16). There are no circumstances in which a Christian can be placed where of "two evils he must choose the least." Evil of every sort and of every degree must be shunned; for sin make no allowance under any plea whatever. If you find yourself in any association where evil is allowed, you ought *at once* to purge it out, and if you cannot, then purge yourself out of that religious or secular body instantler. Make no compromise with sin or with evil men. And we would say, combine faithfulness with graciousness; do not mistake harshness and hardness of spirit for fidelity to truth. Jude 22 and 23 are of present application. (4). Return to Church-principles and to God's resources for His people in days of ruin. There are certain truths and principles flowing from what God *is*, and which ever abide, as holiness and truth (2 Tim. ii).

We will now briefly consider the Church and her ministry as presented in the pages of the New Testament, and each reader can enquire for himself whether that with which he is connected is in accordance therewith.

### THE CHURCH AND THE KINGDOM DISTINCT.

The Church and the kingdom are distinct in character, formation, administration, and time of commencement. The terms are not synonymous and convey totally different ideas and lines of thought and teaching.

The Church is Christ's body (Eph. i. 22, 23), God's habitation (Eph. ii. 22), and God's house (1 Tim. iii. 15). A kingdom with its king and subjects is surely a very different thing from a body with its many members and head; or, from the habitation in which God by His Spirit :

dwells; or, again, from the house which He governs? Confusion there is as to these distinct spheres of blessing and responsibility on earth, but the confusion exists only in the minds and teachings of many, not in the inspired Word.

The kingdom is the grand subject of Old Testament scripture and was preached in New Testament times from the days of John (Luke xvi. 16). But not so the Church of God. This latter is not once referred to in the Old Testament. and in the first mention of it in the New, is spoken of as then future "Upon this rock I *will* build My Church" (Matt. xvi. 18). As all believers in this dispensation are baptised into one body in the power of the Spirit (1 Cor. xii. 13), that baptism could not take effect till Christ was glorified (John vii. 39), as the Spirit was not given till then. Hence Pentecost was the grand occasion on which the Church was formed (Acts ii). Thus the kingdom and the Church are neither identical in character, nor as to the period of their commencement. In the Scripture already referred to in the Gospel of Matthew, the Lord connects the Church with its rock foundation and which He would build (v. 18); whereas the kingdom has its keys (for admission) and which were entrusted to Peter (v. 19). The Lord builds the Church; Peter administered the authority of the kingdom. The Church is distinct from the kingdom. We may here add that the expressions "the kingdom of God"—Luke's favourite phrase—and "the kingdom of heaven"—peculiar to the first gospel—are substantially identical. The former, however, intimates that the kingdom belongs to God; the latter, a dispensational term, signifies heaven's rule owned on earth.

### THE CHURCH—CHRIST'S BODY, WHEN FORMED, AND OF WHOM COMPOSED.

The Church as a building has its stones (1 Peter ii. 5) and pillars (Gal. ii. 9), but the chosen figure to express the Assembly's closest and tenderest relationship to Christ is that of the human body with its many members, each dependent on the other, and all governed by the head. The Church or Assembly belongs to Christ. He terms it "My Assembly"

(Matt. xvi. 18) and against which the powers of hell may hurl themselves, but to their eternal confusion. Yes, the Church belongs to Christ, and He has been pleased to bring it into closest connection with Himself. It is His body and He is its head. "The Church is His body" (Eph. i. 22, 23), and the body is the Church (Col. i. 18). In both scriptures His greatness in creation is declared, as also His headship of the body.

*How* the body was effected we are informed in 1 Cor. xii. 13, "For in one Spirit were we all baptised into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether bond or free; and were all made to drink into one Spirit." Now of this baptism there is not a hint in the Old Testament; of its result—one body—not a word. The one body in conception and the revelation of it are confined wholly to New Testament times. Believers living in the former dispensation were children of God undoubtedly, but were scattered abroad as atoms, not a unity at all. To effect this latter the death of Christ was needed. In fact there could not be a spiritual unity on the earth till after the death of Christ (John xi. 52).

*When* the body of Christ was formed is a matter simply proved. Christ on earth said, "I will build My Church," hence it was neither built, nor in process of building; and Caiaphas prophesied that Jesus "might also gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad." Now the Assembly was neither built nor the scattered children of God gathered in one during the lifetime of the Lord; nor could the baptism of the Spirit take place till Christ was glorified (John vii. 39). This spiritual baptism was yet future between the resurrection and the ascension of the Lord (Acts i. 5). The body and the house were formed and set up at Pentecost exactly 50 days after the resurrection of the Lord (Acts ii).

The body of Christ is composed of all Christians in this dispensation—of all truly saved people; see Eph. ii. 11-18; 1 Cor. xii. 13. Membership of a Church, or of a body is unscriptural thought and language. If you are a member of the "one body," of which Christ in glory is head, why deny it in practice by uniting yourself to this or that religious



body which is only a fraction thereof, even if all comprising it are truly saved? Persons who contend for the practical expression of the one body on earth in opposition to all limitations and denominational differences of whatever character, are accused of a narrow ecclesiasticism, of intolerant bigotry and the like. But where *true* ideas founded on scriptural teaching of the one body are held, broad, generous thought and action necessarily follow. Narrowness is characteristic of those who uphold and maintain any system short of that which embraces every child of God. A Christian may connect himself with any one of the 1300 different sects—all of which in their very nature and constitution plead for a narrower fellowship than that embraced in the Church of God—but for all that he *is* a member of the one body. He cannot sever himself from it. What a bold and generous thought—surely one worthy of God Himself—that every saved person on earth, be he termed Roman Catholic or Presbyterian; or of Church or Chapel, is a living member of that *one* and *only* body on earth of which Christ in heaven is head.

The unity of the one body is indissoluble. It is a living, organic, existing thing on earth. Its unity was effected and is maintained by the Holy Ghost. Man cannot break it; but alas, Christians may fail in giving *practical* expression to that which is the grandest fact of the dispensation “There is one body.” Wake up, fellow-believer, to the consideration that you *are* vitally connected with such a corporation. What intense interest would be created in your soul and mine—what love and care for each other—were it remembered that we are members one of another, indispensable to each other (1 Cor. xii. 24-26), and the body as a whole equally needful to the fullness and enjoyment of Christ—our glorious head (Eph. i. 23). What a cure for envy and strife and every form of self-seeking there is in the fact that God has sovereignly “set the members each one of them in the *body* even as it pleased Him,” as also, “set some in the *Church*” (1 Cor. xii. 18, 28).

