

THE  
CHURCH OF THE LIVING GOD  
  
THE HOUSE OF GOD  
  
AND  
  
THE BODY OF CHRIST.

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## PREFATORY NOTE.

Many quotations from recent writers in some of the foremost and deservedly valued Christian periodicals, could be given in proof of the fact that there is a growing tendency even amongst those who profess to be zealous for the truth to ignore or set aside one or other of the two aspects of the Church, represented by the "House" and the "Body." But in the present paper it has been thought wiser to avoid all appearance of controversy, and to keep simply to the truth as given in the Scriptures, to which every sincere believer must perforce appeal. The writers referred to, beloved for their works' sake, must stand or fall to their own master. Each and all can, if they will, compare this present paper with their own; and whatever their matured thoughts may be, it is confidently believed they will lose nothing by so doing. May our common Lord and Master add His blessing.

It surely behoves those who care for Christ's glory (because they have "tasted that the Lord is gracious") to look afresh into the Scriptures in order that their souls may be established in the faith once delivered to the saints (Jude 2).

W. J. LOWE.

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# The Church of the Living God, the House of God, and the Body of Christ.

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THE "Church of the Living God" is presented in two distinct ways in the New Testament, namely, as "*the House of God*," and as "*the Body of Christ*." With the former is connected every matter of practical holiness and behaviour; with the latter, the special character of God's ways in grace during the present interval, and consequently, all that concerns the spiritual progress and final perfection of those who are soon to "bear the image of the heavenly," and who are now expected to be found waiting, and "ready," for their Lord's return.

The "*House*" and its character depends upon what God is, Who deigns to dwell therein, and has said, "Be ye holy, for I am holy."

The "*Body*" is the complement of the glorified Son of Man, "the fulness of Him that filleth all in all." The unfolding of this "mystery" was specially committed to the Apostle Paul, who had been called to see the Lord Jesus Christ in glory.

The mystery of the *Body of Christ* could not be properly made known until the "Head" was glorified in heaven, after having accomplished His work of redemption. It was, says the apostle, a mystery hidden during the past ages, only to be revealed when the full expression of His love for the Church has been given in the cross. There is, however, a faint indication of it in Gen. ii., before the fall of Adam, which sets forth figuratively some of the fundamental truths

Psa. xciii. 5  
1. Tim. iii. 15  
Eph. iv. 8-16.  
1. Cor. xv. 48, 49  
Phil. iii. 20, 21  
Col. iii. 1-4  
Mark xiii. 32-37,  
Luke xii. 31-40

1. Pet. i. 13-16

Eph. i. 19-23,  
iii. 2-12  
1. Cor. xv. 8  
Acts ix. 3-6

Eph. i. 22-23

Heb. i. 3

Eph. iii. 5-6,  
Rom. xvi. 25  
John xv. 13  
Eph. v. 25

on which it is based. The passage is referred to and partly quoted by the apostle in Eph. v. 30, 31, as indeed previously in the Gospels, for another reason, by the blessed Lord Himself, referring to the relations established by God between a man and his wife. The apostle adds, however, "This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church."

Matt. xix. 4, 5,  
Mark x. 7, 8

Gen. ii.

1. Tim. ii. 12.

In the original history, we find that "Adam was first formed, then Eve." So did the manifestation of Christ in this world precede any mention of the Church, which is His Body.\*

But the woman was not formed until Adam had slept "a deep sleep," when God took one of his ribs for that purpose. On awaking, he found a "help-meet"; there also in a figure do we find Christ's death and resurrection to be the initial act of the Church's existence, without which Psalm viii. could not be accomplished in divine order, nor His present glory have become available for any one, whether Jew or Gentile. See John xii. 20-24. In the death of Christ, God deals with man on the broad lines of his being "dead in trespasses and sins," an epithet which applies to the Jew as well as to a Gentile. Every national distinction is thus intentionally broken down, and the fulness of divine blessing flows

Eph. ii. 1-13

Eph. ii. 14-17

Matt. ix. 15,  
xxii. 2, 11, 12,  
xxv. 1

\* It is noticeable that, in Matthew, the only one of the four gospels which mentions the Church, we have three references to the "Bridegroom," whereas the word "Bride" does not occur. The blessed, wondrous fact that there was to be a "bride" is consequently deducible only from the fact that Christ is the *Bridegroom* of divine purpose in Old Testament Scriptures. To that the Scriptures in Matthew doubtless refer, as also John iii. 29, if, indeed, this latter passage goes beyond the simple statement of the moral relationship. If not limited to that, it would answer to Psal. xlv. 9. But in Matthew we have the added feature of Christ's rejection, in chap. xxi., preparing the way for the "marriage" (chap. xxii.); and in consequence, those who are instructed in the divine secret, go forth to meet the *Bridegroom* (chap. xxv. 1).