James in his epistle addresses the twelve tribes of Israel, altho’ ten of the tribes had centuries before revolted and broken up the practical unity

of the nation. But in the mind of the Spirit of God, Israel was *one*. The Church of God presents a grievous scene of diverse elements, but "There is one body," and our responsibility remains in all its strength to give practical expression—individually and corporately to *that* fact. A scriptural fellowship welcomes to its heart every member of the one body walking worthily of Him who is holy and true (Rev. iii. 7). On the other hand, any communion founded on the acceptance of certain views such as baptism, Church-government, a humanly ordained ministry, or any special doctrine—true or false—is one more narrow and restricted than the Church of God, and necessarily shuts out those members of the body who cannot honestly subscribe to the required articles of faith and practice. Such narrow fellowships should be rejected and disowned by all who would conform their ways to the Word of God. We would again repeat that every association which does not in principle embrace every member of the body of Christ is false and contrary to Scripture.

### OTHER ASPECTS OF THE CHURCH.

The Church is God's habitation (Eph. ii. 22). The temple of old was composed of *inanimate* material—of stones great and costly. But it is not said that God by His Spirit dwelt therein. Now the stones of God's habitation are each and all *living* stones (1 Peter ii. 5). The spiritual house is built up of saved persons. The Ephesian saints were builded together as God's habitation (Eph. ii. 22), and the saved Corinthians were the temple of God (1 Cor. iii. 16). The body of each believer is also a temple of the Holy Ghost (1 Cor. vi. 19).

You may erect the most gorgeous of cathedrals; you may sumptuously endow it with altars and holy water, and adorn its priests with sacerdotal attire of the richest description; the solemn peal of the organ may resound through its aisles and clouds of incense waft their fragrance through the building, but the highest forms of ritualism leave the most sacred of cathedrals and chapels *without the presence of God*. What a blank! God is not there. God's house is His gathered people. They may meet

under the canopy of heaven, in the catacombs of ancient Rome, in the wigwam of the Indian, or in the severely plain brick building, but however or wherever assembled God dwells in their midst. The people and not the building form His habitation. "The Most High dwelleth not in houses made with hands" (Acts vii. 48).

The Spirit therefore dwells on earth, but in the Church (not *in* the body as such) viewed as His habitation. What a solemn thought that each believer forms a component part of God's habitation. This involves responsibility of the most weighty character. The Church both in its local and universal aspects is God's dwelling place. When the Spirit came down from heaven at Pentecost, He did not deign to take up His dwelling in the palace of the Cæsars, or, in Herod's large and magnificent temple: no, the 120 disciples gathered in an unnamed upper room in Jerusalem (Acts i. 13) were the living stones of the spiritual house into which the Holy Spirit entered and in which He dwells to-day. He filled the house and has continued to fill it ever since; unlike the presence of Christ in the midst of His own and which is conditional on their being gathered to His name (Matt. xviii. 20), the presence of the Holy Ghost in the Church is a fact unfettered by conditions as to her state, however corrupt that may be.

But the Church is also spoken of as the house of God. "If I tarry long that thou mightest know how men ought to behave themselves in the house of God, which is the Church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth" (1 Tim. iii. 15). "The time is come for judgment to begin at the house of God" (1 Peter iv. 17). The "habitation" and "house" and "temple" are each spoken of the Church. The Church is God's habitation, for He *dwells* in it by the Spirit. It is God's house, for He *governs* it. It is God's temple, for His presence makes it *holy*.

The Church also sustains a two-fold relationship to Christ. It is His body nearer to Him than angels, Israel, or men, for there is nothing so near or close to one as one's own body; but it is also His bride and soon to be His wife. Terms more dear there could not be. The body speaks of

a corporate and vital connection with Christ. The bride signifies that the Church is the most precious object to Christ on earth (Rev. xxii. 17), as also in eternity (Rev. xxi. 2).

Each of those various Church relationships whether viewed in relation to God, or Christ, or to the Holy Ghost, bear upon the state of soul of every child of God; practically influencing the life and introducing one into a system of corporate blessing and responsibility. What a serious loss is sustained where Church-truth is either unknown or ignored!

May God be pleased to wake up His own to the earnest and devout study of the Corinthian, Ephesian, and Colossian epistles and so secure the mind and thought of God on the Church and its ministry. Practical obedience to divine teaching on the Church is the only antidote and corrective to the grave evils which afflict the professing Christian body.

### INSIDE THE CORINTHIAN ASSEMBLY.

In the 14th chapter of Paul's first epistle to the Corinthians, we are introduced into the Assembly of the commercial capital of Greece. Now it is a noteworthy fact that Scripture preserves absolute silence as to the architectural character of the buildings in which the Assemblies met in apostolic days, and Corinth in this respect is no exception to the rule. There are vast sums expended on outward and interior Church and Chapel decoration, whilst numbers of the Lord's poor are in need, and home and foreign missions languish for want of funds. Apart altogether from the questionable, if not positively sinful methods adopted in the majority of instances to raise these sums, is it not a striking fact that the New Testament furnishes neither example nor precept for such expenditure? We may point to architectural display and gratify religious pride and ambition as we survey the costly and grand edifice which we term "the house of God," but let the fact sink into our souls that since the destruction of the temple in the year 70 A.D., no building on earth can justly claim that title. In the Pauline epistles the terms "Church" and "house of God" are alone employed to designate the company of the saved. It is people and not stones which constitute the Church, and house of God. In Acts vii. 38 "the Church in the wilderness" refers to the nation of

Israel: while in Acts xix. 37 "robbers of Churches" should read "robbers of temples," *i.e.*, heathen temples.

Here then we have presented an actual gathering together of the believers in Corinth. It is a meeting on canonical days for the worship and ministry of the Church. It is not a conference of Christians at an occasional time. Here we witness the habit, and custom of God's Assembly met for worship. It is a meeting of the Church as such. Nothing less and nothing more. The merest glance at the chapter will prove it; why, the terms Church and Churches occur nine times. The Corinthian Assembly was large (Acts xviii. 10) and had enjoyed the personal instructions of the apostle for 18 months (verse 11). As in most assemblies there were rich and poor (1 Cor. xi. 21, 22). Many amongst them were highly intellectual (chap. i.-iii.), and endowed with remarkable sign-gifts (chap. xiv. 12-23). It is evident that the doors of the meeting room were open for the free admission of saints (verse 6) and strangers—some of whom might be unbelievers (verses 16, 22, 23)—and we may add that Church-door collections and pew-rents are unknown in Scripture, and contrary moreover to the genius of Christianity which *gives*, but never *asks* from the unbelieving.

It is evident that no pre-arrangement existed as to *who* would conduct the worship, for many might take part (ver. 23, 24, and 26-31); nor have we slightest hint of *the* clergyman, or *the* minister to preside. The terms used, absolutely forbid any such thought or practice being entertained. The chapter speaks of the service of many, not of *one*, and even in the most solemn act of worship, the observance of the Lord's Supper—usually regarded as essentially an official service—it is in no wise the special prerogative of one to preside and distribute the touching memorials of the Saviour's love.

This distinctively eucharistic and Christian feast was delivered to the Assembly as such (1 Cor. xi. 23). "The cup of blessing which *we* bless," and "the bread which *we* break" (1 Cor. x. 16) is common action, altho' one for the moment necessarily gives voice to the thanksgiving suited to the occasion. We do not plead for democratic rule on the plea that

we are *all* brethren. *That* principle we abhor, but we do earnestly plead for the privilege (we do not say right) of every Christian man to minister in the Church as the Spirit may give ability; such seems the plain lesson graven on the chapter. Ignorant and unspiritual men may perchance abuse the Spirit-given liberty and have to be rebuked, but "quench not the Spirit" and "despise not prophesyings" are exhortations which we cannot neglect with impunity. We bow to ecclesiastical authority when wielded according to God's Word and in the power of the Spirit and gladly welcome such Scriptures as 1 Thess. v. 12, 13 and Heb. xiii. 17.

Prophecy is the first and greatest of gifts named in our chapter. It signifies *forth-telling* as in John iv. 19, not necessarily *future-telling*. Its certain effect when directed by God is edification, comfort, and consolation (verse 3). Now the apostle earnestly desired that all the saints save the women (verse 34), should covet this best of gifts (verses 1, 5, 12, 39)—the best because it tended directly to the edifying or building up of the Church (verses 5-12). Further, it was the privilege of all, not of a special class to minister in the Assembly, "Ye may *all* prophesy one by one" (verse 31), but not more than three in order (verse 29). Prophecy or other service must give place, or even suffer interruption, to a revelation which might be sovereignly and suddenly given of God for the moment (verse 30). Of course, revelations are no longer vouchsafed as the Word of God is complete and all necessary for the perfecting of the man of God embodied in Scripture (2 Tim. iii. 16). Then, self-control is at all times needed, but especially so in God's Assembly in ministering to the saints (verse 32). Spiritual unction and intelligence too, are surely required, even in what might be deemed the simplest acts of worship, as prayer and singing (verses 14, 15). It is no light matter to interrupt the calm communion of a company of worshippers, to break the chain of holy thought and feeling by, say, the singing of a hymn or other service unsuited to the occasion. Teaching too, has its place (verse 19); and indeed there is the most ample room in the Church for the development of every gift divinely given, save that of the evangelist, whose sphere of ministry is in the world. The gifts mentioned in our

chapter, as also those referred to in chapter xii., may thus be classified. First, *Church-gifts*; second, *World-gifts*. Prophecy being a sample of the former, tongues a specimen of the latter. "Wherefore tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not; but prophesying serveth not for them that believe not, but for them which believe" (verse 22). Miraculous gifts, as tongues, were meant to act on an unbelieving world; to carry intellectual conviction of the truth of Christianity. In other words they were the open credentials of the divinity of our holy religion. These gifts having served their purpose were withdrawn. The world's attention has been called to Christianity, and hence, within the area of Christendom at least, miraculous signs, as tongues and miracles have no place. The regulation as to tongues is found in verse 27. Interpretation should ever accompany speaking in unknown languages.

#### GIFTS CONTINUED.

Those gifts intended for the blessing and profit of the Church are continued and will be till the Lord come and the Church be presented perfect in glory (Eph. iv. 13). Allow these full play. Welcome, gladly welcome, the spiritual ministry of all—of the educated and scholarly, and also of others however intellectually inferior. Ministry in the power and unction of the Spirit is of priceless value in these days. This chapter then, presents God's instructions for His Assemblies at all times and in all places. They are not obsolete, and cannot be out of date till the saints are translated to the heavens. With this inspired portion before us, ignorance on these subjects must hereafter be wilful. We would affectionately commend to one and all the weighty words of the Apostle in verses 37 and 38. Lay the chapter alongside usual Church-order and practice. Apply the test without fear or shrinking. You will be an eternal gainer by strict and rigid adherence to God's Word. An exclusive ministry in the Church has no support in Scripture. Pardon our dogmatism in this assertion. The writer, who is happy to number amongst his personal friends various clergymen and ministers, was told by several clerical friends, that while they fully admitted the order of God's

Assembly as detailed in 1 Cor. xi.-xiv., yet that order cannot now be carried out.

#### THE ANSWER.

In answer we would remind our readers—lay and clerical—that the epistle addresses itself to “*all* that in every place call upon the Name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours” (1 Cor. i. 2); that these instructions were meant to apply to “*all* the Churches of the saints” (1 Cor. xiv. 33); and not only so, but every spiritual believer is expected to acknowledge these divine instructions as “the commandments of the Lord” (verse 37). You would shudder to rob us of that grand and fundamental truth, the Resurrection of the Lord (chap. xv.), but why tamper with and practically set aside Church teaching contained in chap. xiv? Both portions are equally inspired and both are needful—the former, of course, pre-eminently so; to it we gladly accord the palm. 1 Cor. xiv. deals a death-blow to ecclesiastical Christendom. Its adoption would revolutionise the Church-system and introduce once again amongst men to the profit and blessing of thousands, an integral part of a long lost Apostolic Christianity.

#### DIVINE UNITY, NOT THE UNITY OF CHURCHES.

God alone could reveal a system of truth which would embrace all Christians on earth. Our unity in heaven no one questions. Now it is morally impossible for God to own as His, any association as such, which does not in principle contemplate every saved person, and nothing on earth does that save the “one body.” Hence, it is the one and only complete corporate thing He can and does recognise. Individuals according to their godliness and faith in the many religious bodies, may be greatly owned of God in public service and enjoy His presence and blessing, but that is very different from the divine recognition of a system which is *not* the body of Christ. Persons may be greatly used in service even in systems which have to be rejected. You may have the union of Churches, or of certain amalgamated bodies, but that is not the



unity of Christ's body which is the aggregate of the saved on earth at any given moment from Pentecost (Acts ii). It is the unity of many members in one body (1 Cor. xii. 14). Even if true Christians only, comprised the religious bodies of the day, their union as Churches would not give the scriptural idea of the unity of Christ's body. It is a unity of persons, and not of Churches.