out to the lost, as a consequence of Christ being "rejected of men."\*

1. Pet. ii. 3-5

Types always fade before the divine realities which they foreshadow. Were it not for the inspired apostolic comment upon Adam's words concerning Eve, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh,"—who could have ventured to gather from them the wondrous conclusion, "We are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones?"†

Luke ix. 20-22

Such was however the purpose of God for the glory of His Son, set forth in Eden, while Adam was as yet unfallen. And Adam "is the figure of Him that was to come." Through this touching history the believer's heart is led on towards the consummation of those divine counsels which exceed in enthralling power all the brightness of displayed glory. Many will have part in the "kingdom" who do not belong to the Church; but it is "to Himself" that Christ will present the Church, without spot or wrinkle, holy and unblemished. His peculiar portion is in her, who is,—as Abigail was to David,—the companion of His rejection, and she, the brightest jewel of redemption, is known as "the Bride of the LAMB."

Rom. v. 14

Matt. viii. 11

Eph. v. 27

\* It is deeply interesting in this connection to note that the first definite announcement of His sufferings and death made by Jesus at the end of His public ministry in Galilee, was immediately followed by His taking three of His disciples into the mountain and giving them there a view of His "coming," His "power," and His "majesty." See the accounts of the transfiguration in Matthew, Mark and Luke, comparing them with Peter's use of it in his second epistle, just previously to his martyrdom.

Matt. xvi. 28

Mark ix. 1

Luke ix. 29-31

† May we not mention the risen Lord's assurance to His astonished disciples in Luke xxiv. 39, as recalling Adam's words: "A spirit hath not flesh and bones as ye see me have"? But, as above remarked, the revelation of the mystery of the Church was reserved for the ministry of Paul.

Rev. xxi. 9

Eph. i. 9.

Eph. iv. 3, 4

I. Cor. vi. 17,  
xii. 13

Gen. xxviii.  
17-22

Exod. xix. 4-6

Matt. xvi. 18

Thus, in the earliest days of man's history upon earth, was first indicated the "mystery of God's will according to His good pleasure which He hath purposed in Himself." The making of it known was reserved until the Son had fulfilled on earth the Father's will, and had returned to heaven. But now that it is revealed, it commands the believer's heart and conscience, when he learns that "there is one body and one Spirit, even as we are called in one hope of our calling." He is bound in the sight of God and in fealty to Christ "to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." The Spirit is given to him for that purpose. "He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit."

The truth concerning the *House of God*, faintly set forth at "Bethel," in Jacob's history, could not properly be taken up in detail till after the flood, after Babel and the call of Abraham, after the bondage of his descendants in the land of Egypt. But when it pleased God to accomplish the promise made to their fathers, He gathered out the Israelites as His own peculiar people, in whose midst He was pleased to dwell. It is then in Exodus, the book of redemption, that we must look for the simplest and most fundamental principles of the "House of God." The special features of the "House," in the form the Lord has given to it at the present time, cannot invalidate those eternal principles of relationship with Himself, which were clearly established at the first. On the contrary they confirm them, while receiving additional light from the inspired record of Israel's passage through the wilderness, and of their sojourn in the promised land.

God having personally "come down" to deliver His\* people, and being Himself their leader in the

Exod. iii. 7, 8

\* The words, "My people" occur here for the first time, proving that "my" refers to *redemption*. Compare Isaiah xliii. 1, 3, and I. Cor. vi. 20.

pillar of cloud and fire, it was a divine necessity that He should remain with them, and that the tokens of His presence should be continually before them. In this respect their sojourn in the wilderness was the brightest epoch of their history, and the truth unfolded in the Epistle to the Hebrews refers precisely to that period.

The answer of their hearts to it, beyond question inspired of God, was, "He is my God, and I will prepare Him a habitation, my father's God, and I will exalt Him." In that marvellous song after the passage of the Red Sea, we find three great principles brought together: A redeemed people, the "House," and the Kingdom, the latter for the time being, as all the song shows, limited to Israel, for all the nations mentioned are there treated as enemies. But the first condition of God's habitation existing amongst His people was that the people had been previously redeemed to Himself.\* God Himself sets His seal to this at Mount Sinai, when He says to Moses, "Let them make Me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them."