The reception of God's gift—eternal life—leaves the person in blessed individuality, for life neither unites to Christ nor to each other. All Christians are one, and form one body in the power of the Holy Ghost, whether it is realised or not. It is a blessed fact from which some of our weightiest responsibilities flow. While Scripture affords not the slightest support for the theological notion of a visible from an invisible Church, or of the Church militant from the Church triumphant, yet it may be fairly asked: Where do we witness the visible unity of the one body of Christ? We would answer in the words of Scripture—words which have their application in every part of the world where Christians are found—"Giving diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace; there is one body and one Spirit" (Eph. iv. 3, 4). The general failure in giving effect to the unity of the Church, in no wise absolves one from the responsibility to do so. Certain we are that denominationalism in its very nature and character is the denial of the truth "there is one body;" and ere we can attempt to act upon the exhortation of Eph. iv. 3 we must reject *in toto* all sectarian ground. "Cease to do evil, learn to do well" is ever God's order for all His saints especially in days and circumstances of ruin. "The unity of the Spirit" is the one body, so termed, because the Spirit has formed it, and animates it, and works in it through its members.

### GIFTS GIVEN BY CHRIST. OFFICE IN THE CHURCH.

The common priesthood of *all* believers is a truth generally admitted by bible-instructed and godly people (1 Peter ii. 5; Rev. i. 6; Heb. xiii. 15). Ritualism as a system denies it, and interposes a select and

priestly caste between God and His people. Ritualism is destitute of spiritual power, but is exceedingly rich in millinery and ceremonies, and liberally endows her priesthood with what is fitted to awe the beholder and impress the imagination. But in its best it is a barren system, and where God and His grace are known, its vestments, crosses, candles, holy water and oil, dim light, altar, and sundry bowings and prostrations must be regarded as so much childish mummery.

All believers are equally privileged to enter the holiest by the blood of Jesus (Heb. x. 19). The babe and the father in Christ, the weak and the strong are on equal footing in the heavenly sanctuary. Some have greater spiritual capacity than others, and are maintained in more or less degree in worship according to moral condition of soul. But as to the ground, title, and place of worship, all God's children are equally privileged. In these respects there is no difference.

But in service there are distinctions and differences. In Heb. x. 22 the apostle says, "let us draw near." He does not worship *as* an apostle, but as a sinner redeemed to God, and hence he associates the whole redeemed company on earth with himself. How different the language of 1 Cor. xii. 28, "God hath set *some* in the Church: first, apostles; secondarily, prophets; thirdly, teachers." In worship, the whole Church is engaged. In service, some are distinguished in relative order and importance.

We would here call attention to another and greatly overlooked distinction, namely, the Church edified by the ministry of certain Christ-given gifts as Evangelists, Pastors, and Teachers (Eph. iv. 11, 12), and the Church edifying itself, "Christ, from whom all the body fitly framed and knit together through that which every joint supplieth according to the working in due measure of each several part maketh increase of the body unto the building up of itself in love" (verse 16). Here the thought is that the body is complete. Adding members to it is not a scriptural idea. The body is on the earth in all its parts and members, but it grows as a child does; first, by the ministry of gifted persons; second, "through that which *every joint* supplieth;" for this latter see also 1 Cor. xii. 15-

26; Jude 20; Heb. x. 24, 25. The body is complete, is on the earth, while her head is in heaven.

A regular, scripturally constituted order of ministry is undoubtedly of God, and there is abundant need and ample scope for its exercise within the confines of the Church of God. When the saints meet in Assembly character (1 Cor. xi. 18), there ought to be the freest liberty, not only for the gifted to minister, but also for every Christian man whom God by His Spirit, might use for the occasion. Gifts were not ordained; were not established in a circumscribed sphere; but were given by Christ for the universal Church. But besides this general character of gift, *every* member of the body of Christ, *every* joint and band contributes to the good of the whole. The obscure member is as needful in his place as the most prominent. The head and the foot—the two extremes in the illustration of the human body—are indispensable to each other (1 Cor. xii. 21). We need the scholar, we cannot do without the ignorant. Each and all have their place. God has fixed and determined our place in the one body (1 Cor. xii. 18), as also in the Church (verse 28). hence to disallow the ministry of the weakest, or reject the least gifted is really to trench upon the rights of Christ, who “gives” (Eph. iv.) and of God who “sets” each one in their appointed place.

The prominent gifts given by Christ when as man He ascended up on high, were apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers—five in number (Eph. iv. 11). The objects for which these gifts were bestowed were, first, for the perfecting of the saints; second, for the work of the ministry; and third, for the edifying of the body of Christ (verse 12). The continuance of gift till the Church is perfected in glory is also assured us (verse 13). Now these gifts were set *in* the Church and *for* the Church universal. The evangelist, pastor, or teacher of an Assembly is foreign to Scripture thought and language. Nor were these Christ-given gifts ever ordained. The pastor, fully qualified and fitted was given as such to the Church, so with every other gift. “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above.” Are we to refuse Christ’s

gifts because the theological hall or learned presbytery or pious bishop have not set their imprint upon them? Must hands be laid on the teacher given by Christ as a *sine qua non* to his recognition? Is the evangelist to receive his marching orders from the Church or from Christ?

We assert in the most positive terms that Scripture—our guide in this as in all else—affords not the slightest warrant in word or example for the ordination of gift. If either can be produced, do so, and we are your debtors. “He gave some *apostles*.” How many we are not told; no doubt “the twelve” were included in the number. Sent out by Christ on earth the mission of “the twelve” was confined to Israel (Matt. x. 5, 6), and their testimony was to Christ from His baptism till His ascension (Acts i. 22). But the apostles of the ascension and glory of Christ were set in an authoritative position in relation to the Church. The ordering of God’s Assemblies was entrusted to them. The faith of God’s elect, or Christianity in its various parts was revealed to them, and communicated by power and authority to us. The Church’s foundation are the apostles and prophets of the New Testament; that is, apostolic teaching and prophetic revelation constitute the firm foundation on which the spiritual edifice reposes (Eph. ii. 20). The apostles having thus served their purpose and accomplished their work on earth, are no longer needed. To insist upon the continuance or restoration of apostles as some do, is to deny that Christianity has been revealed and the Church founded; both *are* accomplished facts.