Exod. xv. 2

Exod. xxv. 8

One cannot conceive of anything more stirring and heart-searching than the continual sight of the cloud over the Tabernacle in the centre of Israel's camp—a pillar by day and fire by night. Every Israelite could see it from his tent door. And yet how little their hearts really rose up to it, the history of their murmurings proves. Cir-

Num. ix. 15-33

Num. xi.-xvii.

\* What a fatal blow is given here to the idea of a "national church" at the present day! Israel was indeed nationally adopted, but the very principle and constitution of the Christian church is that all national distinctions are abolished (Col. iii. 11), and adoption is individual. To establish a church composed of regenerate and unregenerate alike, is to destroy the foundations of the truth, and what sort of "church" can result from such a combination? It would seem that a spiritual sensitiveness on this head must inevitably drive even evangelicals into adopting the monstrous doctrine of baptismal regeneration.

cumstances had more effect upon them than the fact of God's presence and its proven power and grace. It was then as now a question of faith in God. And may we not ask ourselves whether we show ourselves more believing than they?

Exceptions there were of course even in the olden time. Psalm xxvii. expresses the right desires and feelings of one who has a sense of God's presence and of what it involves, exceedingly striking as referring to the "light" and "salvation" known in the passage of the Red Sea (compare verses 1, 2, with Exod. xiv. 13, 20). But if salvation is to be appropriated, faith has ever been necessary as God's only way of righteousness and life for man. It was reserved to Moses to pray that the principle of God's dwelling with His people should be confirmed to them in the future, and that the tabernacle, "the work of their hands," should have its eternal counterpart (Psa. xc.). It will be true in the millennium for Israel, and universally in the eternal state (Rev. xxi. 3).

Some other principles had to be set forth before the coming of the Son of God to this earth,—incarnate.

When Israel was established in the land of Canaan, God, Who had dwelt and "walked" amongst them in the wilderness, would have a permanent habitation, like the palaces of kings. David desired to erect it, and to him was given a fresh revelation that it could only be properly built by Him Who was at the same time David's son and David's Lord, the One of Whom God could say in deepest meaning, "I will be His Father and He shall be My Son." Zechariah shows to the returned captives that only His building can endure. Every previous temple, even Solomon's, though devised and arranged by David under God's directing hand, was destined to perish in the flames.

Hab. ii. 4

Rom. i. 17

Psa. xc. 1, 16, 17  
Compare the  
word "beauty"  
with Psa.  
xxvii. 4

I. Chron. xvii.  
13, 11  
Zech. vi.



He Who, in 1. Chron. xvii. is owned to be "the Son," forever to be settled in the House and Kingdom of God, is in Zechariah shown to be "the Man Whose name is the Branch," growing up out of His place. He, the Son of Man, will bear the glory, and be a priest upon His throne, fulfilling what is said of Him in Psa. ii., viii., xci. 16, cx. 4, etc.

1. Chron. xvii. 14  
Zech. vi.

All these facts and shadows of olden time are gathered up by the Lord when He, speaking of Himself as "the Son of Man," obtained from Peter the required answer to His question: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God"; and He adds, "Upon this Rock *I will build My church.*" Here we find the first announcement given in the New Testament concerning that spiritual "House" which is composed of "stones" of which Peter was a sample when he confessed that Jesus was the Son of the living God. Such are now "builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit."

Matt. xvi. 13-18

Peter means a  
"stone"

Eph. ii. 22

The administration of the kingdom,—now a heavenly one,—was confided by the Lord to Peter at the same time, thus maintaining the connection between the House and the Kingdom, first set forth in Exod. xv.

Many confound the "church" with the "kingdom of heaven," as if they were one and the same thing; but a little attention to the Old Testament Scriptures suffices to make the matter plain. The kingdom is the entire sphere subjected to the authority of God, in which His government is exercised. The "House" is His dwelling place, and those who are "of His household" are in special relationship with Him. They are "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone, in Whom all the building, fitly framed together, groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord."

Eph. ii. 19-21

We may add as to the Kingdom in its present form, in accordance with I. Chron. xvii. 14, that it is the authority and power of God exercised from heaven over the earth by Him Who said, Matt. xxviii. 18, "All power is given to Me in heaven and in earth: go ye therefore and teach all nations," etc. 19, xi. 27 That being the case, the evangelist can go forth freely, confiding in the Lord's gracious care, even though he be as a "sheep in the midst of wolves," and liable to be brought in judgment before governors and kings for the Lord's sake, "for a testimony against them and the Gentiles." Thus indeed it was that Paul suffered.

Matt. x 16-18

## II.

From the above rapid sketch, which we have sought to condense as much as possible, it must be evident to every truly obedient heart, that the discipline and holiness which become the House of God, have a foremost claim on the Christian's attention, not only as to his own personal conduct, of which all the Epistles speak, but also as to his relations with his fellow Christians in the church or "assembly." This part of his duty is more difficult than that which is purely individual, from the simple fact that in dealing with others there is much more need of grace, patience and long-suffering. Different temperaments, differing tastes, inclinations, and capabilities, all calling for gentleness and compassionate forbearance, meet one on every hand, to say nothing of disorders arising from past failures and the working of man's will, augmented by our own inattention to the order of the House of God. It is easy for an energetic servant to make use of the whip in order to enforce compliance with what he deems to be right, but such methods are those of the world which crucified Christ, and they will in due time meet with the Lord's judgment. If the order maintained in the House does not

Matt. xxiv.  
48-51

adequately set forth the claims of Him Whose House it is, it loses its character, and will eventually be disowned of the Lord.

So it was of the Temple at Jerusalem which He called "My house" and "My Father's house," but of which He said eventually, "Behold *your* house is left unto you desolate; for I say unto you, ye shall not see Me henceforth till ye shall say, 'Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord.'"

Matt. xxi. 13,

John ii. 16

Matt. xxiii.

38, 39

Everything that has ever been committed of God to man's hand has been ruined from the very outset. Adam innocent disobeyed his Creator and lost paradise; Noah, the constituted head of our present world after the flood, was dishonoured through his own failure; Israel broke the law in the most flagrant manner, before the two tables were brought into the camp; Solomon, who built the Temple, built also on the Mount of Olives those high places for the idols of his wives which remained a blot upon the reigns of the best kings of Judah until eventually removed by Josiah, and even then the evil root which had led to their being set up, remained unjudged, and the chastisement foretold overtook the unfaithful people.

Gen. iii.

Gen. ix. 20-24

Exod. xxxii.

I. Kings xi. 7-8

II. Kings xxiii.

13

Jer. iii. 10, 11

The church has been no exception to the rule. Murmurings and deception soon tarnished the joy of the bright beginning and ere the apostles left the scene they had to warn the faithful against every kind of disorder within, not to speak of corruptors who, as Jude says, "crept in" from without. Satan sowed tares amongst the wheat, filled the great tree with the birds which devoured the good seed when it was first scattered, corrupted the fine flour with leaven which, once introduced, never could be eradicated. The purging out of leaven, in as far as that is possible in a local church or company of Christians, became indeed one of the objects of apostolic

Matt. xiii.

I. Cor. v. 7

care ; but there is no suggestion in the New Testament that the church, as a whole, will ever regain the simplicity, mutual confidence and self-sacrifice which characterised its start. On the contrary, the ruin which the enemy brought in, has been a prominent feature throughout its history, only relieved in part from time to time, through the raising up of faithful men, whom God has graciously used to recall Christians to the truth given at the first by the Lord Himself and then through the apostles. The patent fact of the church, both in West and East, having early in the fourth century sold her liberty to the civil power,\* should suffice to convince every honest heart of the hopelessness of looking for better things. When has she ever regained what she gave up then ? Free churches at the present day may pride themselves on being delivered from this influence ; but they prove by their ways that they are quite as political as those who cling to " national " established churches, if not even more so ; thus verifying the Lord's word to Pergamos, " I know thy works and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is." The Romish power pretends to rule the world—that world which the Lord refused to set right ; Protestants—episcopal and non-episcopal—accept to be ruled or guided by the world, trusting to the power of princes in order to be able to make a stand against

Rev. ii. 13

John xviii. 36  
1. Tim. vi. 13

\* And what did she gain by it ? If persecution from without was practically brought to an end by putting the church's judicial administration into the hands of the secular power, it speedily began again from within and in a worse form. Satan raised up trouble through the heretic, Arius, who was before long clever enough to gain the Emperor's ear, and was on the point of being made Patriarch of Constantinople, when he perished miserably during a procession in the streets of the city. But the mischief he had caused by no means ended with his death, and for three centuries the church in the East was torn to pieces with heretical teaching and discussions about doctrine.

Romish pretensions and encroachments. The Greek church is no better. Where can we look to find any considerable following of the rejected Nazarene?