“Some *prophets*.” We gather that a distinction must be drawn between the prophets *in* the Church as in 1 Cor. xiv., and those referred to in Eph. iv. 11; ii. 20. The work of the former was to speak to men to “edification, and comfort, and consolation” (verse 3). In this sense there are prophets in the Church. Now this is a service which will be continued till the coming of the Lord. Further, prophecy and revelation are expressly contrasted (verses 29-31). But this latter *i.e.* revelation was characteristic of the prophets given by Christ when He ascended up on high, and who were coupled with the apostles as a foundation gift—“built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets.” It is vain

to look for, or to expect further revelation. Ephesian prophets there are not. Corinthian prophets there are. The Bible is complete. The whole circle of truth has been authoritatively revealed and settled in a permanent form in the Scriptures. Had we prophets now in the sense of Eph. iv. and ii., there could be no work for them, for theirs' was *foundation* service and hence no longer needed. "For other foundation can no man lay than that which *is* laid, which is Jesus Christ:"—that is apostolic work. "Let each man take heed how he buildeth thereon," is our individual service. A solemn responsibility thus rests on all ministers of the Word to build on the only divinely laid foundation, and to do so with material chosen and fashioned by God (1 Cor. iii).

"Some *evangelists*." The foundation having been laid in the two former ministries, the evangelist fully equipped is sent out by the Lord of the harvest to sow and reap. The sphere of the evangelist is *the World*, whereas the pastor and teacher labour in *the Church*. Thus we account for the marked omission of evangelists and Gospel preaching in 1 Cor. xii. and xiv. There the Church is in view, and hence the evangelist as such, can have no place; as a brother he has, as an evangelist he has not. Evangelists and preachers are not precisely the same. A man may be competent to preach because he knows the Gospel well and loves souls; he may preach occasionally, or often as time and opportunity offer and within a certain circumscribed sphere. Evangelists *are* preachers, but all preachers are not evangelists. Both are independent of human appointment. The interference of man would only hamper in the high and holy work of proclaiming to a lost world the riches of God's grace. An evangelist is a man who breathes the spirit of the apostle, exhibited in 1 Cor. ix 16-18. Souls, not money or popularity, or numbers is his aim and object. He is directly responsible to the Lord, and neither looks to the world (3 John 7), nor to saints for commission to labour, or supply for temporal wants, altho' believers should cheerfully and liberally meet his needs (1 Co. ix). But for the work even in its minutest detail the evangelist must confide in the Lord whose servant alone he is.

There were many evangelists in the early days of Christianity. There are many now—thank God for all who labour in the Gospel. Paul, next to Christ, was the most remarkable servant and more richly endowed with gift than any other in the Church of God. His warmth of heart, passion for souls, and love of the Gospel distinguished him as an evangelist. Unfolding the Scriptures, and instructing the Church and the saints were work which characterized him as a teacher. In the exercise of apostolic functions he was not a whit behind the chiefest of

the apostles. His was a rare combination of gift. But the only one specially designated in the Scriptures as an evangelist was Philip (Acts xxi. 8). Timothy was apostolically directed to do the work of one in the midst of Church-corruption (2 Tim. iv. 5).

“Philip the evangelist” had his movements directly controlled by the Spirit of God (Acts viii. 29). He was in no wise the servant of man. His service as a deacon in *Jerusalem* (Acts vi.), was distinct from his work as an evangelist in the *world*. Evangelists were not ordained, were not commissioned by man, Church, or presbytery, and were not controlled in their movements by any authority short of the Lord Jesus Christ. Subject the evangelist to human authority, even to that of the most godly, and you trench upon the authority and rights of the Lord. It is He and He alone in whose presence the evangelist lives, moves, and acts, and who will assuredly oversee his daily needs and wants. Let the evangelist turn from every missionary society, however pure its methods and aims, to the Lord alone. Trust *Him*, dear evangelist, wholly at all times, and under all circumstances, and you will never be disappointed. The saints of God, should as a privilege generously and lovingly care for the temporal support of all who have gone forth “taking nothing of the Gentiles” (3 John 7). May God increase our love for the evangelist and his work.

“Some *pastors and teachers.*” The careful reader will note the omission of the word “some” before teachers. The reason being, that the pastor and teacher are conjoined in the work of caring for the souls brought to God and into the Church through the labours of the evangelist. The gifts are distinct, yet they happily labour together and may that is shepherding and teaching co-exist in one person. The evangelist has gone into the wild wilderness of the world and brought into the one flock a saved sheep for the pastor or shepherd to feed and tend, and into the school for the teacher to instruct. In other words, the evangelist sees that the convert is set down between the pastor and the teacher; the former to feed, the latter to instruct. The evangelist addresses himself to those “without;” the pastor and teacher to those “within.” Sinners are the object of the former; saints the object of the latter.

The pastor or shepherd is to care for the blood purchased Church, and for every sheep and lamb in God’s flock. The pastor is Christ’s gift to God’s people at large. Wherever therefore a saint of God is found, there is object and occasion for the loving service and care of the pastor. Does he need human authorisation to lead the flock to “living streams and green pastures?” Pastoral work is among the sheep and lambs and as the flock belongs to God, He alone has authority to raise up shepherds and

woe be to those who hinder them in their service. "My flock," "My people," and "My congregation" are expressions, unwittingly used perhaps, but they are nevertheless arrogant words in the mouth of any creature. There scarce seems a limit to high ecclesiastical pretension. The flock belongs to God, the people are His, and the congregation His.

It is as unscriptural, as it is now fashionable to speak of the clergyman or minister of a church as *the* pastor. Pastors were for the Church at large and were not ordained or established for, or set in any local sphere. Teachers, too, there were, for the saints and Churches needed help and instruction. The work of the teacher is ever in season. The need is clamant, and never more so than now. Thousands of saved persons are longing to know more fully the ways of God, and thirsting for fuller light and intelligence on many scriptural subjects. The teacher is Christ's gift to the Church universal.

What a contrast exists between early and later Church times. In apostolic days the doors of the Assemblies were open for the free and hearty reception of every gift given by Christ. The teacher was accorded a warm welcome because he was Christ's gift. They did not say "We must refuse your teaching and unfolding of Scripture for hands have not been laid on you." Now the doors of Church and chapel are bolted and barred against the entrance of ministers of the Word unless they are ordained. The saints are thus shut up to an exclusively ordained ministry, and shut out, too, from a Christ-given ministry, and thousands are groaning under this state of things. In the Churches of the day, the Holy Ghost is not allowed to work by whom He will (1 Cor. xii. 11). Sorrowfully, but without a trace of passion or anger to persons, we pen the truthful indictment that the position of the modern clergyman is not only unscriptural, but is a positive usurping of the functions of the Holy Ghost. Let the Word of God in 1 Cor. xii.-xiv. and Eph. iv., be carefully weighed and our charge is shown to be a true one.