That He has had at all times, and will have through grace, a few witnesses to His truth, like Enoch, faith rejoices in. All Scripture testifies to this fact, though even David the king could say, "Help, Lord, for the godly man ceaseth, the faithful fail from among the children of men." Psa. xii. 1  
If ever there was a time when one might suppose individual piety to be encouraged, surely it was when the king himself was a God-fearing man. Yet such was his testimony given "to the chief musician" to be sung in public.

The comfort is that God's truth abides, and surely He will sustain and bless every soul that humbly seeks, in dependence upon Himself, to walk according to it, while He encourages and helps those who together seek to call upon the Lord out of a true heart. It is in vain that we complain of the faults of others, seeking in this way to account for the failure and disorder, which we would fain remedy, but the seeds of which are in our own individual hearts. The book of Job may well serve as a warning in this respect. That most righteous man (and God bore witness to him as such), a man who was not a Pharisee, but habitually used language that no Pharisee would use,—when put into the crucible, was found to be secretly clinging to a testimony from his fellows, which he knew in his heart of hearts would not avail him before God. III. John 3-4  
II. Tim. ii. 22  
And is there not in every heart a lurking root of self-confidence, a hankering after satisfaction to be derived from comparing ourselves with others, with the conviction that the comparison will turn out to our advantage, God Himself being the Judge? He who through God's grace could say, in the midst of his bitter trial, "I know Job ix. 2, 3, 20,  
30, 31

Job xix. 25

Job xlii. 5, 6

that my Redeemer liveth," was brought to say at the end of it, "Now mine eye seeth Thee, wherefore I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes." If that were our state, there would be an end to seeking applause from others.

As with Job, so it is with us. In the path of self-judgment and true contrition, bearing on our hearts the ruin of the church, will be found the divine remedy for the evils which we deplore; not that Scripture warrants our expecting extensive or brilliant results, but faith counts on God to own and bless His word, and those who do His will in obeying it.

1. Chron. xvii.  
12

The question is, Are the principles and order of the House of God, as given in Scripture, to be complied with? If not, how can there be for Christ's glory any true collective answer to the grace of Him Who died to save us, and Who builds the House for His Father,—the House which He calls "My church?" Holiness becomes that House for ever. Is holiness to be maintained or not?

Surely if we know ourselves at all, we must be conscious of a secret dislike to discipline, when we ourselves become amenable to it. The natural heart will ever be ready to exercise it upon a defaulter, even going so far as to take the law into one's own hand, but our ill-adjusted balances provide excuses for ourselves; and resistance to authority, whether active or passive, is none the less real for being unavowed.

Did the flesh not exist in us, there would be no difficulty. But there it is, and ever will be as long as we remain on earth. Who can truly say, I am free from it? We are swift to detect it in others, and would fain offer to relieve our brother's eye of the mote we think we see there, forgetful of the beam that is in our own eye. Intelligent, godly young Christians are almost sure to err on this side. One of the most painful

things in a Christian assembly is a strong-willed man who lacks the experience furnished by mature age, and yet takes upon himself to set his brethren right in doctrines, principles and practice, as if he alone were the defender of the faith. "Not a novice" was Paul's warning to Timothy ; 1. Tim. iii. 16 and surely we do well to heed it.

Another difficulty, common amongst older men, is a repugnance to obey the Scripture when disciplinary action is called for, as in Corinth. This may arise from the remembrance of past personal failure, or from a lively sense of the feeble moral condition of those called upon to exercise it in obedience to the Lord. The case of Corinth, gross as it was, is full of instruction in this respect. May we not safely say that had the apostle not written to them, they never would have acted at all ? His care, as both Epistles prove, was the state of the whole assembly and the due exercise of every conscience within it. Does not God permit evils of this kind and the trials they lead to, in order to raise the moral tone of those who may, unbeknown to themselves, be quietly gliding down the stream of worldliness and indifference to Christ's claims ?

Others again, who rightly complain of discipline carried out in a wrong way (for in what may not failure come in ?), or in a haughty, harsh or overweening spirit, may feel tempted to go to the other extreme and refuse its exercise in any way at all. This is the case with multitudes at the present time. But whatever may be urged in defence of this argument, it must lead to winking at evil, which is a denial of the first principle of God's house. For God is light, and the light manifests everything. The effect of all independency in principle is to stifle conscience, and encourage indifference to God and His word. As it was of old, those who turned a deaf ear to God's warning, sought for men of their own

1. Cor. v.

II. Cor. xii.  
20, 21

Eph. v. 13

choosing, to whom they could say, "Speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits."

Wrong doing necessarily tries upright souls. But does not God in His providential wisdom, oftentimes permit it, in order that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed? Thus was Christ rejected by those who ought to have been delighted to receive Him, "a sign spoken against," and a sword was to pierce even Mary's soul.

Examples of this are not wanting in Old Testament times. Why, we may ask, did God allow David to consult his great captains, instead of the Levitical instructions, and imitate the Philistines in putting the ark upon a cart, which resulted in Uzzah being smitten? Did it not look as if judgment had overtaken the wrong man? But only so could the king's conscience be reached. And when his own grievous fall had to be chronicled some years later, could it be considered as an excuse for Absalom's rebellion? Surely not. David was no doubt right in bowing to God's chastening hand and in telling the priests to carry the ark back to Mount Zion, but God brought providentially upon his heartless son a judgment that the king, through his own personal failure, was too weak to carry out.

The Lord has said that "offences," or stumbling blocks "must needs come"; and so the apostle in writing to the Corinthians: "There must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you." But on the other hand, "God is faithful, Who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able, but will with the temptation also make a way to escape that ye may be able to bear it." When trials overtake us, surely the first thing we have to do is to see God's hand in it for the good of all concerned: "Hear ye the rod and Him Who hath appointed it." In this way we shall not only find blessing for ourselves, but also

Luke ii. 34, 35

I. Chron. xv. 13

II. Sam. xv. 25

Matt. xviii. 7

I. Cor. xi. 19

I. Cor. x. 13

Micah vi.



have the joy of tracing God's gracious dealings in caring for the spiritual good of our brethren.

Rom. viii. 28

It is easy to seek to get rid of responsibility by crying out against the failures of those who seek in the main to carry it out in obedience to the Lord, and in dependence upon Him ; but that is not the path of faith, nor one in which we may expect to find the Lord's support.

The greater the difficulty, the more need we have of grace, as Paul reminded Timothy, " My son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus." Nothing is more to be deprecated than an assembly dealing with evil in its midst in the spirit of a tribunal. The fact of there being evil in its midst is a reason for self-judgment, and humiliation before the Lord. Those who talk most loudly of what they do being " bound in heaven," are often unconscious of the extent to which they have carried out their own wills, without humbly seeking in concert with their brethren to get the Lord's mind, so that they might carry it out in true brokenness of spirit and obedience.

II. Tim. ii. 1

Matt. xviii. 18

Two things need to be kept constantly before the soul in everything that concerns the assembly—first, the presence of the Lord in the midst ; secondly, the fact of His speedy coming. When the thought of His coming being " delayed " enters in the heart, the " servants " are bound to resort to worldly methods and practices. The Lord will deal with this Himself, when the proper time shall have come. Oh, may the Lord arouse afresh the hearts of all His saints as to these two things, that we may not lose our golden opportunity for faithfulness to Him, ere He come !

Matt. xviii. 20,  
xxviii. 20  
Luke xii. 35-38  
Rev. iii. 11,  
xxii. 12

Matt. xxiv. 48

From what we have thus briefly passed in review, the reader can but feel that there is no short, rough and ready, human way of compassing divine principles. Every heart needs to be personally occupied with the Lord, and all those who compose a local assembly need to be

exercised as to having one mind in the Lord according to His word in mutual forbearance, grace and patience. That can hardly be the case unless we follow the Apostle Paul in the "one thing" he did and sought to do (Philip. iii. 8-17).

### III.

We would now rapidly draw attention to the epistles in which the order and discipline of the church in its local capacity and responsibility, are particularly treated of.

Foremost amongst these are the two epistles specially addressed "to *the church of God* which is at Corinth."

In the first epistle, after three chapters occupied with the character of the Gospel preached by the Apostle, and its effects through the operation of the Holy Ghost, he turns to consider the church in its "House" aspect, to the end of chap. ix., and then takes up the "Body" to the end of chap. xiv., concluding with the resurrection as the fundamental truth of the gospel, in chap. xv. At the end of chap. iii., the "House" or "Temple" is introduced as the result of the preaching, the "building" being looked at from the point of view of that which has been committed to man's hand, bringing into evidence the responsibility of the builders. Throughout, it is a question of privilege, responsibility, and true exercise of conscience towards the Lord.

The coming of the Lord is four times mentioned in the course of the epistle, as giving tone and character to the whole Christian life in all its details: i. 8; iv. 5; xi. 26; xv. 23. And there is a covert allusion to it in the final solemn word "Maranatha" in connection with final judgment at the end (xvi. 22).