If none of the five foregoing gifts were ordained, who were? and by whom? We answer: Bishops and deacons were ordained by apostles or by their delegates, as Titus. Bishop is an old ecclesiastical term, and is rightly translated *overseer* in Acts xx. 28. Bishops and elders refer to the same persons (Titus i. 5, 7; Acts xx. 17, 28). The former pointing to the work; the latter directing attention to the person. Age and experience are looked for in the elder. Care and oversight are the work of the bishop or overseer. The bishop filled an office to which he was apostolically appointed (1 Tim. iii. 1; Acts xiv. 23), and is not named or referred to at all in the list of gifts given by Christ (Eph. iv. 11), or in the Church gifts of 1 Cor. xii. and xiv. Office

is local; gift is universal. The necessities of certain local Assemblies created the office. The founding of Assemblies was not co-incident with the establishment of elders. After a time, married men of moral weight and experience developed a certain aptitude for rule and general oversight, and were then ordained to the office. Thus in the missionary tour of the apostles Paul and Barnabas, they ordained elders in every Church (Acts xiv. 23). The distinction between office which is local, and gift which is universal, is important. Thus while we might speak of the bishops of Philippi (Phil. i. 1); of those established in the island of Crete (Titus i. 5); and of the Ephesian elders (Acts xx. 17), we could not in a similar way speak of teachers and pastors because these were for the Church at large, whereas the bishops were set in local centres and occupied themselves with the difficulties of the particular Assembly and saints in midst of which they were located. Elders were ordained in order that apostolic and official sanction added to moral qualifications might give them greater weight and standing in the eyes of the saints. There was need of caution and care lest the loose state of things and low character of morals characteristic of the Gentile and Pagan world should shew themselves in the Assemblies, hence these and other circumstances called for ordained men to preserve godly order. Counsel, admonition, and rebuke would be administered by the elders; many a trouble too would be met and careful enquiry in all cases be instituted by them in cases of suspicion. The timely and wise action of the elders would preserve in numerous instances the Assembly from inflicting its extreme act of discipline—namely, excision—“put away from among *yourselves*,” *i. e.*, the immediate company in Church character in any given locality; an extremely solemn thing and which in its nature is binding on all Assemblies throughout the earth. (1 Cor. v. 13).

The qualifications of bishops are set forth in 1 Tim. iii. 2-7. Polygamy—common among the heathen—could not be tolerated in one sharing in the oversight of the Assembly as he must have “a good report of them which are without,” and “blameless,” hence the bishop was to be the husband of *one* wife—twice repeated (verse 2, and Titus i. 6). There is nothing said as to the character of his wife, but there is about the wife of the deacon. The work of the former precludes a woman’s help; the service of the latter in caring for the needs of the poor might be greatly aided by the help and counsel of a discreet and godly wife.

Rule was the characteristic service of the bishop, and we can readily



understand that some would govern better than others. Now to those who did their work well, "double honour" was to be accorded, especially if in addition, they laboured in the word and doctrine (1 Tim. v. 17); temporal support was to be given where required (verse 18); their character, too, is guarded against unjust and untrue charge (verse 19)

The bishop of a Church or of a city has no warrant in Scripture. The Assemblies had in all cases more than one (Acts xiv. 23; xx. 17; Phil. i. 1; 1 Peter v. 1), how many we are not told. The cities of Crete had a plurality of elders or bishops (Titus i. 5). This cuts at the root of the episcopal form of Church government. The modern bishop in his episcopal palace, or in discharging legislative functions in the House of Lords is as unlike the bishop of the New Testament as darkness is to light. To what lengths have we drifted from apostolic teaching!

Besides those who officially governed in their local sphere, many apart from official recognition laboured among the saints (1 Thess. v. 12, 13; 1 Cor. xvi. 15, 16)—all such were to be honoured and highly esteemed. All Assemblies had not ordained elders—probably none of the Jewish ones had. We see no Scripture whatever to shew that the rulers or guides of 1 Peter v. 1 and Heb. xiii. 17 had been ordained. Evidently Corinth had not ordained elders, for not they, but the Church itself is addressed as directly responsible to correct the grave errors, which had nigh swamped it as God's Assembly.

Deacons and bishops filled a local office. The former occupying themselves with the temporal necessities of the saints and attending to numerous matters so conducive to the general well-being and comfort. The latter, as has been already observed, caring for the spiritual interests of God's saints within their sphere. Both were ordained. Both were to be married, and both to be free from reproach in the married state (1 Tim. iii. 2-12). The deacons were to be men of irreproachable character, "full of the Holy Ghost" and wise withal (Acts vi. 3). The saints, whose money the deacons were to use, expressed their confidence in those whom they chose, who were then ordained by the apostles (verse 3). The circumstances were grave and urgent in the Assembly at Jerusalem, and hence directed by God, the apostles handed over the temporal cares and interests of the Assembly to men chosen by the disciples for that purpose. The case of the deacons presents no real difficulty. It was a local office. Both Stephen and Philip—two of the deacons at Jerusalem (Acts vi. 5)—attained to considerable eminence as servants of God: for the former, see Acts vii.; for the latter, read Acts viii. "They that have served well as deacons gain to themselves a

good standing and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus" (1 Tim. iii. 13).

### GATHERED UNTO HIS NAME.

"Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matt. xviii. 20). Here then is provision made for the blessing of a corporate company at all times, even if it number but two persons. Two or three thousand or more as in Jerusalem (Acts ii. 41 ; iv. 4), or two or three persons, are equally assured of the richest blessing on this side of the glory—the presence of Christ. The sole condition being, gathered in "My name." The Church may be torn into shreds, and sects and parties multiply, yet the promise holds good and cannot fail. Discipline and prayer are the immediate subjects in the context of this interesting passage. Authority is not wanting, but that flows from the fact of Christ's presence in midst of the company small or large, and it is He who solemnly invests them with authority to bind or loose. It is His presence which gives validity to the binding or loosing. Neither His name nor presence must be pleaded to sanction an unrighteous or unscriptural course or act. The Lord also pledges His Father in heaven to answer to the full the prayer of agreement.

In the midst of Church confusion, contradiction, and babel of voices, turn to those precious words of our Lord, Matt. xviii. 20, which were uttered and penned in view of *just* such circumstances as the present. Why not act upon them and enjoy the promised blessing? The writer has for thirty years known and experienced the truth of the Saviour's precious word "For where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them."

May God richly bless His people individually and corporately. Our hearts true desire for the whole Church of God is expressed in the beautiful words of Heb. xiii. 20, 21, "Now the God of peace who brought again from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep with the blood of the eternal covenant, even our Lord Jesus, make you perfect in every good thing to do His will, working in us that which is well pleasing in His sight through Jesus Christ: to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen."