Every subject heart must own that the person of the Lord Jesus Christ is the prominent thought throughout. The epistle, though specially ad-

dressed to the local church at Corinth, takes in Chap. i. 2  
 "all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours." Consequently it has its value and actuality for all time, as long as the church is on earth. Every matter must needs be referred to the Lord and so considered by the Christian, who cares for His interests and glory. Every detail of his service is by the apostle treated from that unique standpoint. If he were a minister at all, he was a minister of Christ, accountable to his Master Who will make manifest the secrets of every heart.

In discipline, the apostle forbore to use his apostolic authority, preferring that the Corinthians should have their hearts and consciences exercised, so as to act in a way becoming the holiness of God's House. They could only be renewed as an unleavened lump after putting out the defilement that was in their midst. Chap. iv. 1  
 Chap. v. 3-13

The apostle's anxiety is about *them*, the gathering as a whole. He explains it further in the second epistle, where he says: "Wherefore though I wrote unto you, I did it not for his cause that had done the wrong, nor for his cause that had suffered wrong, but that our care for you in the sight of God might appear unto you." Even supposing they had felt morally incompetent to deal with the case, or had for other reasons forbore to act,—had they "mourned" over it in true self-judgment, God might have intervened providentially to remove the offender. Instead of this they were glorying in their gifts and making light of defilement, even when it was of so gross a nature. The opportunity served for admonition concerning other cases of evil conduct, as well as for reminding them that the Christian's body is "the temple of the Holy Ghost." II. Cor. vii. 12  
 I. Cor. v. 2  
 I. Cor. vi. 19

A somewhat analogous expression in chapter iii. 16, refers to the presence of the Holy Ghost on earth in the midst of the saints as a whole.

This began on the day of Pentecost when the Holy Ghost came in fulfilment of the Lord's promise (John xiv. 16 ; xvi. 7-15). On the other hand, the Lord's word, "He shall be in you," is abundantly testified to in Paul's epistles, and presents the individual side of the blessing. "Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father."

Gal. iv. 6

We may indeed note these two things in Acts ii., as often remarked, for while the rushing, mighty wind "filled *all the house* where they were sitting," it is added that the cloven tongues of fire "sat upon *each* of them, and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost." This "baptism" of the Spirit, never to be repeated, was the fulfilment of the Lord's promise previous to His ascension, "Ye shall be baptised with the Holy Ghost, not many days hence." The Holy Ghost then came down from heaven to abide with them "forever" (John xiv. 16). And what a blessing it is to know it!

Acts ii. 2-4

Acts i. 5

In chap. xii. 13 of our epistle, the apostle again refers to these two sides of the truth : The former part of the verse relates to the coming of the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost answering to the word "baptism." The latter part to the individual reception of the Spirit after conversion. "We have been all made to *drink* into one Spirit." The importance of this cannot be overrated ; it is the power of the Christian's life and walk.

Rom. viii. 4,

10, 14

Gal. v. 16, 25

The character of this walk, in relation to the House of God, is fully gone into in chaps. vi.-ix. of our epistle, even to matters of eating and drinking. It concludes with the ministry, its claims and its privileges, in view of the incorruptible crown reserved for those who have run the race.

Then we have, in chap. x., the "Body" introduced, a paragraph reminding us of the examples and warnings to be gathered from the history of

Israel in the wilderness, showing the need of trusting a faithful God in order to be brought through.

It will be noticed that in this and the following chapters, the subject is the *gathering* and what is suitable to it, the order that becomes it, since Christ is the Head of the Body and "the Head of every man." The function of every member is thus referred to Him, and every member has its own function needful for the proper working of the whole.

1. Cor. xi. 3

In principle, this goes beyond a local gathering ; for there is but one "Body" representing the universal church, all gifts being appropriated to the whole and consequently not necessarily confined to a local gathering. But the exercise of the gifts locally is to be after the same order, as chapter xiv. shows, love,—patient, suffering, forbearing love,—being the cementing power and hidden energy of all spiritual action.

1. Cor. xiii.

The second epistle is in many ways the complement of the first, showing how grace is to reign practically, even when the assembly is called upon to go to the extreme act of exclusion.

It is often forgotten that discipline has its limits quite independently of the state of heart or conscience of the one dealt with. It should in its carrying out, bear the stamp of the God of all grace Who chastises "for our profit." He remembers how easily "the souls which He has made" may faint before Him. The prophets abound in analogous passages, of restraining grace.