### ORDINATION.

On this the ecclesiastical superstructure of Christendom is reared, and next demands attention. The scene recorded in Acts i. 15-26 need not detain us long. A few considerations will shew that it affords not the

slightest warrant for choosing or ordaining any class of ministers in the Church of God. "Ordained" in verse 22 should be omitted. The filling up of the vacant apostolate was in fulfilment of Scripture (verse 20), but the choice was referred to the Lord for He only had sovereign right to choose an apostle: "shew whether of these two *Thou hast chosen*" (verse 24). The lot—Jewish custom—was observed in the matter (verse 26). This transaction took place during the ten days which transpired between the ascension of the Lord and the descent of the Holy Ghost to found the Church (Acts ii). In this case there was no ordination in any form; "nor was Matthias chosen to fill office in the Church—for that had not then come into existence—but to complete the number of the apostolic band: "and he was numbered with the eleven apostles" (verse 26). Act i., offers not the slightest pretext for the modern system of ordination, even in its least objectionable form. The Lord's *choice* of one to be an apostle, and the Church's *ordination* of one to be a clergyman, are totally unlike.

Then in Acts vi. we have the appointment of deacons by the apostles. They were installed into office by prayer and laying on of hands (verse 6). The disciples, not exactly the Church as such, were to look out men of moral and spiritual qualifications who would serve tables and look after the temporal interests of the poor, but the direct and official appointment lay with the apostles (verses 3-6). This arrangement left them more free to attend to the higher and spiritual character of their service—prayer and ministry of the Word (verse 4), and the result was increased blessing (verse 7). By all means let this inspired part of the Word have its full weight. Act upon it as far as you can. You may express confidence in certain men to look after the temporal concerns of your Assemblies, but any further or official recognition seems to savour of assumption. "Whom *we*"—the apostles, not *you*, the disciples—"may appoint over this business." The appointment here referred to was accompanied by prayer and laying on of hands (verse 6).

"And when they (the apostles Barnabas and Paul) had ordained them elders in every Church and had prayed with fasting they commended them to the Lord on whom they believed" (Acts xiv. 23). The narrative is simplicity itself. On this missionary tour undertaken by Paul, elders were ordained. These elders were not the choice of the Churches. The Assemblies were not invested with the right to nominate elders, as in the case of deacons, much less ordain them. Unordained labourers and others associated with the apostles in service were to be submitted to, and held in loving respect and honour (1 Cor. xvi. 15, 16). The Holy Ghost is most careful in guarding the saints from

the democratic spirit which would deny the distinctive place of rulers in the Church and reduce all to one dead level on the plea that we "are all brethren." Gift and service distinguish some from others. There are pillars in the Church. There are rulers, and to deny it, is not only to show contempt for divine authority vested in some and to be exercised in humility according to the Word, but manifests the grossest ignorance of Scripture.

In chapter iii. of 1 Tim., we have the qualifications of bishops and deacons set forth, but not their appointment. Whether or not the elders and deacons referred to were ordained by Timothy we cannot say: verses 1 and 10 do not settle the point; nor does the first clause of chap. v. 22 prove that Timothy ordained to either office. Hands laid on persons simply expressed *identification*. It was a common enough practice both in Old and New Testament times (Gen. xlviii. 14; Lev. i. 4; xvi. 21; Num. viii. 10; Acts viii. 18; 1 Tim. iv. 14; Heb. vi. 2). "Lay hands suddenly on no man," simply signifies, do not too readily accredit one either as a Christian or as a servant. Caution and care are needed especially in times of difficulty as the present undoubtedly are.

Is the modern system of ordination to any ministerial charge or office sanctioned by 1 Tim. iv. 14? Let us examine the passage. Timothy is exhorted to stir up the gift which was in him and for which he was previously designated by prophecy. How was it conferred? With the laying on of the hands of the presbytery. The gift which he was to make good use of was instrumentally imparted by Paul (2 Tim. i. 6); the presbytery or elders having fellowship in the act. It was no question of appointing Timothy to a bishopric or other office in the Church of God. It was an actual gift, not office conferred upon Paul's much loved fellow-labourer. We are not informed directly as to the gift itself. Evidently it was not the Holy Ghost as episcopacy asserts, but a special endowment fitting him for the important and arduous work of guarding doctrine and the truth in the capital of Asia. The high character of the work and the youth of the servant sufficiently account for the exceptional circumstances which invest this case with unusual interest. Surely it cannot be seriously maintained that any servant, Church or presbytery can confer gift? Is prophecy yet in vogue? Have we an apostle on the scene? Surely not. Paul was not of the twelve. He carefully reasons out that point in chaps. i. and ii., of his epistle to the Galatians and establishes by irrefragable proofs that his apostolate was distinct in time and character from that of the twelve. Now if we have not a Paul to impart the gift, nor prophecy to point out the person to whom it is to be given, nor the special circumstances

calling for any such exceptional dealing, how foolish to pretend to act in the absence of all that would make *this* Scripture valid. The highest offices in the Church of England are vested in the crown. An infidel Prime Minister and a licentious Sovereign can appoint whom they will and who in turn appoint the inferior order of clergy. What a travesty of Divine order! What a usurping of the chief Shepherd's right to appoint and reward whom He will (1 Peter v. 1-4)!

But Titus i. 5 is triumphantly cited in proof of ordination to office in the Church. We give the passage in full: "For this cause left I thee in Crete that thou shouldst set in order the things that were wanting and appoint elders in every city, as *I gave thee charge.*" Has the apostle given a like charge to any one in these days? If so, let it be produced and the question is settled. We do not read that the apostles Barnabas and Paul delegated the appointment of elders to others. Paul did authorise Titus to do so—only in the island of Crete, however. So far as we are informed in the New Testament, Paul, Barnabas, and Titus were the only persons who ordained elders. The two former being commissioned by the Holy Ghost (Acts xiii. 2, 4); the prophets and teachers then at Antioch fully concurring in the work to which Barnabas and Saul were divinely called (verses 1, 3), the fasting, praying, and laying-on of hands amounting to a recommendation to the grace of God (chap. xiv. 26). Titus on the other hand, was an apostolic delegate and had an express and precise charge given him for the work in Crete. We again assert that neither example nor precept can be produced authorising ordination to any ministerial office or charge by bishop, Church, or presbytery. Do not let us have unproved statements, but boldly grapple with the question: *To* whom and *by* whom is authority granted to ordain? Gift never was, and for the ordination of elders and deacons let us have warrant as unquestionable as that which Titus could produce—"I gave thee charge."