Heb. xii. 10

Isa. lvii. 16

Psa. ciii. 8-10

Where there is but little spiritual power, patience is lacking, and the tendency is to resort to exclusion as a short way of getting over a difficulty. How soon, alas, do we forget that when the cherubim\* of Ezekiel are called upon to

\* The cherubim form a part of God's throne (as previously on the mercy seat), and represent its administrative or executive power, and are thus of great value in setting forth these principles for church action.

Compare Ezek.  
x. 14, with i. 10

Ezek. x. 20

*act*, the one that takes precedence, and is alone called "a *cherub*" distinctively, is the patient labouring "ox." Yet it was "the same living creature" previously seen by the prophet.

i. Cor. v. 13

When exclusion is the only possible remedy for maintaining the holiness of the assembly, it is evident that discipline ceases, for God judges those that are "without." But godly solicitude and prayer has still its place, according to the grace which, in the world, seeks the lost; and there will be watching to see how God continues His work in the soul of the one who has failed, so that the longed for moment may be hailed with joy when it can be said, "Sufficient unto such a man is this punishment which was inflicted of many, so that contrariwise, ye ought rather to forgive him and comfort him, lest perhaps such an one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow."

ii. Cor. ii. 6, 7

Gal. vi. 8

It will always be found that true humiliation and self judgment, go hand in hand with patience and forbearance towards others. If another be overtaken in a fault, we have to seek his restoration in patient grace, considering our own imperfections, "lest we also be tempted."

Chapters viii. and ix. of the second epistle to the Corinthians deal with the whole subject of collections, chapter viii., with the godly care needed for their administration, chapter ix., with the privilege of giving, and the way the matter should be apprehended and carried out for the glory of God in the assemblies of the saints.

The closing chapters deal with jealousies, re-criminations and other fruits of the enemy's work, who seeks to corrupt and turn away the minds of the saints from the simplicity which is in Christ. This affords an opportunity of setting forth the character of true ministry of which the apostle in suffering was such a blessed example.

The two epistles to the Thessalonians were also addressed "to the church," and are full of important directions as to personal walk, mutual consideration and godly order, at a time when the chief difficulties arose from the pressure of persecution, and much ignorance of divine principles in the young converts.

Those to Timothy and Titus contain the apostolic commands to those who were associated with himself in the care of the assemblies. The first to Timothy dealing with a normal state of things which soon gave place to disorder and ruin, so that at the last the faithful servant has to purge himself from vessels to dishonour and follow "righteousness, faith, love, peace with those that call on the Lord out of a pure heart." That can only be truly done in a spirit of mourning like that of Ezra, when he learned the failure of those whom God in mercy had brought back from captivity. Comfort for a true heart is found in the fact that "the Lord knoweth them that are His," while his imperative duty as naming the name of the Lord is, to "depart from iniquity." A most instructive instance of like action is found in Numbers xvi.,\* where these two principles are brought out. See verses 5 and 26.

II. Tim. ii. 20, 21

II. Tim. ii. 22

Ezra ix.

II. Tim. ii. 19

The greatest difficulty at the present time arises from the fact of widespread lawlessness, so that healthy discipline is often rendered nugatory by the facility of finding some company or other of Christians who care little about it and yet maintain an outward appearance of enjoying all Christian privileges.

This, as Scripture shows, will go on increasing. But in the midst of all the ruin, God's truth

\* Note the word "tabernacle" in the singular applied to Korah and his company in contradistinction with the tabernacle of the Lord. It is the only case of such a use of the word. See verse 9, and compare xvi. 24, 27, with xvii. 13.

Eph. iv. 3

abides, and God will bless those who walk according to it, and enable them in dependence upon Himself "to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." We cannot keep "the unity of the Body," as it is sometimes ill-expressed. The idea is unintelligent. The Body exists, and there is but one. But we have to show our hearty subjection to the Holy Spirit's operations and order, so that there may be nothing in our words or ways to clash with it. The "unity of the *Spirit*" cannot be kept where the Holy Ghost is practically ignored, the lordship of Christ forgotten, and the word of God disobeyed.

Psa. xl.

Acts xx. 29, 30  
Rom. xvi. 17-19

The enemy is ever ready with apologies and excuses for disobedience, but it is only by implicit obedience that we can walk in the steps of Him Who said, "Lo I come to do Thy will; O God." Strong-willed men have rent the church to pieces by their doctrines, "drawing away disciples after them." But "God and the word of His grace" abide for those who have ears to hear, and hearts to obey.

W. J. L.

*The reader is exhorted to turn up the Scripture references.*