Christ is the source of both authority and gift, now unless you have authority direct and positive—from Christ, you can neither impart power nor confer gift. It was the apostles and Paul's delegate who appointed elders. The authority to ordain died in the death of the apostles and that authority was in no wise transferred to Church or presbytery. We are helpless in the matter. We cannot move. We cannot act; not that we are losers thereby, for in the absence of ordained persons there is all the more need for subjection to those who labour and are over us in the Lord. Authority in the Church is now put entirely on moral grounds, not on any

official footing. It has been contended that because many Assemblies in apostolic days had ordained elders we need them also and hence ought to be provided with an ordained clergy. But we answer: who is to judge of the Church's need? You or Christ? Had *He* considered the Assemblies of the nineteenth century would have been better of bishops, would He not have made provision for the need? Would He not have perpetuated an ordaining authority? To whom does the Church belong? Christ calls it "My Church;" allow Him then to settle the government of what belongs to Him, and do not meddle with His exclusive prerogative to give or withhold what seems best in His wisdom and love. The form of procedure in the ordination of elders is not told us in Scripture. Elders are not in question where the laying on of hands is mentioned. Clearly this latter was not the mode—pure and simple—of ordination, altho' it may have attended it.

### ON BINDING AND LOOSING.

"Holiness becometh Thine house. O Lord, for ever" (Ps. xciii. 5). The Church in any given locality, if even composed of two persons (Matt. xviii. 20) is responsible to maintain holiness and truth and she necessarily forfeits her Assembly character where these are sacrificed.

In the nature of things it is impossible for Christ to sanction by His presence an Assembly leavened by what is false or unholy. It would be to the denial of His name as holy and true (Rev. iii. 7). Toleration of evil on the broad ground of love is a principle hateful to the Lord. He is light as well as love and both have to be maintained firmly and graciously. The act of excision from a local Assembly (1 Cor. v. 13) has not only been exercised towards obnoxious persons whom it was thought desirable to be rid of, but a wholesale system of excommunication has been resorted to in late years which, we venture to say, has not one shred of Scripture for its support. What a confounding of the innocent with the guilty; of the ignorant with the intelligent; of leaders and followers. But the abuse of disciplin<sup>e</sup> must not be allowed to swamp in the soul the necessity of a scriptural course of dealing in cases of positive evil. Passion, party feeling, prejudice, and ignorance of Scripture truths have wrought sad havoc in the Church of God. It is a grave mistake to suppose that what is bound or loosed on earth is *necessarily* owned by the Lord in heaven. Church decisions are absolutely worthless as authority unless bound in heaven. No decision by the most godly, or gifted, or numerous Assembly on earth can claim submission of conscience, unless that decision has clear Scripture warrant for its

authority. On the other hand we would as strongly insist on the maintenance of a scriptural discipline wherever and by whomsoever exercised, and that too by every professing company of Christians on earth (1 Cor. i. 2). We are thankful that attention has been called to these subjects of late, and that many are waking up, slowly but surely, to the evils in discipline which have nigh swamped us all in testimony to God. Discipline is not exercised on members of the body of Christ as such; nor has it as its sphere of operation the "one body." The house of God is the place of discipline. The Unity of the Spirit which we are to endeavour to "keep," not to *make*, and which has its truest expression at the Lord's Table (1 Cor. x. 17) is not linked in any Scripture statement with discipline. We may further remark that the phrase "put away from the Lord's table"—a theological formula—is an exceedingly faulty one. "The Lord's table" (verse 21), covers in its breadth the area of Christendom and has its contrast in "the table of demons." It is Christianity in contrast to paganism. A scriptural use of terms will guard us from mistake in these matters. "Put away from among yourselves" *i.e.*, the local company of believers, is a very different thing from "put away from the Lord's table." The former has the sanction of Scripture; the latter is of recent origin.

To "receive" or "exclude" is a solemn prerogative and should not be lightly exercised. Both acts to be valid and binding on the conscience of believers everywhere must have Scripture principle or text as authority, and Christ in the midst of the acting Assembly. Allow us these two fundamental Church principles and we *must* in faithfulness to the Lord unquestionably accept the decisions arrived at, holding that they have been sealed in heaven. The power to bind and loose referred to in chap. xvi. 19 of St. Matthew's Gospel was conferred upon Peter *alone*. He "loosed" 3000 Jews and admitted them into the kingdom (Acts ii). He also "loosed" a company of Gentiles in the house of Cornelius (Acts xi.) He "bound" Ananias and Sapphira in their sin (Acts v.), and Simon the sorcerer also (Acts viii). But the administration of the kingdom—at least in admission and rejection—was conferred upon Peter only, and hence the binding and loosing is not only Peter's act alone, but chapter xi. of the Acts records the last instance of its use in Scripture. The doors of the Kingdom of heaven were formally opened for reception of believers—Jews and Gentiles.

But authority is delegated by the blessed Lord to the general body of the disciples couched in identical terms to that given to

Peter. Matt. xviii. 18 is in *Church* connection ; that in chap. xvi. 19 is in *Kingdom* connection. The former *abides* ; the latter has *ceased* ; the former is a *corporate* responsibility ; the latter of *individual* responsibility. The Assembly use of this, *not* inherent, but delegated power is witnessed in the treatment of the "wicked person" at Corinth. He was put away or "bound" by the Assembly (1 Cor. v. 13). Afterwards on due repentance he was received back and thus "loosed" by the Assembly (2 Cor. ii. 6-8). Administrative action on earth and for the earth as witnessed in the Assembly's rejection of, and subsequent restoration of the "wicked person" is a power conferred by the Lord Himself (John xx. 22).

It needs men of broken will to lead in all the various phases of discipline. Excision is the last, the very last and extreme act of Church power. It should rarely be resorted to and only when the resources of grace are exhausted and further patience would result in the toleration of evil. But when we consider ourselves, how active the flesh is in each one of us ; how strong the temptations of some—their surroundings and natural propensities—we should act slowly, enquire patiently, and decide with a gravity becoming the solemn nature of the case.

## CONCLUSION.

We hate a system of fault-finding, and a destructive criticism. Persons who yield themselves to this unseemly habit live in an unholy atmosphere and are sure in time to fall under the power of evil in act. Besides, there is no power in knowing evil. Power is in knowing and doing good. "Wise unto that which is good and simple concerning evil" is apostolic precept. We do not want you, beloved reader, to be *occupied* with Church evil. It is enough to know it and shun it. But we do earnestly beg of you to turn to the pages of the New Testament—where alone the truths and principles of the Church of God are unfolded—and read and study what the Church and Christianity were in apostolic days and times: Will you do this, and then contrast the actual picture there presented with that of the present hour? And if the contrast is an appalling one what is your one duty?—your bounden solemn obligation to your Lord and Master—what but to shun all that is contrary to God's Word and Christ's Name and cleave simply and act openly and decidedly with all everywhere endeavouring to keep the Unity of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace !