

The Church and the Churches

Part 1: The Church Chapter 1: Introductory

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["Search the Scripture." John 5:39.](#)

In matters of doctrine it is of vital importance that the authority upon which we act shall be one on which we can unhesitatingly rely. There are those who advocate that such authority is vested in the Church. This at once introduces certain questions for our consideration, namely, what the Church is, and what are its calling, constitution and destiny. No claim to authority on the part of any man, or company of men, can be admitted, till it is proved to be well founded. We do not acquiesce in anyone's demands simply because he puts them forward.

Basic Facts

It is axiomatic that the Church is the possession of Christ. if Christ were non-existent, there would be no Church. That there is a Church at all rests upon the basic facts of His Incarnation, His Atoning Death and His Resurrection, and upon the fulfillment of His prophetic announcement, "I will build My Church."

Our knowledge of this statement by our Lord is derived from the writings of the New Testament. These are indeed the chief sources from which comes our knowledge of Christ Himself, of the claims He made and the work He accomplished. This would involve, were it necessary here, the accumulation of proofs that the contents of the New Testament consist of authentic historical details and teachings and Divinely inspired writings. The subject of the authenticity, authority and inspiration of Scripture has been adequately dealt with elsewhere and will not be taken up in these pages. Suffice it to say that the evidence of Holy Scripture is of primary importance; all other evidence can be only subsidiary to it. As to their validity, the New Testament books were written by men who lived both in the time and in the country in which Christ lived, by men who wrote immediately for the generation that was born before Christ died, and many of the writers had been witnesses of the events they narrated. Where the writers had not personal experience of some of the events they recorded they had ample

means of verifying the statements they made. All the evidence, external and internal, establishes their veracity. The very contrast of the character of these writings with that of non-canonical writings, both contemporaneous and of subsequent periods, pays its telling tribute to their validity and Divine authority and inspiration.

Of the four Gospels the Gospel of Matthew is the only one that contains a direct statement made by Christ concerning His Church. The same is true regarding a local church. But in each respect all that is taught in the rest of the New Testament is consistent with our Lord's statements, the whole forming a harmonious body of doctrine relating to the subject. The establishment of the claims of Holy Scripture and the Divine authority of its teachings necessitate our adherence to it and our acceptance of that alone which is in accordance with it. To follow any teaching contradictory to the doctrines taught by Christ and His Apostles is to challenge at once the accuracy of Holy Scripture and His prerogatives as therein set forth.

We turn, then, to these writings to consider the nature and constitution of the Church and the churches, and the character and scope of the authority given by Christ for the promulgation of doctrine.

The Term *Ekklesia*

In the New Testament the word *ekklesia* (lit. "called out"), apart from its application to an assembly of Greek citizens (Acts 19:39), and to a riotous mob (verses 32, 41), and to Israel (Acts 7:38), is used in two senses only, firstly, of the whole company of the redeemed throughout the present era, the company of which Christ said, "I will build My Church" (Matt. 16:18), and which is further described as "the Church which is His Body" (Eph. 1:22, 23); secondly, in the singular number, of a company consisting exclusively of professed believers, with reference to the place in which they are accustomed to meet together, and in the plural with reference to a district.¹

A Spiritual Organism

The truth relating to the Church, as formed by the incorporation of believing Jews and Gentiles in one body, of which Christ is the Head, is spoken of by Paul as a mystery (i.e., a truth to be revealed to the saints in the Divinely appointed time) which from all ages had been "hid in God" (Eph. 3:1-9), "kept in silence through times eternal" (Rom. 16:25, R.V.).

While this great fact of its constituent parts as a living spiritual organism was especially committed to that Apostle (Eph. 3:9), the first specific pronouncement concerning the Church was made by Christ on the occasion of Peter's confession of Him as "The Christ, the Son of the Living God" (Matt. 16:16). The Lord declared that the Father, and He alone, had revealed this to him, and that on the foundation of that revelation Christ Himself would build His Church², and that the gates of Hades would not prevail against it. The revelation conveys the great foundation truths of the Person of Christ as such, His eternal relation with the Father, and the fact of His resurrection; He was "declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection of the dead" (Rom. 1:4). Being eternally the Son of God He was declared to be so in His resurrection. That He would be Himself the Builder of His Church was essentially connected with His death and resurrection. By these, too, He vanquished all that Hades stands for, the gates representing the place where authority is exercised. He brought to nought "him that had the power of death" (Heb. 2:14). Upon Christ risen, victorious, life-giving, immutable, the Church is established. "Other foundation can no man lay."

¹There is an apparent exception in the R.V. of Acts 9:31, where, while the Authorized Version has "churches," the singular seems to point to a district; but the reference is clearly to the church as it was in Jerusalem, from which it had just been scattered, as recorded in 8:1. Again, in Rom. 16:23, that Gaius was the host of "the whole church," most naturally and simply suggests that the assembly in Corinth had been accustomed to meet in his house, where also Paul was entertained.

²If we grant that the words, "Thou art Peter," represent the actual original, the Lord was confirming a name which He had already given him (John 1:42), and was indicating the association of his character with that of the truth of his confession. There is, however, considerable ms. authority for the reading "thou hast said." In the contracted form of the last word the lettering of the original is the same, and the difference is simply one of spacing; thus *su ei ps* is "thou art Peter," and *su eips*, which stands for *su eipas*, is "thou hast said." St. Augustine in his Latin version has "tu dixisti" (thou hast said), and must have had ms. authority for this. St. Jerome quotes the passage in one place as "su eipas." Moreover on the occasion, as recorded in this very Gospel, when Caiaphas questioned the Lord as to His being "the Christ, the Son of God" (practically the same U40 as in Peter's confession), He immediately answered, "Thou hast said" (Matt. 26:64).

A Spiritual Edifice

Conspicuous among the facts relating to the Church as set forth by Christ and His Apostles are its spiritual establishment and its heavenly character and destiny. The Apostle Peter, continuing the metaphor used by the Lord, and speaking of Christ Himself as "a living Stone, rejected indeed of men, but with God elect, precious," says of believers, "ye also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices" (I Peter 2:5). "All the building, fitly framed together, groweth into a holy Temple in the Lord" (a sanctuary, a spiritual holy of holies), believers being "builded together for a habitation of God in the Spirit" (Eph. 2:21).

The Apostles did not establish an earthly system, an organization of churches centralized in ecclesiastical headquarters. Such a policy is significantly absent both from their methods and their doctrine. What took place at Jerusalem, as recorded in Acts 15 provides no example of such a centre. The company which assembled there has been called an apostolic council. Whatever was its nature, no Apostle presided over it; Peter and other Apostles took part, James summed up matters in a closing speech, and an epistle was addressed in the name of the Apostles and elders, and delegates were chosen by the whole local church together with them (verse 22). But this gathering was incidental and not intended as a precedent. No other such assemblage is recorded in apostolic times. Nor did the decision effect a settlement of the trouble. Peter himself was afterwards found acting inconsistently with the decree (Gal. 2:11-14).

A great missionary enterprise was initiated from Antioch, but instead of taking place under the aegis of Jerusalem it was undertaken in entire independence of the Apostles there, and own of their delegates (Acts 13:1-3).

Unauthorized Systems

Events at Jerusalem, therefore, provide no support for the establishment of a controlling centre for the organization of churches. One will search in vain in the Acts and the Epistles for even an intimation of the establishment of such an institution.

Apart from such matters as the supply, by churches in a district, of the needs of poor saints in another region, the only bond binding churches together was spiritual, that of

a common life in Christ and the indwelling of the same Holy Spirit. There was no such thing as external unity by way of federation, affiliation or amalgamation, either of churches in any given locality or of all the churches together. Apostolic testimony is, indeed, against the organization of churches into an ecclesiastical system. There is no such phrase in Scripture as "The Church on earth," nor is there anything in the Scriptures to justify such an idea (see p. 57). The only Head of the Church is Christ, and at His hands provision is made for the spiritual needs of each local church. The Church, consisting of all who are joined to Him, the Head, is "visible" as an entity to God alone. In contrast to it there stand out to the eyes of the world ecclesiastical systems, but these include the real and the false. As systems, they are the product of departure from the design of the Divine Founder and Builder and of human interference with the operation of the Spirit of God.

The view has been promulgated that certain decrees of church councils, and potentates, in centuries subsequent to apostolic times, were either developments from apostolic teachings or such additions as were necessary to meet the circumstances of later times. That the accretions were developments is contrary to facts, and that additions were designed or needful is contradictory to the testimony of Christ and His Apostles.

The following pages show something of the departure from the instructions and commandments laid down for the churches by the Lord and His Apostles, and the radical difference between what was established in apostate Christendom and the doctrines of the faith "once for all delivered to the saints." The rise of ecclesiastical systems produced a state of things in the churches which, so far from being developments of the faith, were utterly opposed to it. Such a departure was, after all, the fulfillment of what Christ and His Apostles had foretold, that false teachers would arise, speaking perverse things.

In these later times the Spirit of God has been operating in the hearts of thousands of His people, causing them to return to apostolic teaching.

The Church and the Churches

Part 1: The Church

Chapter 2: The Church and the Kingdom of Heaven

It is important to observe the distinction made by the Lord between the Church and the Kingdom of Heaven. To identify the two gives rise to much confusion.

The Lord's statement to the Apostle Peter, that upon the rock foundation of the truth of his confession, as embodied in His own Person, He would build His Church and the gates of Hades should not prevail against it, was followed by the promise, "I will give unto thee the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (Matt. 16:19). It is important to observe the distinction made by the Lord between the Church and the Kingdom of Heaven. To identify the two gives rise to much confusion.

"The Kingdom of Heaven" describes Heaven as the place from which authority proceeds, while the earth is the sphere in which it is exercised. Heaven is God's Throne, the Seat of Divine Government (Ps. 11:4; 103:19; Matt. 5:34; Acts 7:49). When the One who exercises the authority is the predominant thought, the phrase used is "the Kingdom of God," &~ phrase which also extends beyond all the various ages of time with their dispensational features.

"The Heavens" have always ruled (Dan. 4:32). Inasmuch, too, as the Kingdom of Heaven assumed a special phase with the testimony of Christ in the days of His flesh, obviously the Kingdom of Heaven preceded the formation of the Church. While yet the inception of the Church was future Christ denounced the Pharisees for shutting up the Kingdom of Heaven against men: "Ye enter not in yourselves," He said, "neither offer ye them that are entering in to enter" (Matt. 23:13). That alone would be sufficient to show that there is a distinction. They were not hindering men from entering the Church, as it did not then exist.

The Keys

In saying to Peter, "I will give unto thee the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven," He was at once differentiating between the Kingdom and the Church, of which He had just spoken. The keys are symbolic of authority and of the power to give admission to something. In this case the admission was not to the Church. Peter did not open the door into the Church either when He preached to the Jews on the Day of Pentecost or

when he preached to Gentiles in the house of Cornelius. If the preaching of the gospel is the opening of the door into the Church, then all who engage in preaching are openers of the door. Moreover, the Lord's commission to preach the gospel was given to all the Apostles, as recorded in Matthew 28:19. While, on the one hand, He was about to build His Church, which would consist of true believers only, His disposition of the affairs of the Kingdom of Heaven, of which He handed Peter the keys, was quite another matter; it had to do initially with the nation of Israel, in the midst of which the powers of the Kingdom had already been exercised, though it was not limited to Israel.

Israel and the Kingdom

Whereas there is no mention of the Church in Christ's previous discourses, He had constantly spoken of the Kingdom of Heaven, as also had His herald John the Baptist in his special mission to Israel. Each had given the nation the message, "Repent ye; for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand" (Matt. 3:2 and 4:17), clearly a reference to the fact of Christ's presence in the nation. The Kingdom had been one of the Lord's chief topics in His discourses.

The nation of Israel, though professing allegiance to God, had shared in the general rebellion of mankind (cp. Isa. 1:2, 4). The King had at length Himself come into their midst, but they had refused to recognize Him, and, at the time when Christ spoke of the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, the Jews were just about to reject Him absolutely. For this they were eventually to be "cast away," until a time of restoration, an event still future (Rom. 11:15,25). In spite of this, to Peter was to be committed the proclamation of a great amnesty to the nation, and thereafter the gospel was to be carried by him and others to the Gentiles.

Pentecost

On the Day of Pentecost, after explaining the circumstances of the sending of the Holy Spirit, and addressing his hearers as "men of Israel" (Acts 2:22), and "brethren" (verse 29), i.e., as his fellow nationals, the Apostle proclaimed the resurrection and exaltation of Jesus of Nazareth, whom they had crucified by "the hand of lawless men." "All the house of Israel" were to know assuredly that God had "made Him both Lord and Christ" (verse 36). In his subsequent message to the nation he says, "The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, hath glorified His Servant Jesus; whom ye delivered up, and denied" (3:13). Yet, upon the condition of their repentance,

their sins would be blotted out, "seasons of refreshing" would come from the presence of the Lord, and He would send the Christ (verses 19, 20).

Here, then, was a proclamation to the nation, "the house of Israel," and in this and his further testimony the Lord fulfilled His word to the Apostle, that to him He would give the "keys of the Kingdom of Heaven." In other words, besides the new fact that the Church, the Body of Christ, began to be formed at Pentecost, the Apostle Peter, in offering terms to Israel, was dealing administratively with the affairs of the Kingdom of Heaven; not that he was the first to do so (that is not involved in the Lord's word that He would give Him the keys), for the authority of the Kingdom had already been operating, but that he fulfilled a special function in regard to it.

While members of the Church, the Body of Christ, are thereby in the Kingdom, yet, as we have seen, the Kingdom was preached as the Kingdom of Heaven before the Church began, and will be proclaimed on earth after the Church is complete and is removed from earth to its heavenly destiny at the Rapture.

The Kingdom of God

The Kingdom of God is the sphere in which God's rule is acknowledged. It is said to be "in mystery" (Mark 4:11), that is, it does not come within the natural powers of observation.' The Lord said, "The Kingdom of God cometh not with observation"⁴ (margin, "with outward show") (Luke 17:20). The reign of God on earth today is not that of an earthly kingdom (though His Almighty power controls the affairs of kingdoms), but is the reign of His will over the unseen movements of the inner man. Submission to His will involves faith in Christ, and this brings regeneration, or the new birth, of which our Lord spoke to Nicodemus. Then it is that we become children of God, being born of the Spirit, and thereupon we receive eternal life and are justified in His sight, becoming accepted in Christ. Without the new birth all other conformity is vain. The Kingdom of Heaven, as Scripture portrays it, makes all attempt to gain temporal power entirely inconsistent with its objects. Those who would reign as kings to day must reign without the Apostles (see I Cor. 4:8, where Paul deprecates the attempt to reign now, and expresses an ardent longing for the appointed future time for doing so). When hereafter God asserts His rule universally, then the Kingdom will be in glory, and will be manifest to all (cp. Matt. 25:31-34; 2 Tim. 4:18). That is destined to be the ultimate phase of the Kingdom of Heaven, an expression which often covers the same ground as "the

Kingdom of God," the two terms being frequently interchangeable (cp. Matt. 19:23 with verse 24, and again with Mark 10:23, 24; also Matt. 19:14 with Mark 10:14; and Matt. 13:11 with Luke 8:10)⁵.

⁴See an extended note on the subject in Notes on I and 2 Thessalonians by C. F. Hogg and the writer.

⁵The phrase "the Kingdom of Heaven" is used only in the Gospel of Matthew in the New Testament (in 2 Tim. 4:18, the phrase is "His heavenly Kingdom"). That Gospel speaks of the Kingdom of God four times. There is a distinction between what that Kingdom actually is and what it resembles. In the parables in Matt. 13 the Lord does not say, "the Kingdom of Heaven is so and so," but "the Kingdom of Heaven is like unto" (verses 24, 31, 33, 44, 45, 47), and again in the corresponding passage in Mark, "So is the Kingdom of God as if..." (verse 26), and "How shall we liken the Kingdom of God, or in what parable shall we set it forth" (verse 30). Just as there is a radical difference between wheat and tares, so there is all the difference between 'sons of the Kingdom' and 'sons of the evil one' (Matt. 13:38). Both are to be found in the Kingdom, in its mystery form, outwardly acknowledging the name of Christ. But some yield either merely formal or even feigned obedience. This will be so even in the Millennium, and with hearts unchanged they will rebel at the last (see Rev. 20:7-10). Only those can enter into the Kingdom in reality and in its eternal blessedness who are born again (John 3:5).

Binding and Loosing

The promise with which the Lord immediately followed His word to Peter about the keys, namely, "and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in Heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in Heaven," He subsequently extended to all the disciples, as recorded in chapter 18:18. From this it is obvious that, whatever is indicated thereby, it was not, as a principle, to be confined exclusively to Peter. The preceding context in the eighteenth chapter shows that the reference there is to cases of discipline for maintaining the Lord's honour, and the succeeding context shows that the power was to be shared with two or three who would be gathered together in His Name. He would Himself be in the midst of them. The passage in the sixteenth chapter shows that the reference is, as we have seen, to administration in the Kingdom of Heaven.

The Lord's words to Peter, therefore, do not in any wise imply that this Apostle was to receive a primacy of jurisdiction in the Church, or that he was to have supreme authority to teach and govern under Christ. Both this, and the idea that Peter was the rock foundation upon which the spiritual edifice of the Church was to be built, are based upon ecclesiastical misconception and find no support in the pages of Holy Scripture. Christ was neither founding a monarchy in forming the Church, nor was He establishing an individual to be a ruler over it.

Nor again can such superiority or authority be inferred from the Lord's words to Peter, after His resurrection, "Feed My lambs," "Feed (or tend) My sheep." What Christ was doing, as recorded in John 21:15-17, was not the impartation of ecclesiastical authority but a confirmation of Peter after his restoration from his fall, and a preparation for his service. There was no implication in the Lord's words that any specially superior work of pastoral care was to be committed to him. The care of the flock is a responsibility devolving upon all spiritual shepherds; as the Apostle himself says when exhorting elders, "Tend the flock of God which is among you, exercising the oversight thereof, not of constraint, but willingly, according unto God; nor yet for filthy lucre but of a ready mind; neither as lording it over the charge allotted to you, but making yourselves ensamples to the flock" (I Peter 5:2, 3, R.V.).

Things that Differ

To sum up, the Kingdom is not coterminous with the Church. Holy angels, though they do not form part of the Church, are in the Kingdom of God. The Psalmist, after saying "The Lord hath established His Throne in the heavens; and His Kingdom ruleth over all," calls at once upon His angels to praise Him. They fulfil His commandments, "hearkening unto the voice of His words"; they are "His ministers that do His pleasure" (Ps. 103:19-21). In the present era the powers of the Kingdom work in the hearts of men by means of the preaching of the gospel, but neither the Kingdom of God nor the Church consists of a visible external organization. Christ did not found and build up for Himself a Kingdom upon earth, nor do we find any intimation in Scripture that the Church is an earthly establishment.

When Christ, speaking of a trespass on the part of one brother against another, and of the efforts that were to be made by means of witnesses to remove the difficulty, said that if the erring one refused to hear them the injured brother was to tell it to the

church (Matt. 18:17), obviously the reference was to a local congregation. The Church, in the extended significance of the word, is ruled out by the circumstances. The thought of the establishment of a central ecclesiastical institution as a court of judicature for the trying of such cases is as absent from that passage as it is from the rest of the New Testament. The Church is never looked upon, in the teaching of Scripture, as an earthly institution. To conceive of it as the Kingdom of God is to confound things concerning which Holy Scripture makes a difference. That Kingdom is spiritual in its present phase. Its operations do not consist in the punctilious observance of ordinances, in things external and material, but in those which are spiritual and essential, in righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost (Rom. 14:17).

Chapter 3: The Body of Christ

The truth relating to the Church as the Body, of which Christ is the Head, was especially committed to the Apostle Paul, and it was evidently with the design of unfolding it that he set out to write the Epistle to the Ephesians. The teaching that occupies the first twenty-one verses of the first chapter forms the basis of the statement that God gave Christ to be "Head over all things to the Church, which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all."

An essential truth laid down in this first chapter, amplified in the course of the Epistle, and conveyed in the symbolism of the head and the body, is that the Church, instead of being an earthly organization built up and established in the world, is heavenly in its design, establishment and destiny. Its individual members necessarily become incorporated into it in this life, according as each one receives eternal life through faith in Christ and is born of God. Each one then becomes part of the Body and is inseparably united to the Head. At no period can all the believers living in the world at any given time have constituted the Church. They could not in that respect be spoken of as the Body of Christ and yet that is an alternative designation of the Church.⁶

⁶A local church, meeting in any particular place, is spoken of as a body in 1 Cor. 12:27, but in a different aspect: "To the church in Corinth," the Apostle says, "Ye are (the) body of Christ" (the definite article is absent in the original), but some of the members, in that application of the word, are themselves part of the head, being spoken of as an "eye," an "car" (see verse 16). Accordingly the symbol is not applied in that passage in

the same way as in Ephesians, where Christ is the Head of the whole Church, the Body.

The Scripture View of the Church

Even at the time of Pentecost those who believed comprised only a small fraction of the whole Church, and if they, or all the truly regenerate in the world at the present time, or at any other time, were the Church, then that of which He is the Head (and there is no other) would be a body maimed and marred and lacking most of its parts. In the early part of the present era most of the Church had not come into being; in the closing part of the era most of the Church has, or will have, departed this life, such, while stiff part of the Body, being present with the Lord. The whole will not be completed till the gospel has fulfilled its object. After its number is complete, the Lord will "descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we that are alive, that are left, shall together with them be caught up in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air" (I Thess. 4:16, 17, R.V.). The Church will then have its full membership as the Body of Christ, and only of that company can the term "the Church" be rightly used, apart from its application to a local company.

Many apply the term "the Church" to all those in the world who profess the faith. But such a view of the Church is not borne out by the teaching of Christ and His Apostles.⁷ Believers⁷ are formed into local churches here, each being a separate spiritual temple of God, according to the Divine plan; as the Apostle says to the church at Corinth, "Ye are a temple of God, and the Spirit of God dwelleth in you" (I Cor. 3:16, R.V.). But the churches were not externally organized into an ecclesiastical entity, in any district or country, or generally as a universal system. Neither is there any hint in apostolic teaching that such was Divinely intended to be the case. To such a system or combination the word "Church" is nowhere applied in Scripture, and any such organization is a contravention of apostolic testimony and therefore of the will and design of Christ.

⁷The view referred to has been explained by means of the illustration of a regiment in the British Army, which fought, for instance, at the battle of Waterloo, and still bears the same designation, though not a soldier who took part in that battle is alive today. But Scripture knows no such third definition of the Church as would provide ground for

the illustration. Again, an attempt has been made to find some support for the view in the suggestion that the letters to the seven churches in the second and third Chapters of the Apocalypse speak of conditions which anticipatively represent successive periods in the history of the Christian churches, or of Christendom, throughout the present era. It is argued from this that since the condition prevailing in any one of the periods represents what is conveyed to a particular church in the actual letter, the term "church" may be said to stand for all the Christians in the world during the period intimated. This argument is precarious indeed. To begin with, it is based upon a mere inference, and then, whatever justification there may be for the successive period view, that view involves the teaching that the conditions which are represented by the last of the four letters are not distinctly successive since each of these four last continues from its beginning to the end of the age; so that there are four simultaneous conditions at the time represented by the letter to Laodicea, three represented by the letter to Philadelphia, two by the letter to Sardis, while that which is represented by the one to Thyatira continues through all four. In other words, if we hold the anticipative and prophetic view of these letters to the churches they cannot all be held to represent distinctly separate, successive periods. This itself runs counter to the idea that the Church consists of all believers in the world at any given time, and in any case it is unsafe to apply the word "Church," in a way in which it is not used in Scripture, to something which is simply based upon inference, and especially an inference which does not fit the view taken.

Christ's Design Abandoned

In times considerably subsequent to those of the Apostles, churches were externally combined, organized and centralized, as the result of ecclesiastical aims and efforts, and by such means something took shape quite different in character from the arrangements which were designed by Christ and carried out by the Apostles. It is true that then the term "Church" was applied to that organization, but in no way could its use in that respect be justified from the Divine point of view. The claim is made that such an organization was inevitable, and was developed and directed by the Spirit of God, but the claim is invalid. The ecclesiastical history of the third, fourth and fifth centuries is a witness against it. In those times the churches became partially paganized, and their organization was arranged under the influence and guidance of the Emperor Constantine, and modeled largely on the plan of State arrangements. The

whole system thus became a travesty of the Divine institution and the term "the Church" was, and has been since, a misnomer, when applied to it.

That local churches are themselves visible communities professing the same faith, partaking of the same holy privileges and spiritual blessings, governed by the same Lord, and indwelt by the same Holy Spirit, has never afforded any ground for their external amalgamation, with the establishment of a central ecclesiastical authority on earth, either for any particular district, or for the churches at large; neither has the fact that the Lord provides spiritual gifts in the several churches for the guidance and care therein of believers. We have already remarked that the record of what is regarded as a Council of the Church in Acts 15 affords no evidence of this. The incident there mentioned is, on the contrary, a testimony against such an institution rather than an evidence in favour of it.

The One and Only Head

That God the Father gave Christ to be Head over all things to the Church as His Body, is the crown of all the Divine counsels relating to the Church. There is no more glorious theme in all the plan of Redemption. That, no doubt, is the significance of the double title of God, "the God of our Lord Jesus Christ" and "the Father of glory," with which this passage begins (Eph. 1:17), while it also resumed the threefold mention of the praise of His glory, in verses 6, 12 and 14. The Son wrought for the glory of the Father in His life on earth and His atoning death, and the Father, in response thereto, glorified His Son in raising Him from the dead and seating Him at His right hand in the place of universal authority and in Headship over the Church.

The phrase "Head over all things to the Church" is very comprehensive when viewed in the light of both the preceding and succeeding contexts. The latter speaks of the Church as the fulness of Him "that filleth all in all"⁸ that is to say, in regard to the Church as His Body, He fills all things' in all the members, all their activities being under His direction and fulfilled by His power. But this does not exhaust the meaning of the phrase. The preceding context directs our thoughts to the position which Christ occupies in His universal power and authority both in this age and that which is to come, a position in which all things are put in subjection under His feet. This is stated here anticipatively, as an accomplished fact; for, though as the Epistle to the Hebrews

says, "we see not yet all things subjected to Him," yet its fulfillment is as certain as if it had already taken place.

⁸Here the presence of the definite article in the original refers apparently to what has preceded.

This opens out a wonderful vista. The One to whom all things are to be subjected has been given to the Church as its Head. The Church in this relation to Christ occupies the highest position in the Divine counsels for the future. All things in Heaven and on the earth are unitedly to own His authority, and the position of the Church as being "in Christ" determines its association with Him in the exercise of this universal control. We are to be "joint-heirs with Christ" (Rom. 8:17). The Father has in view for His Son "a dispensation (or administration, lit., economy) of the fulness of the times," wherein He will sum up all things in Christ, "the things in the heavens and the things on the earth" (Eph. 1:10); and inasmuch as the Church, chosen in Him before the foundation of the world, is united to Him in the closest possible manner, it will, while being under His Headship as His Body, at the same time be associated with Him in His power and rule, and thus He is, in the fullest scope, "Head over all things to the Church."

Preparatory Antagonism

Against such a transcendent truth, affecting as it does the glory of God and the Person of Christ, it is not a matter of surprise that the arch-adversary should set himself with his utmost might and his most persistent and ingenious devices, both by opposition and imitation. Nor need we be surprised that, throughout an era when God is calling out from among the nations a company for His Name, to constitute the Church the Body of Christ, formed by the Holy Spirit, and Heavenly in establishment and destiny, the adversary should seek to obscure and travesty the truths relating thereto. Satanic preparation had been made, in the long centuries before Christ came, for the paganizing of the apostate Christendom of the fourth century A.D., by the worldwide spread of Babylonish tents, customs and practices.

Ecclesiastical Presumption

The doctrine relating to the Church as the Body of Christ has a most practical effect on the life of believers, and is strikingly counteractive of a tendency to regard Church truth as merely doctrinal and removed from the sphere of Christian activities. The

dominating principle for all believers, in this figure under which the Church is set forth, is their entire subjection to Christ. The Body is for the Head. Human will of itself is ruled out. The glory of man as such has no place. For the believer the Cross of Christ is the death of human self-satisfaction, ambition and pride. The Cross has revealed in full measure man's alienation from God, his love of this world and his disinclination towards grace. But the Cross is at the same time the very basis upon which the relationship of the Church to Christ is established. Man's tendency is to exalt himself. He loves reputation. He likes to be somebody, to do something which will attract the esteem of people to himself, to be of importance in his own eyes as well as in the eyes of others. In the very discharge of spiritual functions in the Church, man is apt to forget that all that he is and does is to be surely and solely for the glory of Christ, that Christ is the one Head, controlling everything, and imparting everything of life and energy to the Body in all its members.

Nowhere is this innate tendency more dangerous than in spiritual things, and particularly in the exercise of the care and guidance of the people of God. Here one exposes himself especially to the wiles of the adversary, and a man may be deceived into thinking that he is serving God while really he is establishing the glory and power of his ecclesiastical position. The true glory of Christ is obscured when man's greatness is prominent. Ecclesiastical rivalry, and the resulting domination of the strongest men in the churches, served to produce such a condition, that control eventually was exercised from one religious centre, and man usurped the position of the authority of Christ.

That the Church is the Body of Christ strikes a blow at the idea of its establishment on earth as a universal ecclesiastical organization. Christ the Head is in Heaven, and His Body the Church is identified with Him in the Heavenly places. There the Church is "seated" with Him, and its establishment and destiny are there. Its very existence and condition depended, and ever will depend, upon His ascension and exaltation there as a result of His Incarnation, Death and Resurrection. There could be no Church without Christ as its Head, and it is because He is set at God's right hand that He holds that position. That the Church is His Body assumes, then, both His exaltation and the identification of the Church with Him in the heavenlies.

Growth of Clerical Domination

This is not according to the ideas and inclination of the natural mind; it clashes with man's carnal propensities. It is significant that, while this great truth relating to the Church as the Body of which Christ is the Head, was taught and maintained by apostolic testimony, there is the clearest evidence that in post-apostolic times it fell into neglect. The low spiritual condition into which the churches lapsed made this inevitable. The state of things against which Christ Himself remonstrates through the Apostle John in Revelation 2 and 3 was such as to induce a disregard of the doctrine concerning the true position and relation of the Church. Not only so, but, on the other hand, there were forces at work detrimental to it. The rapid and general advance of clerisy was against it. The un-apostolic assumption of human power and domination on the part of Church leaders practically obliterated it. How could it be apprehended when men "loved to have the pre-eminence," and when people gloried in man? The general development of the clerical system was antagonistic to that truth.

Those who have carefully studied the history of the first few centuries of this era, will perhaps have observed that the writings even of the early "Fathers" contain no testimony to this doctrine of the Headship of Christ over the Church as His Body. Whatever else was taught, that was allowed to lapse. Earthly aspirations, motives guided by natural ambition, aims that were concentrated on worldly ideas, superseded the truth of the Church as the Body of Christ. The confusion of the true character of the Church with that of earthly organization was a triumph for the adversary and shows how possible it was for the churches to be "corrupted from the simplicity and the purity that is toward Christ."

Chapter 4: A Fourfold Description of the Church

The first chapter of the Epistle to the Ephesians sets forth the Character of the Church as heavenly in its position, its relationship to Christ and its destiny. As His Body, it is united to Him as its Head "in the heavenly places."

The second chapter likewise speaks of the Constitution of the Church. It consists of those who "in the flesh" were Jews and Gentiles, all alike being "sons of disobedience," living "in the lusts of our flesh, doing the desires of the flesh and of the mind," "by nature children of wrath," and spiritually "dead through our trespasses" (2:3-5). Of such materials Divine grace has designed that Christ should "create in Himself... one new man," reconciling believers both Jew and Gentile, "in one body unto God, through the

Cross" (verses 15, 16). The "one new man" is the Body with the Head, viewed anticipatively, instinct with spiritual life derived from the Head, though the Body is actually in process of formation until the whole attains "unto a full grown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ" (4:13).

Toward the close of the second chapter the metaphor is changed (to be resumed in the fourth chapter), and a threefold description is given. There is firstly the figure of a city, secondly that of a household, and thirdly that of a temple. Gentile believers are not raised to the level of Jewish believers; both are brought out of their former condition into the high privileges of fellowship and association with Christ.

A City and a Household

"So then" (i.e., because of this union in Christ and the common access by one Spirit unto the Father) "ye are no more strangers and sojourners, but ye are fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God." The words rendered "strangers" (*xenos*) and "sojourners" (*paroikos*, lit., a by-dweller) and not infrequently found together in the Septuagint.

The stranger was an alien, tolerated, indeed, yet liable to be frowned on and debarred from rights and privileges which belonged to the nation into whose midst he had come to reside for the time being.

As a sojourner, if the Apostle was merely referring to conditions in Greek States, a sojourner was one who came from one city and settled in another but did not enjoy the rights of citizenship. If, however, he had in mind the Septuagint use of the word in the rendering of Leviticus 22:10; 25:23, etc., the reference would be to one who, while resident with a family or community, was excluded from its domestic rights and privileges, as, for instance, in the case of one who sojourned with a priest as his guest but was prohibited from eating the holy things. That this is the meaning is suggested by the contrasting context, which speaks of believers as "of the household of God." [9] [9] In Leviticus 22:10, the Septuagint has a different word for "stranger" (*allogenos*, one of another race). In Genesis 23:4, "sojourner" (*Paroikos*) is the first word. See also Leviticus 25:23, 35, 47. In the New Testament the terms are found only elsewhere in Acts 7:6, 29; cp. 1 Pet. 2:11.

How striking the change wrought by Divine grace! Instead of "strangers," "fellow-citizens with the saints!" Literally the phrase is "fellow-citizens of the saints," that is to say, the saints constitute a community of which all are fellow-citizens not that Gentile believers are now privileged with Jewish saints, as a distinct class, but that all saints (whether Jew or Gentile formerly) are together privileged as being possessed of heavenly citizenship. All enjoy the same government and protection, the same organization and fellowship, the same rights and liberties. Instead of "sojourners," they are members "of the household of God!" Not mere guests, here to day and gone tomorrow, but members of God's spiritual House, enjoying all the benefits of domestic life, in the most intimate relationship, as "heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ."

A Temple

As a Temple the saints are "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the chief corner stone; in whom each several building (more literally, 'every building') fitly framed together groweth into a holy temple in the Lord."

As to the foundation, the word rendered "being built" (lit., "being built upon"), containing in itself the mention of a dwelling place, forms a transition from the figure of the household to the material of a building, that of a temple being in view. The foundation was laid by the Apostles and prophets (i.e., those whose testimony was contemporaneous with that of the Apostles); it consisted of the doctrines relating to Christ¹⁰. Their testimony was foundation work, Christ Jesus Himself, i.e., His own Person, being "the chief corner stone," the foundation stone placed at the corner. Cp. Psalm 118:22, Isaiah 28:16. Christ, the glories of His Person and work, form the foundation. The Apostles and prophets are again viewed in 4:12 as engaged in the work of "building up."

¹⁰Some regard the apostles and prophets as themselves the foundation. While this is possible, it is needful to remember that the genitive case in the original, represented by the preposition "of," frequently has an objective sense instead of the appositional. That is to say, in the present instance the meaning would be, not that the apostles and prophets were themselves the subjects, forming part of the foundation, but that the foundation was the object laid by their agency, and this is a fact. Revelation 21:14 affords no confirmation of the subjective or appositional view; that passage speaks of a city wall, a symbol of defense, not of God's Temple.

The phrase rendered "every building" (R.V. margin); "all the building," (A.V.); each is possible as a rendering signifies the structure in every part of it. The edifice in course of construction, in process of being "fitly framed together (or, more literally, 'jointed together')," grows "into a holy Temple in the Lord." This presents the process in its ultimate issue. All is viewed in its future state as complete and perfect, every stone fitting its appointed place, the whole being God's dwelling place, a place of absolute holiness, a structure of glory and beauty, a place of worship. There is no noise in the process, no outward display. The building is not set up on the earth it is a spiritual structure and this is consistent with and confirms all the teaching of the New Testament concerning the Church. Nothing can prevent its completion. The gates of Hades cannot prevail against it.

Chapter 5: The Father's Family

The first chapter of the Epistle to the Ephesians speaks particularly of the counsels of God in regard to the glory of Christ and the relationship of the Church to Him. The second chapter brings especially before us the operations of God in the formation of the Church, the present process and the ultimate design.

The third chapter, which, since the Apostle treats therein of his own ministry, is parenthetical, yet introduces, as we shall see, a figure additional to those of the second chapter. At the same time even here he recalls the subject of the Body; in speaking of the special stewardship committed to him in connection with "the mystery" of Christ and the Church, he defines the mystery in this way, "that the Gentiles are fellow-heirs and fellow-members of the same Body, and fellow-partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus, through the gospel" (3:6, R.V.) Co-heirs, co-incorporated and co-sharers. Here the one Body is again the dominating thought. For the thought of the incorporation into the same Body conveys a closer union than that of joint inheritance, and the third expression, "fellow-partakers" is simply added to show that the first two involve this, that there is no blessing or privilege, either in kind or in degree, which is not shared alike by believers, both Jew and Gentile.

The additional figure which this chapter presents is that of a family. Having pointed out the present purpose of God concerning the Church, in regard to the principalities and the powers in the heavenly places, the Apostle speaks of the access which we enjoy

through faith, and bows his knees "unto the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named." "Every family" may be taken as the correct rendering.¹¹

¹⁰It is true that the Greek word *pas* may signify "all," even when it is not followed by the definite article with the noun (when the article is used, the rendering should be "all the" or "the whole" as in Acts 3:25, "all the families," and Phil. 1:3, R.V. "all my remembrance of you; 11 contrast "every prayer" in verse 4, where the article is absent). Yet a distinction is necessary in the phrases without the article. In the case of an abstract, or a proper noun, some collective nouns, and some used in a collective sense where no other meaning but "all" is possible, the rendering is "all," e.g., "all righteousness" (Matt. 3:15), "all Jerusalem" (Matt. 2:3), "all flesh" (Luke 3:6). Otherwise the rendering should be "every;" thus "every ordinance" (1 Peter 2:13), "every creature" (Col. 1:15, 23), "every Scripture" (2 Tim. 3:16); so "every family" (here).

The Patria

As to the meaning of the word *patria*, "family," it is found only twice elsewhere in the New Testament, in Luke 2:4, "lineage of David" (R.V., "family"), that is, those who reckon their descent from David, and Acts 3:25, "the kindreds (R.V., families) of the earth." The word, then, signifies those who have a common paternal origin.

Now as to the context, the Apostle has mentioned in the 18th verse of the preceding chapter that through Christ "we have our access in one Spirit unto the Father." This he has just repeated in the 12th verse of the third chapter and in this connection he speaks of "the Father" as the One to whom he bows his knees. In both passages the Fatherhood of God is stressed, and the point here is that from the Father every family in heaven and on earth is named. Some have regarded this as signifying a series of families consisting of the Church, angels, Jews and Gentiles. This, however, does not seem to be the apostle's meaning.

"Every Family"

The phrase is exactly parallel in the original to that in 2:21, where, speaking of the Church as a temple, he says "in whom every building (see margin of the R.V.), fitly framed together, groweth unto a holy temple in the Lord." Just as there the phrase "every building" signifies "the building in all its parts," so here "every family" would

point to the same kind of meaning, namely, "the whole family in all its parts," that is to say, all those who, whether in Heaven or on earth, enjoy relationship to God as their Father. Thus the Church is in view, in all its constituent parts⁹ those who are already with the Lord and the various communities or assemblies on earth who likewise enjoy this Divine relationship. This is in keeping with the tenor of the whole Epistle.

That the whole in its several parts is named from the Father indicates that from Him as Father it derives that which gives it its true character, and it is the practical realization of this in the lives of believers that the Apostle desires, as expressed in his immediately following prayer. For the Fatherhood of God, and all that this means in spiritual relationship and experience, can be carried into practical effect only if we are strengthened by the power of the Spirit of God in the inward man and Christ dwells in our hearts through faith. only so can we be rooted and grounded in love and be strong to apprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge." Thus and thus only can we be "filled unto (Or 'into) all the fulness of God." All this is consequent upon having God as our Father.

The Father

The matters contained in. this comprehensive prayer, then, are those which appertain especially to the family of God. In the Apostle's prayer in the first chapter he speaks of God as "the Father of glory," as well as "the God of our Lord Jesus Christ" (verse 17); for the subject of that prayer is more especially the power of God in raising Him from the dead, and in consequence the greatness of His power to usward. Here in the third chapter his prayer is occupied more particularly with the subject of love. We are to know the love of Christ and are to be rooted and grounded in love. The theme of love is especially appropriate to the subject of the family. As the Father of glory (chapter 1) He raised up Christ from the dead, and made Him to sit at His right hand in heavenly places, giving Him to be Head over all things to the Church, which is His Body. As the Father of the spiritual family (chapter 3) His design is that the members of the family should know His love as embodied in and expressed through Christ. In the first prayer the Church is "filled unto all the fulness of Him that filleth all in all." That is a matter of glory expressed in power. Here in the second prayer the subject of fulness is not the power by which Christ fills all things in all the members, as in 1:23, but the design of the Father that the members of His family should so know the love of Christ that they may

be filled into all the fulness of God. Divine. power fills all the members of the Body; by Divine love the members of God's family are filled into His fulness.

The Doxology

The theme of the Apostle's prayer is so transcendent, and the effects designed to be produced so soul-stirring and heart-affecting, that he follows his prayer with this doxology: "Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto Him be the glory in the Church and in Christ Jesus unto all generations for ever and ever" (3: 20, 21). Let us note particularly the combination "in the Church and in Christ Jesus"; that is undoubtedly the right rendering. The Church is the sphere in which the glory here spoken of is to ascend to God. But not simply the Church; never the Church without Christ who is its Head, who fills the members, and whose love draws forth their praise. The combination is a beautiful continuation of the great theme of the Epistle, the union of Christ and His Church. The Son, who glorified the Father on the earth, having finished the work which He gave Him to do, glorifies Him now, and will ever do so, in and through His Church, which He has redeemed by His precious blood and united to Himself. It is this oneness, this fellowship, with Christ which causes the glory to ascend to Him who is the Father of glory. The glory, which is the exhibition of His own character, power and attributes, flows down from Him, and returns to Him, in responding recognition and expression, in the Church and in Christ Jesus, and it will do so through all successive generations and throughout eternity.

Chapter 6: "The Unity of the Spirit"

At the beginning of the 4th chapter of Ephesians the Apostle recalls his circumstances as mentioned at the opening of chapter 3. There he described himself as "the prisoner of Christ Jesus;" here he speaks of himself as "the prisoner in the Lord." The change of title is appropriate to the context. At the close of chapter 2 he had been occupied with the Heavenly aspect of the Church, and there, in introducing his appeal, he uses a title of Christ which expresses the intimacy of the mystical union between the Lord and His saints; here, where his appeal actually begins, and his series of exhortations in regard to practical Christian life, he uses the title which betokens His authority as Lord over their lives.

In saying, "I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord," he not merely resumes what he had said of the Church at the close of chapter 2, but bases it likewise on all that he has unfolded in chapter 3.

How to Keep the Unity

While now beginning that part of his Epistle which consists more especially of practical exhortations, he has yet more to say, by way of the development of his subject, concerning the Church as the Body of Christ. The sublime character of his theme leads him at once to enjoin upon the saints the need of a walk worthy of their calling. Such a walk could be marked only by "all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering" and by forbearance of one another in love. Indissociable from these is the diligence necessary "to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

Unity can exist only where we have a right estimate of ourselves, a realization of our own littleness and demerit, and that unassuming self-abasement which is a reflection of the lowliness of Christ; when, too, we exercise that spirit of glad submissiveness to God's dealings which produces considerateness towards others even when under provocation, the "invincible might of meekness," which reflects the meekness of Christ and overcomes evil with good. To these is to be added the longsuffering which patiently bears with unreasonableness and meets disappointments with quiet fortitude. Only so can we forbear one another in love. That kind of forbearance is not studied courtesy or frigid endurance, but is characterized by the holy attachment which binds believers together in the bonds of Christian love.

Formation of the Unity

Since these things are exhibited by reason of our relation to Christ, and are the fruit of the Spirit, they are essential to the maintenance of the unity of the Spirit. We are to "give diligence" (not merely "endeavour"), i.e., to make it our business, to keep this unity. The unity is there; it is not for us to fashion it. The Church is one, a Divine entity. The Spirit of God makes it so. As the presence of the Holy Spirit imparts to the Church its fitness to be God's Temple (2:22), so His power imparts its unity to it. That unity is not formed by man, nor by any ecclesiastical organization on earth. Human arrangements and institutions may devise, and have devised, something which possesses a show of uniformity from the natural point of view, but the unity of the true

Body of Christ of which Scripture speaks, is spiritual in its course of development and heavenly in its position and character, its design and destiny.

Believers, then, are not exhorted to make the unity but to keep it. Each has a responsibility to act consistently with it, keeping it in the bond of peace, by exhibiting those traits of character and that conduct which are here enjoined. Such a manner of life is necessarily connected immediately with local conditions and circumstances. The Apostle was, for instance, directing his injunctions to the church at Ephesus, thus bringing his general instruction about the character of the whole Church as the Body of Christ, to bear upon their life as a local community. By dwelling together in harmony in "all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love," they would walk worthily of their high and spiritual vocation, and, as he says further on, by speaking truth in love (or rather dealing truly¹² in love), they would "grow up into Him in all things, which is the Head, even Christ" (verse 15). Again, "putting away falsehood, they were to speak truth, each one with his neighbour, since they were members one of another" (verse 25). All bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour and railing, and all malice were to be put away from them; they were to be kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving each other, even as God also in Christ forgave them (verses 31, 32). Thus maintaining unity in the local church, their harmonious conduct would be in conformity with the unity of the Spirit which pervades the whole mystical Body.

¹²"Speaking truth," represents the one verb *aletheuo* in the original. It signifies to deal faithfully, or truly, with anyone. "The idea of integrity of conduct as well as of truthfulness of speech is included in the word, see Gen. 42:16, LXX, "whether ye deal truly or no" (Notes on the Epistle to the Galatians, by C. F. Hogg and the writer, p. 207).

An Unscriptural Unification

There is no hint here, or anywhere else in the New Testament, of anything like a unity consisting of the combination of a number of communities, or assemblies, delimited by geographical conditions, or formed into earthly associations or circles of fellowship, nor is there any hint of a number of churches bound together by the bonds either of formulated religious creeds or of human tradition. No matter whether such communities are organized by mutual consent or under a church council or any form of ecclesiastical authority centralized in a given locality, all such combinations are a distinct departure

from the plain teaching of Christ and His Apostles. They do not constitute the unity spoken of in this passage or any other in the Word of God. They are the outcome of human conceptions and operations. They satisfy the aspirations of men but are contrary to the mind of the Lord.

The unity which the believer is to give diligence to keep is determined neither by efforts to bind churches into an earthly organization, nor by human ideas of what is or is not a local church. The risen and glorified Head has made provision for the spiritual direction and care of each local assembly. The traditions of men and the bondage, or confusion, which has been brought about by them have naught to do with the unity formed by the Holy Spirit. Where a local church acts in conformity with the teaching of the Word of God, it is thereby an expression of the unity of the Spirit.

Elements of Unity

There are elements of unity which characterize the whole. These are enumerated in verses 4 to 6: "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye were also called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all." The mention of the Trinity, "one Spirit," "one Lord," "one God and Father of all," is significant. The Spirit is put first, for the immediate subject dealt with is the unity of the Spirit. Associated with Him are the spiritual and heavenly unities of the Body and the hope of our calling. The Body, yet incomplete, and only a small portion of which is on the earth, is the entire Church, formed by the Spirit of God. The hope is associated with the Spirit, inasmuch as He is "the earnest of our inheritance" and is in that connection called "the Holy Spirit of promise" (1:13, 14).

The next three unities are associated with Christ. They have to do with public witness; firstly, the acknowledgment of Christ as Lord; secondly, the one faith, the complete Divine revelation, which testifies of Christ; he who holds it confesses Him; thirdly, the one baptism, an ordinance involving the public recognition of, and identification with, Christ as Lord. Then, to crown all, "there is one God and Father of an, who is over all" (His transcendence and supremacy), "and through all" (His pervading and controlling power), "and in all" (His indwelling and sustaining presence).

All these constitute "the unity of the Spirit" (verse 3), and they are enumerated as inducements for us to give diligence to keep this unity in the bond of peace. They have

to do with the one Church, the Body of Christ, in which all believers are thus united to Him. Its unity is not yet visible, for the Head is not visible, but it will become so when He is manifested and His saints with Him.

Chapter 7: The Building Up of the Body of Christ

After the description of "the unity of the Spirit," a unity which constitutes the high character of our calling (Eph. 4:1-6), our attention is drawn to the functions assigned to individual members of the Body. Indeed the mention of the seven unities in verses 4 to 6 is designed to form a basis for the setting forth of the various forms of service given to us and the source from whence they are derived.

Unity Not Uniformity

Unity is not uniformity. There is diversity of gifts, a variety of operation. "To each one of us was the grace given." None have been overlooked. There is no room for envy at the possession of gifts by others, or of self-glorying in the exercise of them ourselves; they are gifts of grace; they are to function for the glory of Christ. Grace and self-exaltation are incompatible. The grace was given "according to the measure of the gift of Christ." That is the principle operating in the endowment of gifts. To each believer grace for service is supplied upon becoming, by faith in Christ, a member of His Body, the Church. That is the significance of the past tense "was given." In 2:8 grace was mentioned in the matter of salvation: "by grace have ye been saved through faith." That gives us membership in the Church. In no other way is such membership possible. Here in 4:7 there is an added grace for functioning in the Body.

The Giver of the Gifts

"The gift¹⁴ of Christ" suggests the source of the supply, the fulness which there is in Christ, and the relation which each recipient bears to Him. Paul has already anticipated this in the preceding chapter. His own ministry of the gospel was 'according to the gift of that grace of God which was given him according to the working of His power.' "Unto me," he says, "was this grace given, to preach unto the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ" (3:7, 8). In his case he mentions God the Father as the Bestower of the gift; here he speaks of Christ as the Bestower, a testimony to the Deity of Christ and His oneness with the Father. Whatever the nature of the gift, Christ is the

sovereign Distributer. Whatever the degree of ability, whether the more highly gifted, or the less, the adjustment in the Body is His work. The measure of the gift is His.

The description of the varying gifts is preceded first by a quotation from the Psalms, which tells first of Christ's triumphant Ascension (verse 8), and then by a statement as to the antecedent descent which His Ascension involved, and the position and purpose of His Ascension (verses 9, 10); all this serves to establish the fact of His absolute prerogative and power in the distribution of the gifts. Let us consider this a little.

"Wherefore He saith, When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive and gave gifts unto men." Psalm 68, from which this is quoted, is a celebration (probably of a general character, that is to say, without pointing to any particular occasion) of Jehovah's victory over the foes of Israel and the deliverance of His people from the oppressor.¹⁵

¹⁴"The word *dorea*, "gift," is used (in the eleven passages where it is found in the New Testament) only of spiritual gifts bestowed by Divine grace. This word and *dorema*, which has the same meaning, and is found only in Romans 5:16 and James 1:17, are to be distinguished from *dosis*, which directs the thought more particularly to the act of giving; *dosis* is used only in Philippians 4:15, "giving and receiving," and in James 1:17, which, taking the RX. margin, reads, "Every good giving (*dosis*. the act) and every perfect boon (*dorenia*, the concrete gift)." Here in Ephesians 4:7 the phrase "the gift of Christ" is not "the gift possessed by or consisting of Christ," but "the gift bestowed by Him." There is a further word, *charisnou*, signifying distinctly "a gift of grace," and though this is not used in the Epistle to the Ephesians, yet it is connected with the bestowment of grace (*charis*), as in chapter 3:7, as well as the present passage.

¹⁵The phrase "to lead captivity captive," was used to express the completeness of a victory, as demonstrated by the multitude of captives taken. Cp. the words of Deborah's song in Judges 5:12. The abstract noun "captivity," stands apparently for the concrete "captives," thereby adding force to the expression. No intimation is given in Ephesians 4:9 as to who the captives were. The statement has been regarded as referring to the release of the spirits of the just from Hades and their transference by Christ into Heaven. Not improbably the reference is directly to the complete victory of Christ over the spiritual foe, which had formerly triumphed over his captives (cp. Is. 14:2). All the efforts to oppose the designs of God in the Death, Resurrection and

Ascension of Christ, had been frustrated, and now, as a result of what had been accomplished, and in virtue of the glory and power of His own Person as the triumphant one over him who had the power of death, as the Liberator of His redeemed and as Head of the Church in His place of high exaltation, He "gave gifts unto men," i.e., those on whose behalf He had triumphed (Acts 2:33).

Christ's Unchanged Personality

The next verses lay special stress upon the fact of His descent and then upon the identity of His Person as the One who having descended likewise ascended. "Now this, He ascended, what is it but that He also descended into the lower parts of the earth?" (verse 9). Opinions vary as to whether this means the descent into Hades after His death, or whether the reference is to His Incarnation. In the latter case the phrase, "lower parts of the earth," means the earth as consisting of the parts lower than heaven. Whatever may be the intention in the statement, the great fact stands out that Christ could not be the Ascended One if He had not first descended. It is a confirmation of His pre-existence, and served to counteract the erroneous Gnostic theories being promulgated in the Apostles' times. So again, in the next statement, "He that descended is the same also that ascended, far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things." Changes of locality meant no change in His humanity.

The Giver of the gifts is One who ascended with unchanged personality. Coming down from heaven to enter upon a life of true manhood, and having become, by His Death and Resurrection, the Victor over death and him that had the power of it, He ascended in His glorified humanity to His place of authority at the Father's right hand. As Son of Man, while still Son of God, He had experienced all human conditions, sin apart, and still with undissociated Godhood and manhood He ascended far above all the heavens, that filling all things He might meet the needs of His Church. The One who supplies the gifts is as absolutely cognizant of human needs as He was in the days of His flesh. He is therefore entirely fitted to give gifts to His Church, assigning to each his appropriate work. This is indicated by the emphatic pronoun in the original; "He Himself gave," that is to say, He and no other is the Provider and Bestower of the gifts.

The Variety of the Gifts

"And He gave some to be apostles; and some, prophets; and some evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers." Human appointment has no place here. The list is a

series not of formal offices but of the exercise of spiritual gifts bestowed by the Lord. The apostles and prophets fulfilled an initial ministry in laying the foundations of doctrine. The revelation given to the apostles was likewise communicated to the prophets (see 3:5). Evangelists, pastors and teachers communicated the truth already received in respect of the gospel and the ministry of the truths of the faith. The work of the apostles and prophets was distinctly supernatural and temporary, until the completion of the Divine revelation. The work of evangelists, pastors and teachers continued and still continues. The last two are associated in a special way, as one who teaches thereby engages in a measure of pastoral work.

The provision of these spiritual gifts by the ascended Lord was for the perfecting of the saints, that is to say, for the development and equipment of each member, with the following twofold object in view:(1) "unto the work of ministering,"¹⁶ that is to say, for service in all its various forms, each in harmonious relationship with others (a general ministry in which we all share), and (2) "unto the building up of the Body of Christ." What this verse plainly sets forth is that both the service and the building up of the Body, by gathering in new members and consolidating the work, are to be rendered by all the saints. In other words, the provision of the spiritual gifts mentioned is to enable all the saints both to serve and to do the work of building up of the Body, and this "till we all come in the unity of the faith, and the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."

¹⁶Diakonia is "service," "ministering," not "the ministry," as if signifying the present technical sense of an ordained set of ministers. The prepositions *pros* and *eis*, in verse 12, make clear the order intended. *Pros*, "for," "with a view to," introduces the phrase "the perfecting of the saints; on the other hand, the preposition *eis*, "unto," is used to introduce each of the two following clauses, "the work of ministering," and "the building up of the body of Christ," showing that both the ministering and the building up are intended to be the work of all the saints.

The Completion of the Body

There are three parts to the subject of the unity of the Spirit in the 4th chapter of the Epistle to the Ephesians:

(1) As to its essentials (verses 1-6); (2) as to its development (verses 7-12, 14-16); (3) as to its ultimate state (verse 13). In the first part, the unity, which is sevenfold,

provides the standard of conduct consistent with our calling. In the second part the unity is shown to be developed by the ascended Lord, who provides the requisite spiritual gifts, the object being that the saints may be perfected in their service and may fulfil their part in the building up of the Church, avoiding error, dealing in truth and love, and so growing up into Christ in all things. In the third part the finality designed is stated, and is to have fulfillment in the completion and perfection of the Body of Christ.

In verse 13 the threefold use of the word "unto" (eis) should be noted: "till we all attain unto the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a full-grown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ" (R.V.). The 46 we all" signifies all believers as a Body, the complete company.¹⁷ The end in view, then, while it has its bearing upon the life of each individual, is yet the consummation of the whole as the glorified Body of Christ. The present operation of the Spirit in the process of building in regard to each member, is antecedent to the aggregate completeness. The perfect attainment is not possible for the individual in this life, but nothing can prevent its fulfillment in all the saints in the Divinely appointed time and manner.

¹⁷This is indicated by the use of the article with pantes, "all"; as we might say, "the whole of us" (cp., e.g., I Cor. 10:17, there especially of each local community).

Conformity to Christ

Again, the word rendered "attain," in its grammatical form in the original, signifies the point of time at which the end determined is to be realized, indicating the culminating event. The faith and the knowledge of the Son of God are associated as a unity. They will together reach their climax in the day to come. Faith is the outcome of, and is inseparable from, "the faith." The doctrines of Scripture, spoken of as "the faith," so called because they consist of what is to be believed, are not given merely as a revelation of Divine truth, less still as a mere subject for theological contemplation, but with a view to bring to us an increasing knowledge of the Son of God; and all this is a matter of faith on the part of believers. Here the word for "knowledge" is, more literally, "full knowledge," as in 1:17.

But this, again, is not a matter simply of personal acquaintance with Christ. It is rather that of conformity to His character, of the manifestation of Christ Himself in His saints. This is what is suggested by the phrase "a full-grown man." This, too, is what is borne out by the context, both immediately and what follows in the subsequent verses. The

complete development is defined as "the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ," for it is Christ as the Head of His Body who fills every part, ministering His grace and power by the Holy Spirit through His spiritual gifts in the Church. The fulness is that which is His in His own Person as the Head and by means of which the Body is filled, now as the members are united to Him and hereafter in eternal completeness. The present process of conformity to His character is brought out in the exhortations which follow. "That ye be no longer children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, in craftiness, after the wiles of error; but speaking truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him, which is the Head, even 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 the increase of the body unto the building up of itself in love" (verses 14, 15, 16, R.V.).

The Wiles of Error

The first exhortations have to do with that which hinders the development of spiritual growth. We are not to remain as infants, spiritually immature in the knowledge and likeness of Christ. Our spiritual foe exerts himself in unremitting antagonism against all that makes for the glory of Christ. While, therefore, Christ provides those in the Church to minister the doctrines of the faith and build up the saints, the adversary endeavours to thwart this work by false teachings. These are spoken of metaphorically in two ways. They are winds of doctrine and wiles¹⁸ of error (R.V.). Winds are variable and irregular, wiles are ingenious and subtle. Those who are subject to such errors are like a rudderless vessel, tossed about on a stormy ocean. On the other hand, they unconsciously yield themselves to the craftiness of the Devil.

¹⁸The word *methodeia* is rightly rendered "wiles" in the R.V. in this verse. The Apostle uses it again in 6:11, "the wiles of the Devil," and it is found in these two places only in the New Testament. In 4:14, it is in the singular number; in 6:11, it is in the plural.

To give way to error, then, is to come under a power which prevents that spiritual growth into conformity to Christ which it is the gracious work of the Spirit of God to develop. In contrast to such hindrances, that which makes for spiritual progress is "speaking truth in love" (margin "dealing truly"). This is not a matter merely of the maintenance of moral virtue, it is a case of that conduct towards one another which is essentially the outcome of adherence to the truth of Holy Scripture and manifesting it in

all our ways in the exercise of the love of Christ. "No lie is of the truth" (John 2:21). If I deal falsely I not only act contrary to the truth but stifle its power to work in me. I am robbing myself as well as injuring my brother, and above all I am grieving the Holy Spirit. The truth, the revealer of which is the Holy Spirit, binds together in love those who know it. Possession of the truth leads to walking in the truth, for the truth produces truthfulness (see 2 John 1 and 3 John 3, 4). The exercise of godly sincerity, of love that goes hand in hand with the truth, enables us with our fellow believers to grow up in all things into Christ. For such conduct is the effect of His own work as the Head, making increase of the Body unto the building up of itself in love.

Truth and Love

It is needful to give heed to the exhortation that, "putting away falsehood," we should "speak truth each one with his neighbor," remembering that "we are members one of another" (Eph. 4:25). Love and truth are never to be separated; they are intimately associated. Love that is pursued at the expense of truth is mere sentiment. While it may captivate the natural mind, it is not of God. It plays no part in the building up of the Body of Christ. Truth that is maintained at the expense of love is frigid theory. It lives in the element of legalism. Its effect may be the very opposite to that which it seeks to maintain. Faith, which links us to Christ, works by love and maintains truth, of both of which He is the source and which therefore in the life of the believer are expressions of His character.

When Christ fills the heart there is no room for selfishness. False teaching and deceit have selfishness as their motive. They belong to the old nature and are expelled by the love of Christ. They are superseded by that self-forgetfulness which seeks the interest of Christ and His people. Truth and love belong to the new man, "which after God hath been created in righteousness and holiness of truth." It is only the power of the Holy Spirit which enables us to grow up "into all things in Him."

Chapter 8: The Church the Object of Christ's Love

In the passage which follows the command, "be filled with the Spirit," Eph. 5:18 (a passage which, we may note, in passing, is explanatory of what being filled with the Spirit involves in human relationships, as of husbands and wives, parents and children,

masters and servants), the subject of the relationship of husband to wife is taken as an illustration of the relationship between Christ and the Church.

It should be observed that what is here set forth is used simply as an illustration. That is to say, the passage does not state that the Church is actually the Bride of Christ. Whatever may be gathered from the other parts of Scripture, we need to keep clearly before us the difference between what is definitely set forth in the passage and what are merely deductions from it. The illustration, with its spiritual application, is beautiful and full of teaching, but any direct statement that the Church is the Bride is absent from this chapter.

The Method of Comparison

The language adopted is that of comparison. The reason why wives are to be in subjection to their own husbands as unto the Lord, is given as follows: "For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ is the Head of the Church, being Himself the Saviour of the Body" (verse 23, R.V.). The phraseology of comparison is continued in the next verse, where the order of the natural and the spiritual is reversed. "But as the Church is subject to Christ, so let the wives also be to their husbands in everything." Again, husbands are to love their wives, "even as also Christ loved the Church, and gave Himself up for it" (verse 25). Again, and still by way of comparison, "No man ever hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as Christ also the Church" (verse 29). Finally, when the Apostle speaks about a man's leaving his father and mother and cleaving to his wife, the twain becoming one flesh, he says, "This mystery is great: but I speak in regard to Christ and the church."

The Combined Features

While injunctions are given as to Christian conduct in the matter of this natural relationship, the subject of the Church which has occupied a prominent place in the earlier part of the Epistle, is interwoven into them. There are features of the relationship between Christ and the Church which could not all be included in any of the figures which have been used in the earlier part of the Epistle, those namely of the body (1:23), the city, the household (2:19), the temple (2:20, 21), the family (3:15), and the full-grown man (4:13). While the subject of authority and subjection are involved, for instance, in the relationship of the head to the body, yet there are additional features in this respect in the simile of the relationship between husband and wife. In

the illustration of the head and the body there is union between the one and the other, but, so far as the physical illustration itself goes, the head does not choose the body; with husband and wife there is choice as well as union, and love, joy and companionship.

Again, there are servants in the household, and they are chosen for their service, but they are not related to the head of the household; with husband and wife there is relationship as well as choice. There may be friends in the household, but here, too, there is choice without relationship. Again, in the family there are love and joy, communion and relationship, but not choice. Only in the case of husband and wife are all the conditions fulfilled choice, union, relationship, love, joy, companionship and communion. All are comprehended in this illustration.

These features form, in a special way, the subjects of that part of the Lord's discourse in the upper room recorded in John 15. There He speaks of His choice of them (verse 16), of their union with Him (there in the figure of the vine and the branches verses 4, 5 and 16, where the word "appointed," R.V., is literally "set in"), of His love for them (verse 9), their mutual joy (verse 11), their companionship with Him (verse 27), His communion with them (verse 15), and their relationship with Him (verse 5). Thus to those who formed, as it were, the nucleus of His Church, He unfolded, before His death, those details which the very illustration of husband and wife in Ephesians 5 provides.

Unity and Union

The metaphor of the head and the body suggests unity; the illustration of husband and wife suggests union. The former has to do with constituent parts of a whole, the latter with the oneness of two persons. The body conveys the thought of that which is the instrument of the Lord's will; the simile of the wife conveys the thought of that which is the counterpart of Himself and the object of His love.

The similitude of the marriage state is the most lovely of all the figures by means of which the mystery relating to Christ and His Church is set forth. It is at the same time the most practical in its teaching for it sets forth, to begin with, the headship and authority of Christ over the members of the Church and their delighted subjection to Him in the fulfillment of His will, the great principle that moulds their character and guides their conduct; for Christ Himself becomes the ideal and standard of their

manner of life. Further still, the illustration conveys the truth of that holy and gracious intimacy by which the Lord unlocks the secrets of His heart, making known His mind, His counsels and His love; while on the other hand it suggests that living response which those who enter into the joy of this communion make to Him.

The Practical Acknowledgement

It was the delight of Christ ever to abide in the Father's love and so to fulfil His will. This is the very fount of His love to us and His desires toward us, as is expressed in His words of grace "Even as the Father hath loved Me I also have loved you: abide ye in My love. If ye keep My commandments, ye shall abide in My love; even as I have kept My Father's commandments, and abide in His love" (John 15, 9, 10). Let us, then, abide in His love, as a faithful spouse does in her husband's love.

The practical acknowledgment of this relationship is intimated in what is said of Sarah, who "obeyed Abraham, calling him Lord" (I Peter 3:6). Not by mere exclamations of faithfulness and loyalty, or loud protestations of adherence to the truth, is He to be acknowledged as Lord, but by manifestation of that character which is conformed to His own, which indeed involves the maintenance of Divine truth, but therein displays His virtues and excellences. Christian conduct consists in truth expressed in love, love which is a Spirit-kindled response to His. "We love because He first loved us" (I John 4:19, R.V.).

The Cleansing and Presentation

"Christ loved the Church and gave Himself up for it." Displayed in all its fulness at the Cross, His love is undiminished now that He is in glory. The love which led Him to the Cross had this as its object, that, having cleansed the Church by the washing of water with the Word, "He might sanctify it," and might "present it to Himself." Christ did not sanctify the Church in order that it might be His possession, He made it His possession in order that He might sanctify it. It belongs to Him inasmuch as He gave Himself for it, and it is destined to be just what He designed that it should be, the great expression of His character as well as the object of His care. It is in its heavenly sphere and destination that He will present it to Himself and it will then be entirely suited to His own glory.

Since there are things which are contrary to His character in the life of believers here below, His present work is to cleanse them by the laver of the Word of God. This is the Divine purpose for all who as true believers constitute the Church. How readily, therefore, should we respond to this His gracious operation, realizing what He has done in giving Himself up for us, what His will is for us now, and the destiny to which He is bringing us! How ardently we should desire just those things that He desires, and do only that which pleases Him, that our life may be entirely lived for Him!

The Nourishing

Let us ever remember that we are the objects of that tender care and love which are expressed in the words "nourisheth and cherisheth." "Even so ought husbands to love their own wives as their own bodies." To love one's wife is to love oneself. "For no man ever hated his own flesh, but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as Christ also the Church" (verse 29, R.V.). What is said about Christ's love for the Church is given as the pattern of the husband's love for his wife, but what constant and loving care on the part of Christ, what provision for all our needs, are herein set forth! As one ministers nourishment to his body so that it may be healthy and strong, and affords it protection and everything else designed to make it free from that which would be detrimental to it, so is the gracious and unremitting ministry of Christ for those who are members of His Body, the Church.

All this is designed for our comfort. May we live in such close communion with our Lord that we may enjoy the realization of His love, and respond by our love to the impulse of His. Let us remove from us all that would hinder this holy communion, and, entering into His desires towards us, find accordingly our delight in Him.

Part 2: The Churches

Chapter 9: Local Churches

The word ekklesia is never used in the New Testament in the singular number to embrace all the believers in a country, or district, or the churches in any locality. Such companies of believers are spoken of in Scripture as "churches of God," as in I Corinthians 11:16; 1 Thessalonians 2:14; and 2 Thessalonians 1:4.

The phrase in the singular, "the church of God," is correspondingly used to designate a company of believers acting together in local capacity and responsibility. Thus Paul addresses his first Epistle to the Corinthians to "the church of God which is at Corinth" (1:2. See also 10:32, and 11:22). He uses the same phrase with reference to the church at Jerusalem, which he had persecuted (I Cor. 15:9; Gal. 1:13). So with regard to the church at Ephesus in Acts 20:28. Obviously the phrase is used of the local church there, for the Apostle, in addressing the elders of the church whom he had called to him at Miletus, exhorts them to take heed to themselves and "to all the flock, in the which the Holy Ghost hath made you bishops, to feed the church of God which He purchased with His own blood" (R.V.). That the church in which they were to exercise their responsibility is spoken of as a flock, and the whole character of the injunctions given to them, indicate that the phrase is used there simply of the local company.

Things that Differ

Similarly in his instructions given to Timothy as to the character and qualifications of a bishop, he says, "If a man knoweth not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?" (I Tim. 3:5). Again, the Epistle is written that he may "know how men ought to behave themselves (lit., 'how it is necessary to behave,' i.e., for all in the assembly) in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth" (verse 15). The description of the kind of person referred to is general, but the application is to any given local assembly, as is clear from the facts that Timothy, who had been at Ephesus, was exhorted in the same Epistle to stay there for a time, and that the Apostle was hoping to come shortly to him there (3:14). If we speak of the whole Church, the Body of Christ, as "the Church of God," we confuse things which Scripture differentiates, and we miss the import and teaching conveyed by the term, which has to do with local responsibility and testimony.

The plural, "churches," is used in other descriptions of such companies, besides that already referred to. They are spoken of as "churches of Christ" (Rom. 16:16), "churches of the saints" (I Cor. 14:33), or, topographically, as churches of a particular country (I Cor. 16:1; 16:19; 2 Cor. 8:1; Gal. 1:22), or, ethnographically, as "the churches of the Gentiles" (Rom. 16:4). None of the phrases containing the word "churches" is used with reference to the entire Church, the Body of Christ, and this for

the obvious reason that the Church which is His Body is one and indivisible and to it the plural would be inapplicable.

Scriptural Terminology

The importance of having regard to the Scriptural use of these terms lies especially in this, that deviations therefrom support unscriptural organizations, sectarian views, racial antipathies, and merely human traditions concerning the true Church. The application of the word "church" to the Christians or to the churches in a whole country, as, e.g., "the Church of England," "the Indian Church," or "the Church in China," or again, to any section or branch of professing Christians, is unwarranted by the Scriptures.

Hence the importance even of guarding against the term "Indigenous Church." The expression is subversive of the maintenance of that true and spiritual position and relationship the realization of which is necessary for our fulfillment of the will of God. A believer of Chinese nationality is as much a foreigner spiritually as the missionary from Europe or elsewhere who brought him the gospel. Plants of the Heavenly Father's planting are not "indigenous" in the spiritual realm; they have been transplanted by the Holy Spirit (cp. Col. 1:13). Churches of God as such should know no racial distinctions.

We have already pointed out that it is contrary to the teaching of Scripture to use the word to designate all believers now living in the world, or for any religious system to apply the term to all its adherents in the world. The phrase "the Church on earth" finds no support in the Scriptures. The Church is heavenly in its constitution and organization; its seat and centre are in Heaven, where its one and only Head is. The Word of God does not countenance any organization or amalgamation of churches, whether in a locality or in the world at large.

A Sanctuary

The terms "churches of God" and "churches of Christ" indicate that they are each His possession, a possession purchased by His blood. As "churches of the saints" they consist of those who, by the operation of the Spirit of God, have been set apart to Him for His glory. Not only so, they are, in each case indwelt, as churches, by the Holy Spirit, and hence are I as each one a temple, of God. To the church in Corinth the Apostle writes, "Know ye not that ye are a temple of God, and that the Spirit of God

dwelleth in you? If any man, 4**Uoycth the temple 4 of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are" (I Cor. 3:16, 17, R.V.). The word used for "temple" here (as also in 6:19, and again in 2 Cor. 6:16, of the body of the believer and of the whole Church in Eph. 2:21) is naos, which is derived from a word meaning "to dwell." The earthly temple in Jerusalem was most frequently called hieron ("the divine or dedicated place"). That term was applied to the whole building, and is never used in the New Testament in the figurative sense, as in the passages in the Epistles just referred to. Naos, while occasionally used of the whole earthly temple, more frequently signified the inner sanctuary, the holy of holies²⁰."

²⁰It was the naos into which Zacharias entered (Luke 1:9, 10), while the people were without in the hieron. Into the naos the Lord did not enter during His ministry on earth. He drove out the money changers from the hieron, not from the naos. Zacharias was slain between the temple, naos, and the brazen altar, which was outside. The priests alone went into the naos, and there Judas in his despair entered and cast down the money before them.

Many circumstances in connection with the Temple, as with the Tabernacle, find their spiritual counterpart in a local church. Of this we speak more fully later. How solemn and yet what a high and holy privilege it is to be a naos, a sanctuary, a dwelling-place for God, a house of God (oikos, from oikeo, "to dwell") as the local church is called in I Tim. 3:15! "Holiness becometh Thine House, O Lord, for evermore." Evil doctrine, evil association and evil practice are to have no place there. Where such exists it is to be judged and put away. It is a place where God's honour dwells (Ps. 26:8, lit., "the place of the tabernacle of Thy glory"). There the honour of the Name of Christ is to be maintained, and those who name His Name are "to depart from iniquity." It is a place of worship, and worship can only rightly be offered in "the beauty of holiness." It is a place of witness for God, where the testimony to His attributes, His character and His Word are to be maintained; for the house of God, the church of the living God, is "the pillar and ground (or stay) of the truth," and the witness is to be that not only of oral testimony but of Christian character and conduct. Those who belong to it are to live "in righteousness and holiness of truth."

Consistent Conduct

It is with that in view that the Apostle, in the passage just referred to, says that the object of his Epistle is that Timothy may know "how men ought to behave themselves in the house of God" (R.V.). That is to say, instruction is given concerning the believers who form a local church, in regard to their general life, conduct and service, so that the assembly itself may be a living testimony for God.

Both in doctrine and practice, our spiritual foes are constantly and assiduously set against such a testimony. Collectively as well as individually, we need to be much in prayer and intercession and ever on the watch, lest the Lord's Name should be brought into dishonour, and the witness He designs be marred by our inconsistencies.

Chapter 10: "Jesus is Lord"

That part of the first Epistle to the Corinthians which treats specially of the distribution and exercise of spiritual gifts in a local church, is introduced by a declaration concerning Christ Jesus as Lord: "No man speaking by the Spirit of God saith²¹, Jesus is anathema; and no man can say, Jesus is Lord, but in the Holy Spirit" (I Cor. 12:3, R.V.).

The test of the witness is the due acknowledgment of Christ. The two utterances, "Jesus is anathema" and "Jesus is Lord," were the battle cries of opposing spiritual forces. Readily would the words of execration spring to the lips of hostile Jews. "Anathema" designated that which was devoted to God for destruction under His curse. That was how the rulers of the Jews, and the people after them, regarded and treated Jesus of Nazareth. That was how they instigated Gentiles to do the same, and the utterances became the glib expression of Satanically-inspired antagonism, whether on the part of Jew or Gentile, to the gospel and the Person whom it proclaimed. Doubtless, upon occasion, when testimony was being given by the preachers of the gospel, or in the midst of an assembled church, the witness would suddenly be interrupted by the blasphemous cry "Jesus is anathema," uttered by opponents of the truth.

²¹The words "speaking" and "saith" stand for two different words in the original, *laleo* and *lego*. *Laleo* signifies an utterance of human language in contrast with silence; it stresses the fact that speech is being uttered. *Lego* represents a statement or

discourse in its orderly reasoning; it stresses the meaning and substance of what is spoken.

The Great Essential

"Jesus is Lord;" that was the witness of the faithful. It sums up the doctrines of the gospel. It was the great central truth. It formed, therefore, an essential part in the ministry, 'not only of gospel testimony itself, but of the foundation thereby laid in the formation of local churches.

The acknowledgment of Jesus as Lord marks the beginning of the life of a believer. It is an element of that faith by which he is saved and becomes a child of God: "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord, and shalt believe in thine heart that God raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved"²² (Rom. 10:9). That is, "the word of faith" which is preached (verse 8).

²²The confession of Christ as Lord is put first, presumably, for the following reasons:

1. It is appropriate to the order, mouth and heart, verse 8.
2. The order is in agreement with the order in verses 6 and 7, verse 6 speaking of Christ's present position in Heaven, verse 7 of His resurrection.
3. The confession of Jesus as Lord provides a distinctive and evident difference between those who have been justified by faith and those who are seeking righteousness by their own works.

With a special significance this passage in Rom. 10, which deals with the basic ministry of the preaching of the gospel, stresses His title "Lord." "The same Lord is Lord of all" (verse 12, R.V.), that is to say, of Jew and Gentile alike, "and is rich unto all that call upon Him; for whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." The acceptance, then, of Christ as Lord as well as Saviour is essential for faith, and the proclamation of Christ in both respects is the responsibility of the evangelist.

The Full Commission

That the work of the preachers of the gospel was not simply that of evangelization, is clear from the narrative of the Acts and from the Epistles. The service in which they were engaged had wider responsibilities. Gospel ministry was designed to issue in a

corporate testimony. Hence, by means of the gospel they preached, evangelists are spoken of as laying the foundation of churches (I Cor. 3:10).

The commission given by the Lord Himself intimates this wider scope. "Go ye and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them into the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you" (Matt. 28:19). The incorporation of believers into local churches had been definitely inculcated by Him. Besides His intimation concerning His formation of His entire Church (16:18), He gave unequivocal instructions as to His design for the existence of communities, gathered in His Name, conditioned by local circumstances, and enjoying His spiritual and continued presence (18:17-20). These were not already existent Jewish churches, as has been supposed. The teaching given by the Lord as recorded in the context makes clear that He had in view not only His disciples but those who would become so by their instrumentality.

Apostolic Methods

The record in the Acts of the Apostles relating to the founding and formation of local churches is significantly in keeping with the Lord's instructions in His commission regarding making disciples and teaching them to observe all that He commanded. No sooner do we read of the effects of the gospel in Antioch in Syria on the part of the scattered members of the church at Jerusalem, than we learn that a church has been formed in the northern city; so that those who go there as servants of God are able to gather together "with the church" (11:26), and the believers so gathered are spoken of as "disciples."

So again, as the gospel spreads, not only are churches formed in every place, but the saints are described as "disciples." They were "disciples" who stood around Paul after his stoning at Lystra (14:20). At Derbe he and Barnabas preached the gospel and "made many disciples" (verse 20, R.Y.). From thence they returned to Lystra, Iconium and Antioch "confirming the souls of the disciples" (verses 21, 22), and after arriving back at Antioch in Syria they are said to have tarried there with the disciples.

"Go ye, make disciples," said the Lord. Now while believers are spoken of as "brethren" in relation to one another, they are designated as "disciples" in relation to Christ as their Master and Lord. Disciples are those who have learned His Will and seek to carry it out in that relationship. "Ye call Me Master, and Lord; and ye say well; for so I am. If

I then, the Lord and Master, have ... ye ought also to... ." (John 13:14). In Acts 9:1 believers (not simply the Apostles) are distinctly called "the disciples of the Lord."

Collective Acknowledgement

Since, then, confession of Christ Jesus as Lord marks believers from the time of their conversion, and their life as His disciples gives proof of their recognition of their relationship to Him in this respect, so in their collective capacity, as constituting churches, it is their high privilege and responsibility to acknowledge Him as Lord by the fulfillment unitedly of all that He has commanded. Only as an assembly owns Christ as Lord, can it be built up and ordered according to the Divine will. Only when Christ has His rightful place in a local church can it be constituted according to God's design. Only adherence to what is taught in the Word of God will meet with His approval.

That Jesus Christ is Lord betokens the authority committed to Him by the Father, who has made Him "both Lord and Christ." The measure in which His authority over a local church is recognized by it is the measure of its spiritual vitality and power. In virtue of His authority He has Himself appointed the ordinances and exercises His prerogative in the provision of spiritual gifts in each assembly and in the functioning of each member in the power and operation of the Spirit of God.

The Effect of the Acknowledgment

The genuine acknowledgment of Christ as Lord will keep the saints faithful in their adherence to the Scriptures in these matters, and in the recognition of the presence and work of the Holy Spirit in matters of worship and service. They will be likewise kept separate from the world's religions as well as its principles and ways, its ambitions and follies. The fulfillment of the will of their Lord will be their consuming ambition, if they are indeed true to Him, and this will involve their repudiation of the traditions of men, of human accretions to the faith "once for all delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3), and of all that undermines its doctrines as they are set forth in the Scriptures of truth.

The craft of Satan is ever at work to beguile us from allegiance to our Lord. We need, then, to receive the exhortation He gave to His disciples in this matter, when He warned them against lip confession, against mere profession of faith, and the imagination that service is being rendered to Him while all the time His revealed will is being ignored. His words demand our careful attention. "Not every one that saith unto

me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven; but he that doeth the will of My Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 7:21). His will is not far to seek. It is set forth with such clearness in the Holy Scriptures that none who genuinely seek to know His mind need err therein. Let us beware of substituting our own predilections, or the traditions of men, or matters of our own convenience, or even the bonds of human associations, for what He has enjoined upon us, lest, in setting aside or ignoring His authority over us, both in our private life and in our church capacity, we are after all found wanting.

Chapter 11: Spiritual Gifts

In the twelfth chapter of I Corinthians, after the introductory statement that the acknowledgment that "Jesus is Lord" is due to the operation of the Holy Spirit, the Apostle takes up the subject of the provision of spiritual gifts and their exercise, with special reference to the local church.

The uniform confession of Christ as Lord produces multiform effects. The source, the distribution and the operating power are Divine, not human: "Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are diversities of ministrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of workings, but the same God, who worketh all things in all" (verses 4-6).

The essential element of harmony and unity is pointedly stressed by a sevenfold mention of "the same," first as to the Triunity of the Godhead, "the same Spirit the same Lord ... the same God," and then a fourfold repetition of "the same Spirit," in verses 8-11. So in Ephesians 4, with reference to the whole Church, the Body of Christ, stress is laid upon the essential unity--a sevenfold oneness; there not only of the Trinity, but of details of a basic character relating to the church.

There is a threefold diversity, first as to possession of the gifts, then as to forms of service, and then as to their exercise: diversity of "gifts," of "ministrations," of "workings." Firstly, the differing gifts are distributed to be possessed according to the individual capacity as Divinely prepared. Secondly, there are the varying kinds of ministration of service.²³

²³Not "administrations," as in the AN. The exercise of rule is not in view here. The word is diakoniai, "ministrations," i.e., forms of service. The gifts are charismata, gifts of

grace (expressive of their utility); they are energemata, "workings" (expressive of their activity).

Two enumerations of gifts follow, one immediately, in verses 8-10, the other in verse 28. The former has to do with the functions discharged, the latter more particularly with the persons who exercise them. The lists are not formal and exhaustive. The order sets forth, to some extent, their comparative importance, but the great object for which they are mentioned is to keep before us their Divine origin, and the purpose for which they are bestowed. "To each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit withal" (verse 7). Their rightful exercise gives evidence of the power of the Spirit of God acting through the human channel. This again, in each case, is for the profit both of the one who possesses the gift and of the other members of the church. They are given not for the display of human abilities but for the glory of God in the edification of the saints. They are given not to be characterized by an atmosphere of mystery, but that the Spirit's power may be manifest.

The Temporary and the Permanent

They are mentioned just as they were in operation in the churches in apostolic times. Some were designed for the temporary and special purposes of that period, others were for permanent functioning. This is made clear in the next chapter. The personal gifts of apostles and prophets, for instance, were bestowed for the immediate purposes of the time. They laid the foundation of the truths of the faith by the revelations Divinely imparted to them, and laid it completely. No foundation doctrine remained to be added. The special work of apostles and prophets ceased with the completion of the inspired Scriptures. All that was communicated to them by direct revelation, and through them by oral testimony in the churches, was, during their lifetime, imparted "in the written Word of God."

Tongues and Prophecyings

As with the temporary character of the ministry just mentioned, so with other gifts imparted for the particular purposes of the apostolic period. "Tongues" were "for a sign" and especially to unbelieving Jews (I Cor. 14:21, 22):the Apostle makes this clear by basing the fact that they were for a sign upon the quotation from Isaiah 28:11, 12, wherein God declared that "by men of strange tongues" He would speak "unto this people," that is to say, to Israel. This testimony, the rejection of which was likewise

foretold, continued while God maintained relations with His earthly people, and ceased with the termination of those relations."²⁴

²⁴As to the gift of tongues, this was not to be exercised without being interpreted (verse 28). There was a special gift of interpretation (12:10). Each of these was an inferior gift (verse 31; 14:1, 2, 12, etc.).

So, again, with the miraculous manifestation of the power of the Spirit of God. In every instance recorded in the Acts, the testimony and its appeal were especially to Jews, as vindicatory signs of what God had done and was doing through Christ Jesus in His death, resurrection and session at His right hand. Firstly, there was the testimony at Jerusalem at Pentecost (2:22-36); secondly, in Samaria (8:14-17); thirdly, at Caesarea, in the house of Cornelius ("they of the circumcision were ... amazed," 10:45); fourthly and lastly, at Ephesus, where the "certain disciples" were clearly Jews who had been baptized with John's baptism, and had not heard "whether the Holy Ghost was given" (19:2, R.V.). The sign was accompanied by the exercise of the gifts, tongues and prophesying (verse 6). There is no further mention of this kind of demonstration either in the Acts or anywhere in the Epistles. All took place within twelve years after Pentecost, in the period of transition characterized by God's special dealings with the Jews.

Healings

So, again, with the miraculous "gifts of healings," these were designed for the same period of apostolic testimony, whereas those gifts, the purpose of which was the ministry and unfolding of the Scriptures, were of a permanent character. The limitations of the gifts of healings as sign gifts are shown by the fact that Timothy, Trophimus, Gaius, and others were not healed of their physical infirmities. Yet these were certainly Spirit-filled men. Moreover, in the same period the supernatural power was imparted of raising the dead (Acts 9:40; 20:9, 10), all attempts at which since have been unsuccessful. Undeniably God does heal the sick in answer to prayer and such ministry as is enjoined in James 5:14, 15, but the distinction between that and the supernatural gifts temporarily bestowed in the churches in the times of the Apostles, is clear from the Scriptures themselves.

The Apostle lays it down as a general principle that "when that which is perfect is come, that which is in part shall be done away" (I Cor. 13:10). Wherever the principle

holds good it is applicable. It will be applicable at the coming of the Lord, after the completion of the Church. It was primarily applicable when the sacred Volume consisting of the Scriptures of truth, the written Word of God, was complete. As the Word of God it stands perfect. With this communication of the full cycle of Divine truth, the temporary gifts, imparted as supernatural sips, were done away.

The professed possession of supernatural power is always attractive to the mind of man, and imparts a glamour to any so-called "Movement" which claims to use such powers and even performs supernatural deeds. Those, however, who are living in the light of God's Word, and know the fellowship with Him which the indwelling Spirit of God imparts through its pages, will ever test all things by its teachings, and will "prove the spirits, whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world," and even Satan "fashioneth himself into an angel of light."

The Care of the Churches

The New Testament gives a constant and uniform testimony of the mind of God concerning the provision and work of those to whom is committed the care of local churches. The various passages relating to this subject are not merely the records of facts; what is written is the Divine will for all churches, not only in apostolic times but throughout the present era. As in other matters, the Word of God not only is sufficient for all, it is binding upon all, and those who desire to be conformed to His will and to act in loyalty to Christ, will adhere to the teaching in subjection to Him.

The instruction given does not admit of human accretions. The devices of men, however specious and plausible, fail to accomplish the designs of the Lord, as revealed in the Holy Scriptures. The teaching, unvarying as it is throughout the canon of the New Testament and the apostolic ministry which it records, should have been heeded and followed throughout subsequent centuries, instead of being modified or adapted to suit human opinions and convenience. If we hope to receive the approval of the Head of the Church hereafter, let us submit to the claims of the Word of God, and follow it at all costs, in devotedness to Him whom we recognize and own as Lord.

Bishops in Every Church

We turn, then, to what is set forth in the Word of Truth. It requires no laborious scrutiny to observe from Acts 20, that elders are bishops (or overseers), that there are more

than one exercising the care of a single church, and that they receive their function from the Holy Spirit. From Miletus the Apostle "sent to Ephesus, and called to him the elders of the church" (verse 17) obviously the elders of the church in that city (cp. Rev. 2:1). In his address he says, "Take heed unto yourselves and to all the flock in the which the Holy Ghost hath made you bishops" [25] (verse 28, R.V.). Not only, then, are the elders bishops, but they are figuratively regarded as shepherds, for the local church is spoken of as a flock, and their duty is to "tend it." The word in the original denotes not simply "to feed," but to do all that devolves upon a shepherd. They are therefore to exercise pastoral care, acting together as pastors over the local company. [25] A.V. "overseers." The word "overseer" is a literal translation of episkopos, from whence also the word "bishop" is derived.

The case of the church at Ephesus is illustrative and not exceptional. In the churches previously formed in Lycaonia "elders in every church" had been "appointed"²⁶ (14:23, R.V.). Again, the Epistle to the Philippians is addressed to the saints there "with the bishops and deacons"--bishops acting in one church. Later, in the island of Crete, Titus is enjoined to "set in order things that were wanting, and appoint elders in every city" (Tit. 1:5) never a single elder or bishop over one church, much less over a number.

²⁶The word cheirotoneo, rendered "appointed" (A.V. "ordained"), is the same as that in 2 Cor. 8:19 (the only other place where it is found in the New Testament); at Corinth men were to be "chosen" to take a monetary gift to Judea. Here in Acts 14:23 a formal ecclesiastical ordination is not in view. The apostles chose men who were already evidently fitted for the work. The churches did not choose their leaders. The context makes that clear. Sheep do not choose their shepherds.

This passage, again, shows that an elder is a bishop; for, in describing the character requisite for an elder, the Apostle immediately says, "for the bishop must be blameless" (verse 7). [27] The postscript printed in the Authorized Version at the end of the Epistle, to the effect that it was "written to Titus, ordained the first bishop of the church of the Cretans," is false in two respects, to say nothing of the wrong implication that he was to be resident there. For, firstly, Titus was not a bishop, and, secondly, there was not "a church of the Cretans"; there were churches in Crete. [27] "The definite article here obviously does not point to a particular individual, but represents a type (cp. 1 Cor. 12:12). The passage clearly provides no ground for the functioning of a single bishop.

That a number of elders were exercising pastoral care of the church at Thessalonica, is clear from the exhortation to that church, "But we beseech you, brethren, to know them that labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; and to esteem them exceeding highly in love for their work's sake" (I Thess. 5:12, 13). This passage is very instructive. That the recognition of the elders is urged shows that the well-being of the church could not be maintained without them. On the other hand, it is clear that their authority was based, not on human appointment, whether of an individual or by the election of the church, but upon the relation of all to the Lord. When the qualifications of overseers had been put on record, to guide the saints in the recognition of those who had been put over them in the Lord, apostolic appointment became unnecessary. That the elders "are over" them (lit. "stand before," and so lead and care for "in the Lord") limits the scope of their authority to matters spiritual. See also Heb. 13:7, 17.

Tending the Kleros

Elders are to "tend the flock of God, exercising the oversight, not of constraint, but willingly, according unto God, nor yet for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither as lording it over the charge allotted to you, but making yourselves examples to the flock" (I Pet. 5:2, 3). The three characteristics of church leaders are again intimated here, namely, that the same persons are elders (men of experience), bishops (exercising the oversight), and shepherds (exercising a pastoral care of the flock). It is highly significant, too, that the word kleros, from whence the word "clergy" is chiefly derived, and which is here rendered "charge allotted," stands not for the church leaders but for members who are cared for by them! How glaringly Christendom, owing to the force of unscriptural influences and the bias of human opinion and tradition, has reversed the situation! The medieval and modern ecclesiastical systems of clerisy in its various forms, so far from being founded upon the Word of God, are contraventions thereof.

The Rise of Clerisy

The course of departure from apostolic teaching and precept is easily traceable. Human pride and rivalry, a struggle for ascendancy and power, early produced a class of ecclesiastical officials, who obtained their position in a manner very different from what is set forth in Scripture. The case of Diotrephes (3 John 9) provides an illustration.

The method was adopted, too, of electing church officials by vote. Hence the popular or the strong man obtained the coveted position. Dependence on the Spirit of God and the recognition of the evidences of His operation gave place to officialism and formality. The evil spread gradually but surely, and eventually became general.

False teachers represented that the Christian faith was simply a development of Judaism. Hence church leaders came to be regarded as priests in contradistinction to the laity, a flagrant contradiction of apostolic doctrine, which declares that all believers are priests; they are "a holy priesthood" (I Pet. 2:5) "royal priesthood" (verse 9); Christ has made us "priests unto His God and Father" (Rev. 1:6).

We can hardly be surprised that church ecclesiastics were to the fore in furthering carnal ambition and in supporting and promulgating clericalism. Writing to the church at Ephesus in 109 A.D., Ignatius says, "We ought to look upon the bishop even as we do upon the Lord Himself." In his epistle to the church at Tralles (also in Asia), he says, "ye are subject to your bishop as to Jesus Christ." In his epistle to the Magnesians, he says, "I exhort you that ye study to do all things in a Divine concord; your bishops presiding in the place of God; your presbyters in the place of the council of the apostles." Again, to the church in Philadelphia, "Give diligence to be established in the doctrine of our Lord and the apostles, together with your most worthy bishop, and the well woven spiritual crown of your presbytery."

The marked departure from the principles of the New Testament and apostolic precept and practice has received candid admission by many. Dean Alford's comment on the perversion of Acts 20:17, 28 by Irenaeus (who states that Paul called together the "bishops and elders (!), who were from Ephesus and from the rest of the adjoining states (!)") is as follows: "So early did interested and disingenuous interpretation begin to cloud the light which Scripture might have thrown on ecclesiastical questions." He points out, too, that verse 28 shows that elders and bishops were apostolically synonymous, and remarks that the A.V. "overseers" instead of "bishops" conceals the identification.

Again, on Phil. 1:1, he says, "The simple juxtaposition of the officers with the members of the church, and their being placed after those members, shows the absence of hierarchical views such as those in the epistles of the apostolic Fathers." Jerome, who died in A.D. 420, commenting on the Epistle to Titus, and with reference to the times of

the Apostles, says, "elders were the same as bishops, but by degrees, that the plants of dissension might be rooted up, all responsibility was transferred to one person."

The Corrective Power

The remedy for evils is not to be found in human devices. To substitute clericalism for the principles and instruction of the Word of God was a gross departure from the faith. Nor did the humanly devised system remove the evil of dissension. It existed, and still exists, even in the greatest religious systems, notwithstanding an outward semblance of unification.

The various religious systems of Christendom are fast hastening to their appointed destruction. The anticlerical forces are already fulfilling Scripture. If we believe that the Bible is the Word of God, let us follow its teachings. Let us beware of professing one thing and following another. Let us obey God rather than men. Faithfulness to His truth may mean suffering here, but it means peace and joy withal, and an eternal reward hereafter. Let us recognize and honour the prerogatives of the Holy Spirit in the churches, and the principles inculcated by Him in the Holy Scriptures.

Chapter 12: Ministry and Deacons

We hear much of the need of revival, and truly the need is great. Real revival can be brought about only by adherence to the Word of God. There may be an ephemeral emotion, a transient zeal, an ebullition of religious fervour and sentiment, but what is acceptable to God, and therefore of real and permanent value, is a return to His will as revealed in the Scriptures of truth.

When the Psalmist prays, "Wilt Thou not revive (or quicken) us again; that Thy people may rejoice in Thee?" and pleads for mercy and salvation he goes on to say, "I will hear what God the Lord will speak." There lies the secret of spiritual reviving.

The adversaries of God are ever at work seeking to turn people away from the Scriptures, or to belittle them, or to becloud their meaning by human traditions. Hence the perversions in Christendom of what really is a church, as set forth in the New Testament, and the departure from the revealed will of the Lord regarding the functioning of church members.

Ministrations

We have seen the provision made by the Spirit of God in the exercise of His Divine prerogatives, for the spiritual care of churches by bishops, otherwise called overseers or elders, each church being provided with a number of such. These are among "the diversities of gifts" spoken of in I Corinthians 12:4. They are bestowed in the designs of God's love and grace towards His saints, for their spiritual welfare, and are for the Holy Spirit's use in the churches. Next there is mention of "diversities of ministrations" (verse 5, R.V.). The word diakonia, "ministration," is used thirty-four times in the New Testament. It is first found in Luke 10:40, in the Lord's word to Martha as to her being cumbered (or distracted) about. much "serving." It is said in Hebrews 1:14 of the angels who are sent forth "to do service for the sake of them that shall inherit salvation." Nowhere in the New Testament is it used in the ecclesiastical, official sense, with which it has been vested in Christendom, of "the ministry." Nor again is the corresponding noun diakonos "servant," "minister," "deacon" (which is employed thirty times in the New Testament), used in the sense of a clerical functionary known as "the minister." Just as, in regard to the churches, "ministry" is said of the actions of believers in their service one to another, so the word rendered "minister" describes them as servants, whether of God or of Christ, or of one another.

A Comprehensive Term

Thus the Lord says, "Whosoever would become great among you shall be your minister" (diakonos), Matt. 20:26; again, "If any man would be first, he shall be last of all and minister (servant) of all" (Mark 9:35); and again, "Where I am, there shall also My servant be" (John 12:26). Diakonos is used of the domestic servants at the marriage in Cana of Galilee: "His mother saith unto the servants, Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it (John 2:5; so verse 9).

Phoebe, whom Paul commends to the saints at Rome, is described as a servant, diakonos, of the church at Cenchrea (Rom. 16:1). Paul describes himself and Apollos as servants, diaknoi, "ministers by whom ye believed" (I Cor. 3:5) certainly not "ministers" in the clerical sense; so, too, in speaking of himself and his fellow-workers as "ministers (diakonoi, servants) of a new covenant" (2 Cor. 3:6). Tychichus, again, is spoken of as "a faithful minister (servant) in the Lord" (Eph. 6:21); and so with regard to Timothy (I Thess. 3:2).

That diakonos is a term used in the New Testament to express service in general is clear from these instances, and the word might well have been rendered "servant" in all of them, rather than "servant" in one place and "minister" in another. Even in the two passages where in the English Versions the word is rendered "deacons" there is no mention in the original of anything like an office in connection with the term. In the passage in I Timothy 3, which describes the qualities necessary for what are termed deacons (the deacons there referred to are those who render any service of a definite character in connection with a local church), ecclesiastical bias inserted the term "office" in the Authorized Version, to suit the clerical traditions of Christendom. Hence the Revisers have rendered as follows: "And let these also first be proved, then let them serve as deacons²⁸ if they be blameless" (v. 10). Even the phrase "Let them serve as deacons" represents one word only in the original, and it would have been quite sufficient to translate by "let them serve." So again in verse 13, instead of the preposterous rendering, "They that have used the office of a deacon well," the R.V. puts, "they that have served well as deacons." It would have been quite sufficient to say, "they that have served well."

²⁸The word is diakoneitosan, which is a form of the verb diakoneo, to serve, and means "let them serve" in verse 13, the word is diakonesantes, which simply means "having served."

The Case of Timothy

Only a few verses further on the Apostle says to Timothy, "If thou put the brethren in mind of these things, thou shalt be a good minister (deacon) of Jesus Christ." Timothy, then, himself is spoken of as a servant of Christ. He certainly was not, as the A.V. note at the end of the 2nd Epistle describes him, "Ordained the first bishop of the Church of the Ephesians." Nor was he, as has been supposed by certain advocates of the sacerdotal order, "the Primate of all Asia"! On the contrary, surely if Timothy himself is spoken of as a servant of Christ Jesus, then those who, in the passage just before, are spoken of as having served well, were not functionaries holding an ecclesiastical office. They were rather, as has already been said, such as rendered service on behalf of the saints in a local church, and any such service demands that those who render it should be known to be possessed of the qualities mentioned in verses 8 and 9.

One form of such service will consist in the handling of the money gifts of a church, though ministry is by no means confined to this. For instance, in the second Epistle to the Corinthians the Apostle speaks of the monetary gifts of the churches in Macedonia for the poor saints in Judea, as "service," or administration" (diakonia, rendered "ministering" in 8:4 and 9:1, and "ministration" in 9:12 not "administration," as in the AX.):so again in verse 13, "the proving of you by this ministration." One of the brethren who was appointed by the churches to convey the gift is described as one "whose praise in the gospel is spread through all the churches" (8:18). It was a matter of principle, not only that men of good repute should undertake such business, but that in regard to money the service should be undertaken at least by two; "avoiding this," as verse 20 says, "that any man should blame us in the matter of this bounty which is ministered by us: for we take thought for things honourable, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of man."

A Guiding Principle

As a general principle, the prerogative belongs to the giver of a gift of choosing the channel of its ministration. Thus, in regard to spiritual gifts, such as elders, pastors, teachers, and evangelists, these are human channels for that ministry which is provided by the Spirit of God, and it is His prerogative, and not that of man, to choose those who shall act as the servants of God in this capacity. This again, by the way, rules out ecclesiastical ordination, lay patronage, or the election of a pastor, according to the traditional methods of Christendom. So, then, with regard to financial gifts contributed by a local church for one purpose and another, since the church is the bestower of the gift in kind, it is the prerogative of the church to choose the channel of its ministration.

Take the earliest case that is mentioned in the Acts. When difficulties arose in regard to the care of the numerous poor in Jerusalem, the saints were exhorted to look out from among them seven men of good report, full of the Spirit and of wisdom. The church in Jerusalem was responsible for choosing the men. These seven have been called "deacons," in the technical sense of the term. There is no reason for so describing them. In point of fact they were servants of the church, and, as they handled gifts of the church, so the church was entitled to choose them. The same principle is illustrated in the case of the gifts from churches in Greece for poor saints in Judea.

Such gifts are primarily offerings to the Lord, but those who handle them are the servants of the church that provides them, and such should be chosen by it.

The Real Value

It is the Person of Christ Himself who imparts both dignity and value to service of whatever character. No matter how insignificant it may be in the eyes of men, no matter how little noticed, all service for God is measured by Him according to the standards of the Sanctuary, and is treasured by Him for commendation and reward in the day to come. "Ye did it unto Me," says the Lord, or, if it was withheld, "Ye did it not unto Me." We can understand the surprise of those who will say, "When saw we Thee an hungered, and fed Thee? or athirst, and gave Thee drink? And when saw we Thee a stranger, and took Thee in? or naked and clothed Thee? And when saw we Thee sick or in prison, and came unto Thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, "Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of these My brethren, even these least, ye did it unto ME" (Matt. 25:37).

Human Traditions

A careful perusal of the Scriptures on the subject of ministry makes clear that to be rightly understood it requires to be divested of the clerical accretions which it has received from the traditions of ecclesiasticism. How important it is, in view of the Judgment Seat of Christ, to test matters by the instructions and precepts of the Word of God! The extent to which we have obeyed its truth, instead of following the precepts and practices of men, will determine for each believer the abiding results of that solemn Tribunal.

What is Ministry?

Let us consider something of what Scripture teaches on the subject of ministry, in contrast to the traditional usage which has obtained in Christendom. The following passage is at once indicative of the will of God: "according as each hath received a gift, ministering it among yourselves, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God; if any man speaketh, speaking as it were oracles of God; if any man ministereth, ministering as of the strength which God supplieth: that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ" (I Pet. 4:10, 11, R.V.). Certain facts stand out clearly here. Obviously spiritual gifts are distributed by the Holy Spirit amongst the churches;

the ministry is to be exercised "among yourselves." While "speaking," that is to say, oral instruction from the Scriptures, is to be of the character of "oracles of God," ministering, or rendering service, is to be by God given strength. Thus ministry is of a wider scope, both in its nature and in the number who exercise it, than that of giving discourses or sermons. Ministry is here, indeed, distinguished from this latter activity.

Again, the passage in I Cor. 12, which enumerates the diversities of spiritual gifts in a local church, and the "diversities of ministrations" and of "workings," says, "but all these worketh the one and the same Spirit, dividing to each one severally even as He will" (verse 11). Ministry is service rendered to God on behalf of others. There is no allusion to any special minister in charge of a church or congregation, nor is there to any pastor appointed or chosen by a church. The instructions are imparted to the entire local church itself as the ministering body, and prominence is given to the prerogatives and operation of the Spirit of God in and through the members. Indeed, none of the Epistles to churches are directed to "the minister," nor is any such individual named in them.

A Distinction

There is a similar passage in the Epistle to the saints in Rome. "For even as we have many members in one body, and all the members have not the same office: so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and severally members one of another. And having gifts differing according to the grace that was given to us, whether prophecy (i.e., 'telling forth' the mind of God), let us prophesy according to the proportion of our faith; or ministry, let us give ourselves to our ministry; or he that teacheth, to his teaching; or he that exhorteth, to his exhorting" (Rom. 12:4-8). Here, again, ministry is distinguished from oral testimony, instruction and admonition. Whatever form the service to be rendered takes, the saints are to "give themselves" to it. Moreover, teaching, exhortation and other forms of spiritual ministration are not assigned to one person, either in this passage or any other. They vary in the members of a church, according to the grace imparted.

Ecclesiasticism

With such a widely distributed exercise of gift among the members of churches, by the provision of the Holy Spirit, and functioning under His control and guidance, the sacerdotal and clerical systems of Christendom are entirely inconsistent. They are due

to a very marked and historically well known departure from the Word of God. Such early apostasy had been foretold by the Apostles themselves. Scripture knows nothing of an ecclesiastical official set apart to act as the "minister" in distinction from a congregation, and appointed amongst other things to "administer the sacraments." Plainly the spiritual gifts raised up according to the teaching of the Word of God, differ widely from what prevails in the clerical systems that have sprung up by human arrangement and tradition.

Diakonos, Doulos and Leitourgos

There are today evangelists, pastors and teachers, as there were apostles and prophets (Eph. 4:11), and they are given by the ascended Lord "for the perfecting of the saints, unto the work of ministering, unto the building up of the body of Christ." The word is diakonia, "ministering." The corresponding word diakonos, "servant," and the verb diakoneo, "to minister," are derived from the word diako, "to pursue" (not from dia, "through," and konis, "dust," as has been supposed). They describe service in general. A servant of Christ is most frequently spoken of as a doulos, a word which primarily signified a bondservant, but which has not always and necessarily the idea of bondage. The Apostles so described themselves in relation to God (Tit. 1:1; Jas. 1:1) and to Christ (Rom. 1:1; Jude 1, e.g.), and again in relation to the saints whom they taught (2 Cor. 4:5). Believers who were slaves were to regard themselves as bondservants of Christ (Eph. 6:6), and all believers are so designated (I Pet. 2:16).

Speaking of himself in connection with his missionary service, Paul describes himself as a "minister of Christ Jesus unto the Gentiles" (Rom. 15:16), and the word he employs is leitourgos, one who discharges public duties, whether religious or otherwise; here he uses it of the ministry of the gospel of God as a spiritual sacrifice. When in writing to the church at Corinth he speaks of himself and his fellow apostles as "ministers of Christ" (I Cor. 4:1), he uses a different word huperetes, which originally signified an under-rower in a war galley and subsequently came to denote any subordinate official who waited on the commands of his superior.²⁹

²⁹"Speaking generally, the diakonos is a servant viewed in relationship to his work; the doulos is a servant viewed in relationship to his master; the huperetes is a servant viewed in relationship to his superior; the leitourgos is a servant viewed in relationship

to public duties." (*Notes on the Epistles to the Thessalonians*. by C. F. Hogg and the writer. p. 92.)

Teaching

As to the service of teaching the Scriptures, when a church was assembled the edification of the assembled company was received through a variety of ministry (see I Thess. 5:11, RX., and I Cor. 12:7, 8), those who thus handled the Scriptures being called and fitted of God to do so (Eph. 4:8, 11-14; 1 Cor. 12:18, 28-30). This kind of ministry was confined to such (14:29), and was exercised under the guidance of the Holy Spirit (12:11), and with self-control (14:32). The teacher was not to be himself the judge of the value of his ministry (v. 29), and teachers were to defer one to another (v. 30). Teaching was to be exercised both with discretion, "according to the proportion of faith" (Rom. 12:6), and with diligence; for the teacher was "to give himself to his teaching" (v. 7), and to do so with a due realization of the dignity and solemnity of the service he was rendering, speaking "as it were oracles of God" (I Pet. 4:11). These injunctions and principles were given as permanently binding upon churches and should never have been abandoned. The argument that the instructions given in the New Testament required development in subsequent periods under the guidance of Church leaders is utterly invalid, and is contradicted by the internal testimony of Scripture itself. The injunctions given concerning "prophesying" apply to "teaching." The principles underlying each are the same. Upon the completion of the Scriptures, prophesying passed away, and the teacher took the place of the prophet. This is intimated in the statement in 2 Pet. 2:1, "there arose false prophets among the people, as among you also there shall be false teachers." A prophet spoke by immediate revelation of the mind of God; a teacher delivers his message from and in accordance with the Scriptures.

Quenching the Spirit

The exhortation given to the church in Thessalonica, not to quench the Spirit (I Thess. 5:19), had particular reference, as the context shows, to the work of the Holy Spirit in the exercise of His prerogatives and guidance through such as were qualified to minister the Word of God when the church was assembled. The Spirit would be quenched, either by refusal, through self-will, to acknowledge His will and way, or by yielding to the impulse of the flesh, whether ignorantly or presumptuously, instead of

submitting to the guidance of the Spirit. To replace dependence on the Holy Spirit's leading by the substitution of a system of clericalism was derogatory to the honour of Christ as Lord. To appoint a minister over a congregation was an easy way out of a difficulty, but it was a departure from the Word of God. Failure in a local gathering calls for humiliation, self-judgment and waiting upon God, and if necessary, faithful and yet gracious rebuke, and not for the introduction of humanly devised means of correcting an abuse. One deviation from the Divine will cannot be rightly removed by another. The Scriptures remain today as the mind of God for us. The systems of religion in Christendom have not developed the doctrines and truths of the Word of God. Additional doctrines have been introduced distinctly contradictory to it. Where false principles are supported they should be left and not connived at even by silent acquiescence.

Chapter 13: Baptism

"Baptism," a word transliterated from Greek into English, is derived from the verb *bapto*, to dip, and among the Greek-speaking peoples the lengthened form *baptizo*, to baptize, signified the acts of immersion, submersion, and emergence; no other meaning was attached to the word till a considerable time after the first century of the Christian era.

The Greeks used the word, for instance, of the dyeing of a garment, in which the whole material was plunged in and taken out from the element used, or, again, of a boat which had been wrecked by being submerged and then stranded on the shore. To substitute the words "immerse," "immersion," for "baptize" and "baptism" is a mistake, for immersion is only part of the process, and a person merely immersed would not remain alive. We need, therefore, the transliterated words, for which no adequate English equivalent existed.

It is necessary, moreover, to understand them in their Scriptural significance and not as they have been interpreted by ecclesiastical tradition. The mode and meaning of baptism is clear from the Scriptures relating to the ordinance. These speak of death, burial and resurrection (Rom. 6:3, 4; Col. 2:12). Thus, figuratively, the people of Israel were "baptized in the cloud and in the sea" (I Cor. 10:2).

The Commandment

The ordinance was instituted by the Lord in the following command: "Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you: and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world (or age)" (Matt. 28:19, 20). The order is significant. The fulfillment of the command on the part of the Apostles, as recorded in the Acts, makes clear that baptism was to be preceded by repentance and faith, essential preliminaries to discipleship. To translate this passage by inserting the word "by" before "baptizing," thus making the passage mean that baptism was to be the means of making disciples, is to force a doctrine into the command which is contradicted by other Scriptures, and to read a meaning into it which it was never intended to convey. On the Day of Pentecost those who were baptized were those who received the Apostle's word (Acts 2:41). Again, when Philip preached in Samaria, those who believed were baptized (Acts 8:12). The subsequent narrative in that chapter, about the eunuch, shows that he was baptized only after the exercise of faith. So with the jailer at Philippi and the members of his house (Acts 16:32, 33); the record leaves no room for doubt that all those who were baptized were believers. For when the word of the Lord had been spoken to all in the house, all the household both believed and rejoiced greatly, statements entirely inapplicable to those who were in infancy. Again, at Corinth, "many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized" (Acts 18:8).

These and other Scriptures not only show that baptism is for believers only, but make clear that the Apostle's words at Pentecost, "Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the Name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins," are not to be taken to indicate that the remission of sins is obtained by baptism. The remission of sins is granted on the ground of faith. The same Apostle declares that everyone that believeth on Christ shall receive remission of sins (Acts 10:43). So, too, in the message of the Apostle Paul at Antioch: "through this Man is proclaimed unto you the remission of sins: and by Him every one that believeth is justified" (Acts 13:38, 39).³⁰

³⁰The case of Saul of Tarsus is confirmatory. Acts 9 records first his conversion and then his baptism (verse 18). In his own narrative of this, recorded in chapter 22, the command of Ananias, "arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins," by no means implies that God had not remitted his sins already at his conversion, nor does it afford ground for the doctrine that Divine remission of sins is granted on the ground of baptism. Saul, who had judged Christ to be an impostor, had actually accepted Him as

Lord, and was now to give acknowledgment of this in his baptism, thus publicly testifying to his fellow nationals his changed attitude, and symbolically washing away by his own act the sins of his former rejection of, and antagonism to, Christ. In no case is such language used of a Gentile; for a Jew thus to testify to Jews would have a special significance in relation to ceremonial washing.

Binding Upon All Believers

Further, while none but those who professed faith in Christ were baptized, no believer remained unbaptized. An unbaptized believer is not contemplated in the New Testament. It could not be otherwise in view of the Lord's command. When the Apostle Paul says, concerning the saints in Corinth, "I thank God that I baptized none of you save Crispus and Gaius," the context gives proof that he was not in any way minimizing the value of baptism, or setting little value on it. He immediately states as his reason, "lest any man should say that ye were baptized into my name" (I Cor. 1:15). That there was no unbaptized believer in the church at Corinth is clear from his preceding question, "Were ye baptized into the name of Paul?" He does not say, "Were those of you who were baptized, baptized into the name of Paul?" as if distinguishing the baptized from the unbaptized. Again, when he says, "Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel," he simply means that he did not himself administer the rite in all cases, but that, while he baptized a few, the carrying out of the ordinance by his own hand was not his special work. All those who were not baptized by him were baptized by others, as Acts 18:8 shows.

The Great Error

That a person should be regarded as having become regenerate through having been baptized cannot be rightly deduced from the Lord's words in John 3:5, "Except a man be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." The Lord immediately says, in confirmation of this statement, "That which is born of the Spirit is spirit." The Apostle Peter testifies that we have been "begotten again through the Word of God, which liveth and abideth" (I Pet. 1:23, R.V.; Cp. James 1:18). It is therefore consistent to understand the water as symbolizing the Word of God. [31] [31] Water is also a symbol of the Holy Spirit (see the Lord's words to the woman of Samaria, John 4:14, and again to the Jews, 7:38, 39). In that case the kai, "and," is epexegetic and signifies "even." As against this the objection is raised that a word used symbolically is

not coupled with that which denotes what is symbolized. The objection, however, is invalid; for instance, "soul and spirit" (actual) "and joints and marrow" (symbolic) are thus associated in Hebrews 4:12. On the other hand, the Spirit, the water and the blood are distinguished in I John 5:8.

There is no intimation in the New Testament that baptism as the means of regeneration was ever taught in the churches. The testimony, as we have seen, is to the contrary. The error arose in a later period, through departure from apostolic teaching, and by the introduction of rites and practices adopted from oriental religions. After the early persecutions of immediately post-apostolic times, measures were taken to incorporate people into the churches in a wholesale manner, in order that the Christian religion might outrival its competitors. The mode of baptism by the sprinkling of water was thus adopted, contrary to the teaching of Holy Scripture, and the doctrine was promulgated that salvation was secured by the rite, and that unbaptized persons must perish. In this and other respects the Christian faith, as taught by Christ and His Apostles, became generally replaced in Christendom by an admixture of paganism with the faith, with disastrous results.

The Cause of the Error

That salvation could be obtained by a mere outward form or ceremony, appealed to pagan ideas, and would ever prove attractive to the natural mind. Moreover, the perversion of the ordinance was contingent upon the substitution of priestcraft for those forms of spiritual ministry set forth in the New Testament, the teaching of which is directly opposed to a system of clerisy. The ordinance of baptism, with its profound significance for the believer, became changed into a rite which was practised for the maintenance of priestcraft, and fostered superstition.

Baptism is a testimony on the part of a believer that he has, through faith in Christ, become identified with Him in His death, burial and resurrection (Rom. 6:3-5). It is an acknowledgment that Christ is his Lord, that he belongs to Him as such, and that, having formerly served sin, he reckons himself as having died to it and as being alive unto God in Christ Jesus (verse 11).

To take the words of the Apostle Peter (in I Pet. 3:21), that baptism "saves us," as signifying that baptism is the means of regeneration, is to miss the meaning of the passage completely. For he declares at once that baptism is "not the putting away of

the filth of the flesh, but the appeal (R.V. margin) of a good conscience towards God, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ." Baptism provides the believer with an appeal against everything contrary to his identification with Christ in His death and resurrection. The very significance of the ordinance, to which he voluntarily submits himself, in the fulfillment of the will of the Lord is an appeal against yielding to sin. Thus the believer is thereby saved, not from the doom of his sins, but from an evil conscience through having by thought, word or deed contravened the meaning of the ordinance. The passage just referred to is likewise a testimony to the Scriptural mode of baptism; for it speaks of the ordinance as "a corresponding figure" (lit., "a corresponding type") to the similarly typical representation set forth by the ark and those who were brought therein through the flood in a figurative burial and resurrection.

Baptism bears no relation to the Jewish rite of circumcision, nor has baptism taken the place of circumcision. Jews, who, as such, had been circumcised on the eighth day, were baptized after they had believed on Christ; and, vice versa, Timothy, who had become a disciple and therefore had been baptized, was circumcised by the Apostle Paul just before going forth with him in missionary service. If there is any analogy, then, as Jews were circumcised because they were children of Abraham, so believers are baptized because they are children of God.

In connection with the significance of baptism, the twenty-ninth verse of 1 Corinthians 15 has been usually understood to refer to a certain ceremony which took place on the occasion of the burial of a believer. In view, however, of the absence of any other intimation in Scripture regarding such a ceremony, and the absence of any historical evidence thereof in apostolic times, or those which immediately followed, another meaning must be sought. Bearing in mind that the original was written without punctuation marks, let the first question mark in the verse be placed after the word "baptized," and the verse gives a meaning at once consistent with the doctrine of Scripture. The reading will thus be: "Else what shall they do which are baptized? It is for (i.e., 'in the interests of') the dead, if the dead are not raised at all. Why then are they baptized for them?" The first question, "What shall they do ... T' is a way of asking what is the use or value of being baptized. The insertion of the words "It is," to provide the answer, is consistent with the fact that the verb "to be" is frequently omitted in the original, as is shown by the italicized words in several places in this very chapter. If there is no resurrection of the dead, the ordinance, instead of setting forth the

identification of believers with the risen Christ, has no meaning at all either for Him or for them; for all perish at death: see verse 18. Both His command and their witness in the ordinance are null and void. They testify to doctrines that have no significance. Their baptism is therefore in the interests of dead ones."³²

³²The next question follows appropriately, "Why do we also stand in jeopardy every hour." If there is no resurrection, why lead a life which involves "dying daily?"

Ecclesiasticism, so far from developing the truth relating to baptism, has perverted the ordinance both in its mode and its meaning.

Chapter 14: The Table of the Lord and The Lord's Supper

The phrases "The table of the Lord" and "The Lord's supper" are found once only in Scripture, the former in I Cor. 10:21 and the latter in 11:20. There is a difference, in the first place, in the significance of the terms.

For while the word "supper" stands actually for that which it denotes, the word "table" stands, not simply for the material of the table, but also for that with which it is connected. This is an illustration of that principle of language by which a word is used to signify that with which it is associated. Another instance of this is to be found in those phrases which make mention of the blood of Christ. The blood does not simply denote the physical material, it stands for the Death of Christ by the shedding of His blood in propitiatory sacrifice.

Associated with the table of the Lord are, firstly, the sacrifice of the Cross, through which what is set on the table is provided; secondly, the materials thereon which set forth the body and blood of Christ; thirdly, the privileges and spiritual blessings bestowed upon those who partake. This at once will serve to show how wide is the scope of the significance attaching to the phrase.

Three Tables

There are three "tables" spoken of in Scripture:(1) the table provided for Israel, which signifies the privileges Divinely bestowed upon God's earthly people, through the provision He made for them. Owing to the hardness of their hearts their table became "a snare, and a trap, and a stumbling-block, and a recompense unto them" (Rom.

11:9); (2) "the table of demons," which is in sharp and divisive contrast to (3) "the table of the Lord." "The table of demons" stands for that which is provided for idolaters by these powers of darkness.

The parallel is clear. The various heathen altars of sacrifice supplied "the table," in its spiritual significance, for the devotees of this or that god or goddess. Actually the provision was made by demons. The activity of these beings in this respect, however, is more extensive than what appertains to the idolatrous cults of the heathen. For idolatry does not consist merely of the worship or veneration of images. There are many forms of idolatry. The table is spread for the worldling with a variety of supplies, and believers are warned that they cannot partake of this table as well as of the table of the Lord.

In the Church at Corinth there was a temptation, while partaking of the Lord's table, to revert to the former conditions of unregenerate days, and to associate in idolatrous practices and customs. Against this the Apostle remonstrates. Hence the warning against attempting to participate in both tables. Moreover, such an attempt is to provoke the Lord to jealousy (verse 22), a spiritual application of the jealousy-offering mentioned in Numbers 5. The believer who thus transgresses renders himself liable to drink a cup of judgment instead of the cup of blessing.

The Basis of Supply

With regard more particularly to the table of the Lord, the Old Testament foreshadowing of this is given in such passages as Deuteronomy 12:27, "Thou shalt offer thy burnt offerings, the flesh and the blood, upon the altar of the Lord thy God and the blood of thy sacrifice shall be poured out upon the altar of the Lord thy God, and thou shalt eat the flesh." As the altar of burnt offering supplied Israel with that upon which they were to feed, so the sacrifice of Christ on the Cross is the means of supplying us who sit at His table, not only with the materials which are put thereon, but with the corresponding spiritual provision made for us in Christ Himself. Hence the Apostle says, "Behold Israel after the flesh: have not they which eat the sacrifices communion³³ (or fellowship) with the altar?" (verse 18). The spiritual application of this is mentioned in the preceding verse, in that, in the unity which we enjoy, "we all partake of the one bread (or loaf)."

³³The word rendered "Partakes of" is *metecho*, to have a share in, whereas in verse 18 the word rendered "have communion" is *koinonos*, one who has something in common with others.

An Important Difference

Chapter 10 is not primarily occupied with the details of the actual partaking of the Lord's Supper, as in chapter 11, but with the privileges and responsibilities which believers enjoy as those who have fellowship with one another in that which the death of Christ has provided for them. We are, in the more comprehensive sense of the term, always at the Table. This helps to explain the order in verse 16, the cup first, the bread after: "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not a communion of the body of Christ?" This is especially a fellowship of His death. The subject throughout chapter 10 is twofold, namely, the separating power of His death, dissociating believers from the world, and the close bond of their union in Him through His sacrifice.

The Significance of the Order

That the cup is mentioned first, then, is very significant. The passage lays stress on the sacrificial aspect of His death. The blood of Christ is that which met the claims of Divine righteousness, the claims of God as Judge, while at the same time the love of God was therein manifested. The realization of that comes first in the matter of fellowship with one another, a fellowship which we enjoy as those who have come under the cleansing power of the precious blood of Christ. By way of consequent experience, this fellowship is then set forth by the bread which we break: it is a communion of the body of Christ, "seeing that we, who are many, are one bread (one loaf), one body."

Chapter 10 treats of the subject more from the external point of view, while chapter 11 views it internally. What is conveyed by "the table of the Lord," while referring immediately to the cup and the bread of which we partake at the Lord's Supper, points especially to our responsibilities and privileges all the week, and the provision made to enable us to fulfil and enjoy them. This is borne out by the immediately ensuing context, where the Apostle points out the necessity of so ordering our life, that we shall abstain from anything inconsistent with the table of the Lord. We cannot partake of that and then go and compromise our relationship. We are to remember that we have a

fellowship to maintain, and we are to seek not our own, but one another's good, avoiding everything that would cause our brother to stumble. Indeed, to partake of the table of the Lord involves this, that whatsoever we do we shall do "all to the glory of God," and that we shall give no occasion of stumbling, either to Jews or Gentiles, or to the church of God (verse 32). Any such act belies that fellowship into which we have been brought with other believers, and dishonours the name of Him whom we own as Lord.

The Moral Aspect

The table of the Lord presents a moral aspect. There are moral responsibilities attached to it. To partake of it means that we accept the death of Christ as our own death, the destruction of the body of sin, the death by which we are crucified to the world and the world to us, the world in all its phases religious, political, social. The arch foe of God is its prince, and he will continue to be "the god of this world" till he is removed hence to his appointed doom. Hence the importance of maintaining our identification with Christ as those who, being privileged to sit at His table and enjoy all that He is to the Father for us and the fulness of the provision that there is in Him for us, have at the same time become dead, through His Cross, to all that stands in alienation from Him.

The order in chapter 11 is that in which Christ instituted the Supper, and the subject there is the partaking of it in remembrance of the Lord, and as a proclamation of His death, till He come. We call Him to mind as the Living One, who was dead, and we proclaim the efficacy and the purpose of His death. The contrast in chapter 11 is not between the table of the Lord and the table of demons, but between the Lord's Supper and our own supper. It can only be the Lord's Supper when we acknowledge Him as Lord thereat and, fulfilling His commands as He instituted it, enter into the significance of that of which we are partaking.

For the Whole Era

The teaching given in this Epistle to the Corinthians concerning the table of the Lord and the Lord's Supper, was not intended simply for the church at Corinth. The Apostle associates the church there "with all that call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ in every place, their Lord and ours" (1:2). He definitely states that the instructions he gives are not simply for that church but for all the churches (7:17); so 11:16; he says,

too, that what he teaches there he teaches everywhere in every church (4:17). Moreover, the Lord's Supper is appointed as a proclamation of His death "till He come" (11:26). It was therefore not designed simply for the early period of the testimony of the churches.

As in the case of the ordinance of baptism, ecclesiastical tradition has changed the character of the feast, with regard both to its mode and its meaning, so that what prevails in organized religious systems in Christendom bears little resemblance to that which is laid down for us in the New Testament Scriptures.

A Custom Transformed

The Lord's Supper, as instituted by the Lord Jesus, was in one respect not altogether new. The breaking of bread and the drinking of a cup had been customary in connection with burials³⁴. By way of contrast, the Lord appointed these acts as a feast of joy. His followers were to partake of the Supper in remembrance, not of His death, but of Himself (I Cor. 11:11-25). They were indeed to enter into the significance of His death, as set forth in the bread and the cup, and were to proclaim His death in the act of partaking. "Proclaim," be it noted, not "shew" or "shew forth." The word (*katangello*) is used of proclaiming a message, as in this very Epistle, in 2:1 and 9:16, in the latter verse of preaching the gospel. Not representation but proclamation is intended; not, as has been wrongly interpreted, a showing to God, but a witness to men.

³⁴For the breaking of bread in this respect in the Old Testament see the R.V. of Jeremiah 16:7, where "break bread" is the rendering; Ezek. 24:17; Hos. 9:4; Deut. 26:14.

Again, the Lord's words are "in remembrance of Me" (Luke 22:19; 1 Cor. 11:24,25~) not in memory of an absent person, though He is corporeally absent, nor as a memorial of an act, but in vivid realization of the Lord Himself, spiritually present, according to His promise; yet ever on the ground of the fact, the purpose and the effect of His vicarious sacrifice at Calvary. The force of the word "remembrance" may be gathered from its only other occurrence in the New Testament, viz., Heb. 10:3, "in those sacrifices there is a remembrance made of sins year by year." The effect of the sacrifices under the Mosaic economy was to bring "iniquity to remembrance" (Num. 5:15); the design of the breaking of bread and drinking of the cup is to bring to the hearts of the partakers the realization of what Christ is to them as Lord and Saviour, and what they are to Him

through His redeeming blood. He appointed the Supper, not simply "lest we forget," but in order that He might Himself, as the outcome of His finished work on the Cross, communicate to us a fresh impulse of His grace and love.

Not Transubstantiation

As to His words upon giving the broken loaf to the disciples, "Take, eat; this is My body" (Matt. 26:26), certain considerations should be sufficient to make clear that any idea of the actual transmutation of the material elements of the bread into the substance of His body, was by no means His intention.

Firstly, the Lord in bodily Presence was there, reclining with His disciples at the table, His hands that broke the bread and handed it to them being members of His body. The disciples certainly did not conceive of His having, or creating, another body in any sense, shape or form, in addition to that in which He was present with them.

Secondly, the parallel statement concerning the cup cannot be taken as conveying the thought of transmutation. The following reason is sufficient to show this. The Lord, upon giving the disciples the cup, said, "For this is My blood. . ." The narratives in Luke 22:20 and I Cor. 11:25, are given as His words, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood." In whatever language Christ spoke to the disciples in the upper room, it thus becomes plain that He spoke of the cup as symbolizing the new covenant. Plainly His words here, therefore, signify representation and not transubstantiation. The word "this" (neuter in the original) in Matt. 26:28 refers back to the cup (poterion, also neuter), which the narrative records Him having just taken. "He took a cup ... saying ... Drink ye all of it; for this is My blood of the new covenant." The four narratives are all thus in agreement. The Lord's language shows that He had no idea of the transmutation of the contents of the cup itself. Since the cup was undeniably a representation of the new covenant in His blood, the preceding and parallel phrase "this is My body" never should have been interpreted as indicating a change of the actual substance from bread into His body. Clearly, what the Lord meant was, "This bread represents My body, and this cup with its contents represents the new covenant to be made in My death and to be ratified by the shedding of My blood." In regard to the cup, this is again confirmed by what is said of the cup and of the bread in I Cor. 10:16, "The cup of blessing ... is it not a communion of the blood of Christ? The bread ... is it not a communion of the body of Christ?" Neither the cup nor the bread is the

actual communion. They stand for, or represent, the communion (that which we have in common as believers), and precisely so the bread represents His body.

Thirdly, in all statements with the verb "to be" as the connecting predicate, the verb is never used to signify that one thing is changed into another. In other words, it is never used as the equivalent of *ginomai*, "to become." In all such usage either (a) the object is actually what it is said to be, apart from any change from the one thing to another (as, e.g., "This is the witness of John," John 1:19), or (b) the object represents what it is said to be (as, e.g., "the field is the world," Matt. 13:38; "these women are two covenants," Gal. 4:24; "the seven heads are seven mountains," Rev. 17:9). Obviously (a) is not the case in the statement, "this is My body" (for the doctrine of transubstantiation does suppose a change from one thing to another). We are therefore confined to the meaning as set forth in the examples under (b), and the statement is to be understood as meaning "This bread represents My body."

Fourthly, there is not the slightest intimation in any writing of apostolic times, or of post-apostolic times for some centuries, that believers either were taught, or understood, that any change took place in the substance either of the bread or of the wine. On the contrary, the testimony of the Apostle Paul is against the theory of transubstantiation; for throughout the passage, and with reference even to the actual partaking, which would be after the alleged pronouncement of the blessing, the elements are spoken of still as the bread and the cup, and not as the body and the blood.

Fifthly, the Lord's words concerning the cup were, "Drink ye all of it." That this was not intended simply for the Apostles but for all believers, is clear from the testimony of I Cor. I 1:26, where the Apostle, speaking of the whole church at Corinth, says, "as often as ye drink the cup." Now, to say nothing of the audacious decree promulgated in 1415 A.D., forbidding laymen to partake of the wine in the Lord's Supper, there is a very direct testimony against the supposition that the wine ever became changed into blood. The Law of God given to the people of Israel forbade the drinking of blood (Lev. 17:10, 14). Nor was the prohibition ever removed. On the contrary, it was enforced by the decree issued for the churches by the Apostles at their gathering at Jerusalem. The churches were to abstain from what is strangled and from blood (Acts 15:20). Any ecclesiastical fiat, therefore, confining the cup to a sacerdotal partaking (which is itself a breach of the Lord's own institution of the cup) simply made the priests of the

religious organization guilty, under the supposition of transubstantiation, of disobeying the Divine prohibition against partaking of blood. But the idea is preposterous. The Lord never instituted a feast which would involve a breach of Divine prohibitions.

Sixthly, the statement "Ye proclaim the Lord's death," taken with the Lord's own words on the subject, teaches that the elements are emblems of Christ in His death, and not in His exaltation and presence in Heaven as the ascended Lord. For, while in bodily presence He is at the right hand of the Throne of God, He is at the same time, in fulfillment of His promise, Himself spiritually in the midst of His people, not in the elements on the table, but Personally with them. That He "took bread" and "took"³⁵ a cup, afforded no ground whatever for the sacerdotal practice of elevating the emblems, either for presentation or veneration. There is no stress upon the word in the original, rendered "took." What is recorded is simply an act in the ordinary sense of the word.

³⁵ Lambano is the ordinary word denoting either 'to take' or 'to receive.' It never conveys the suggestion of elevating.

Seventhly, whereas attempts have been made to explain the breaking of bread by the interpretation of the sixth chapter of the Gospel of John, a careful perusal of that passage, in which Christ speaks of His being the Living Bread, shows that there is no reference there to the Lord's Supper. Christ was on that occasion speaking of the means whereby a person obtains eternal life, which is granted on the ground of faith, and not on the ground of partaking of the bread in the Lord's Supper. Moreover, when He said, "The bread which I shall give is My flesh, for the life of the world" (verse 51, R.V.), and the Jews made the mistake of taking His words literally, He rebuked them, with the remark, "It is the Spirit that quickeneth the words that I have spoken unto you are spirit and are life. But there are some of you that believe not." To take His words therefore in the literal sense is to support what has become one of the greatest errors in Christendom. Plainly the Lord was drawing the analogy between material support of the body by bread and the spiritual support of the soul by faith.

The partaking of the Lord's Supper, as set forth in the New Testament, is marked by an entire absence of officialism. There is no hint of the appointment of anyone for the administration of the elements. Both the breaking of the bread and the drinking of the cup are for the whole company. The cup is "the cup of blessing which we bless" (or "give thanks for," as is the meaning in I Cor. 14:16); the bread is that which "we break."

The argument that the "we" stands for the Apostles and their successors is refuted by the context; for the Apostle immediately says, "seeing that we, who are many, are one bread, one body: for we all partake of the one bread." Again, when he points out to the church at Corinth the inconsistency of partaking of the cup of demons and the cup of the Lord (10:21), the implication in the "ye" is obvious (save to those who have some unscriptural theory to advance) that the whole church partook of the cup.

The sacerdotalism which, by mere human tradition, has intruded human mediators for official ministrations of the elements to all the partakers, has marred the character of the feast as appointed by the Lord, and has perverted the carrying out of His intentions. The solemn responsibility, yea, happy privilege, of believers is to follow His will and adhere to the teaching which He has left on record for us in the Scriptures of Truth.

Chapter 15: "Reception"

Local churches are spoken of in the New Testament not only as "churches of God" (I Cor. 11:16) but also as "churches of Christ" (Rom. 16:16). They belong to the Father and to the Son, from whom they derive their existence and whose sustaining power and care are ministered to them. They consist of those who are both "for God's own possession" (I Pet. 2:9, R.V.), having been purchased with the blood of Christ (Acts 20:28), and "for Christ's own possession" (Titus 2:14).

The churches are His by right of His redemptive work on the Cross and by the operation of the Holy Spirit. They are not the property or possession of any ecclesiastical organization or religious body or society or denomination. As we have already observed, the Word of God knows nothing of such organizations or associations of churches in any shape or form; its testimony is distinctly against the formation of any such federation or combination with earthly headquarters. Each church, as the property of Christ, is designed to acknowledge His authority as its Lord (I Cor. 12:5).

Nor again does any local church belong to those who, as its spiritual guides, elders or bishops (see, e.g., Acts 20, verse 17 with verse 28, R.V., Phil. 1:1, etc.), are appointed by the Spirit of God to exercise oversight and to take care of it (I Tim. 3:5). They are the Lord's servants, answerable to Him for the discharge of their functions in tending

the flock under their care, which they are to regard as His. The local church in which they are bishops or elders is spoken of, not as "their flock," but as "God's flock" (I Pet. v. 2).

Credentials Necessary

Having then a care for the "charge allotted" to them, they are justified, when a person applies for reception into local church fellowship, in asking the applicant for credentials as to matters of faith and conduct; indeed, such a demand is necessary, especially in times of confusion and apostasy like the present, times of rampant modernism, numerous religious cults and abounding lawlessness. When such credentials are forthcoming, the command holds good, "receive ye one another, even as Christ also received you, to the glory of God" (Rom. 15:7); reception is to be "in the Lord" and "worthily of the saints" (16:2). The decision of the spiritual guides of a church that an applicant is to be received, should be sufficient for the tacit agreement of the assembly. Yet, as it is the church that receives and puts away, the ultimate responsibility rests upon the church (Rev. 2 and 3).

Granted that those who have a spiritual care for the assembly are satisfied with the evidences, not only of life in Christ but of soundness in the fundamental doctrines of the faith and of a life consistent therewith, one who, through faith in Christ, has been received by Him and become a member of His body, the Church, is entitled to the fellowship of an assembly, and so to a place at the Lord's Table. The privilege of partaking of the Lord's Supper involves the enjoyment of all the privileges of a church, and not only so but the fulfillment of the responsibilities attaching to such fellowship. As to permanency or otherwise, this is conditioned by local or personal circumstances. This is particularly so in days characterized by the confusion which prevails in Christendom.

The Need of Care

The greatest care needs to be exercised to avoid the dangers of introducing elements of error or division, and of laxity in adherence to the Lord's will as revealed in the Word of God and the principles contained therein. As to fundamental doctrine, one is not to be received who "abideth not in the teaching of Christ" (2 John 9), that is to say, all that He taught, and therefore also the doctrine relating to His Person. This warning was

against false teachers, not against believers who were seeking light, or genuinely endeavouring to understand the will of the Lord.

The Apostle Paul similarly denounces anyone who should preach any gospel other than that which he and his fellow apostles had preached; such a one was to be "anathema" (Gal. 1:8). Special instances of such errorists were Hymenius and Alexander, whom the Apostle "delivered unto Satan, that they might be taught not to blaspheme" (I Tim. 1:20). So, too, the Lord reproves the church at Pergamos for having in their midst some that held the teaching of Balaam, instead of putting them away from them (Rev. 2:14). Teaching which perverts the gospel is called "leaven" (Gal. 5:9) and thus receives the same denunciation as immorality (1 Cor. 5:6).

On the other hand, the case of the attitude of the disciples at Jerusalem towards Saul of Tarsus after his conversion, when "he essayed to join himself" to them and "they were all afraid of him," cannot rightly be taken as the regular course of procedure to be adopted in the matter of reception. The saints in Jerusalem had had experience of Saul's methods and had good ground for their fears and for "not believing that He was a disciple," until Barnabas allayed their apprehensions (Acts 9:26, 27). To make such a case a guiding line of procedure would be unscriptural. Evidence is necessary, but not suspicion.

Whom not to Refuse

Apart from cases of false teaching and immorality, the adoption of rigid regulations is precarious. The desire of a believer may be limited, either through lack of full understanding or owing to other circumstances, to the privilege of partaking of the Lord's Supper and of enjoying the worship of fellow-believers on that occasion. To refuse a believer simply on the ground of the temporary and limited character of his desires would be to grieve the Spirit of God. To receive such a one is not to be guilty of laxity. No regulations unprovided in Scripture can be sufficient to debar evil. In Jude's time certain ungodly men had crept in unawares. That indeed affords no reason for carelessness in these matters; at the same time it affords no ground for erecting a humanly devised barrier. Principles of Scripture ever hold good; their application is always safe. What is needed is watchfulness and care on the part of those who are appointed by God to exercise oversight--watchfulness against the reception of those

whose life or teaching is inconsistent with the gospel, and those who give evidence of being such as to cause division. To go beyond this is to usurp the authority of Christ.

The following words of J. N. Darby are cogent in this respect: "Suppose a person, known to be godly and sound in faith, who has not left some ecclesiastical system, nay, thinks Scripture favours an ordained ministry, is glad, when the occasion occurs (i.e., to partake of the Lord Supper), suppose we alone are in the place, or he is not in connection with any other body in the place (staying with a brother or the like), is he to be excluded because he is of some system as to which his conscience is not enlightened, nay, which he may think more right? He is a godly member of the body, known as such; is he to be shut out? If so, the degree of light is title to communion, and the unity of the body is denied by the assembly which refuses him. The principle of meeting as members of Christ walking in godliness is given up, agreement with us is made the rule, and the assembly becomes a sect with its members like any other.... It may give more trouble, requiring more care to treat every case on its merits, on the principle of the unity of all Christ's members, than to say, 'You do not belong to us, you cannot come,' but the whole principle of meeting is gone."

A sectarian connection would not of itself justify refusal of fellowship at the Lord's Table. At Corinth there were those who were guilty of a sectarian spirit, yet no admonition as to exclusion was given as with the delinquent in chapter 5. How much less should a believer be refused who, fulfilling the above conditions, has been hindered by denominational association from receiving light upon the Scriptural principles relating to a church! Fellowship is not conditional upon the measure of light received. Deficiency of spiritual understanding in this respect affords no reason for the rejection of one who is a member of the Body of Christ and walking in godliness of life. Reception of such does not involve carelessness or looseness in doctrine or in the fulfillment of God's will.

Letters of Commendation

It is needful for all that they should bring satisfactory evidence, and, in the case of one who has been identified with another assembly, professedly constituted on Scriptural lines, that a letter of commendation, such as is intimated in 2 Cor. 3:1 and other Scriptures, should be forthcoming, unless there is any valid reason for its absence. Those who are moving from one place to another, who have been so identified, do well

to see to it that they are so commended, not simply for the sake of being admitted to fellowship, but that the saints where they are received may have the joy of the expression of goodwill from the commending assembly, and the link of fellowship which such a letter involves. While ecclesiastical bonds of human organization are not countenanced in Scripture, yet any means of Christian intercourse affords an occasion of manifesting that spiritual unity which eternally binds believers together.

Chapter 16: Church Discipline

What is true of the whole Church, the Body of Christ (never spoken of in Scripture or to be regarded as "the Church on earth"), is in many respects likewise true of the earthly, local and temporary portions of it, the churches. An evidence of this lies in the very name *ekklesia*, given to both the whole and its parts, with its suggestive literal significance, "called out." Those who comprise the parts, and therefore the whole, are called out from one sphere into another, out from the world in its alienation from God, and "into the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord" (I Cor. 1:9).

Each Church a Temple

Again, the whole Church is spoken of as a temple, and so is each local church. As to the whole, "each several building, fitly framed together groweth into a holy temple in the Lord" (Eph. 2:21) that is a process; of a local church, whenever formed, the statement holds good, "ye are a temple of God" (I Cor. 3:16; cp. 2 Cor. 6:16, where the reference is to the individual believer). God's temple is called His house, a frequent description of the temple in Jerusalem. So a local church is described as "the house of God ... the church of the living God" (I Tim. 3:15). That the local assembly is there referred to is clear from the fact that the Apostle was giving instructions to Timothy as to the circumstances and testimony of the church at Ephesus (the instruction is of course applicable to every assembly). He was exhorting him, as he had done before, to remain there for a time (I Tim. 1:3, R.V.; 2 Tim. 4:9).

As the temple or house of God, the assembly is God's dwelling place. That is the root meaning of the word *oikos*, "house" (from *oikeo* "to dwell"; the same meaning is contained in the word *oikodome*, "building," lit., house, building), as, e.g., in I Cor. 3:9. Being such, a local church is essentially a place of holiness. "Holiness becometh Thine

house, O Lord, for ever" (Ps. 93:5). Whatever is inconsistent with the character and claims of God must be absent from it. In such a community it is necessary for each believer to know how to behave himself. That is what the Apostle expresses as the object for which he wrote the first Epistle to Timothy. That this was not intended merely to refer to Timothy's individual conduct in the church, but to that of all the saints therein, both the immediate context and the general tenor of the Epistle indicate.

The awesome holiness of the Sanctuary, wherein God dwelt in the midst of His people Israel, was ever impressed upon them, and that with the beneficent design that His character might find reflection in theirs. They were to be holy as He is holy. Precisely so with an assembly. The very reason for its existence demands that it be kept fit for the presence of God. The spiritual power and glory of the Lord's presence cannot be experienced where holiness is not maintained. To harbour anything contrary to the character and claims of God is to do despite to the Holy Spirit.

The Basis of Discipline

Consistently with the maintenance of holiness, with its consequent blessing, the church at Corinth was enjoined to put away from among themselves the "wicked person" who had defiled God's spiritual temple. The command to do so was based not only upon the character of God but upon the claims of the death of Christ. On this ground they were to "purge out the old leaven." "For our passover also hath been sacrificed, even Christ: wherefore let us keep the feast (or, as in the margin, 'keep festival' not here the Lord's Supper but the constant and joyous maintenance of a life and testimony well pleasing to God and effective in its witness in the world), not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth" (I Cor. 5:8). That was what the passover lamb had meant to Israel. Only so could they be His people, separated to Him by sanctification and cleansing. "Purge out the old leaven," says the Apostle, "that ye may be a new lump, even as ye are unleavened." Spiritual standing must find its counterpart in conduct.

The Scope of Discipline

One who was so disciplined was not merely debarred from the Lord's Supper, but was put away from amongst the assembly, and therefore excluded from the fellowship of the believers in their daily life and intercourse, a fellowship of which the breaking of bread is only one expression. For any member of the assembly to ignore the act and continue

social intercourse as if there had been no sin, would be merely carnal sentiment, void both of holy love and righteousness, and grieving to the Spirit of God. So with seeking spiritual help from the ministry of one from whom it has been necessary to separate on account of evil doctrine. He who has missed his way is ill suited to be a guide. The command concerning such is, "If any one cometh unto you, and bringeth not this teaching (i.e., the teaching of Christ), receive him not into your house, and give him no greeting: for he that giveth him greeting partaketh in his evil works" (2 John 10, 11).

Further, for a person to be under the discipline of expulsion from an assembly involves his being outside every other assembly. No circles of fellowship are required for the maintenance of this, nor are they Scriptural. Human devices may prove effectual in preventing one evil, but they do so only by introducing another. The restrictions of men, however rigid, ever fail to fulfil the will of God. Unscriptural barriers against a spiritual evil prove barriers to real blessings. Due care on the part of the spiritual guides in the churches should be sufficient to obviate the intrusion of one under discipline into any particular assembly. Let a note of commendation be required. For such a person simply to go off and seek the fellowship of another assembly and there to be received, is to ignore the authority of Christ and to contravene the unity of the Spirit, which we are enjoined to endeavour to keep (Eph. 4:3). An act of church discipline is not simply the act of the assembly; when rightly used it is the exercise of the authority of Christ carried out in His Name and power (I Cor. 5:4). The realization of that is itself sufficient to enforce the solemn and binding character of the discipline.

The Object of Discipline

Godly discipline ever has restoration in view. There is a double purpose, immediate and ultimate: immediate, that the erring one may learn the mind of the Lord in deep exercise of heart, be brought to a new apprehension of the sinfulness of sin, and be granted the grace of repentance and confession; ultimate, that complete restoration may be established. "All chastening seemeth for the present to be not joyous but grievous; yet afterward it yieldeth peaceable fruit unto them that have been exercised thereby, even the fruit of righteousness." The saints are to see to it that "that which is lame be not turned out of the way, but rather be healed" (Heb. 12:11-13).

Following on, and in contrast to, the solemn warning in Gal. 5:19-21, that those who practise the works of the flesh shall not inherit the Kingdom of God, comes the earnest

command concerning a believer, who, being off his guard, has fallen into sin: "Brethren, even if a man (i.e., any member, of either sex, of the church) be overtaken in any trespass, ye which are spiritual restore (a metaphor from the setting of a dislocated or broken bone) such an one in a spirit of meekness; looking to thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another's burdens (here especially the burden of the sense of shame and dishonour), and so fulfil the law of Christ" (Gal. 6:1, 2). Where such pastoral care brings the erring one to judge his sin, he will have been "gained."

That the restoration of an erring one is to be the earnest and prayerful desire of the whole assembly is touchingly set before us in the second chapter of the second Epistle to the Corinthians. Punishment had duly been inflicted, as enjoined in the first Epistle (2 Cor. 2:6), but the grief which had been caused was to be succeeded not only by forgiveness but by a ministry of comfort, "lest by any means such an one should be swallowed up with his overmuch sorrow" (verse 7). Nay, more, the saints were to confirm their love toward him. A wholehearted and godly restoration indeed! But this had another purpose, that of preventing Satan from getting an advantage of the saints. The adversary is persistently set against the spiritual welfare and testimony of a church; not only by marring the witness through sin, but by preventing, either through a spirit of harshness, or through negligence, the restoration of one who has been disciplined.

The Effect on the Assembly

The necessity for the act of discipline should bring an assembly down before God in deep heart-searching and humiliation. There is need of this, if only for this reason that had the saints been in a healthy spiritual condition, walking in fellowship with the Lord and in separation from the world, the sin for which the expulsion had become necessary might never have occurred. The church at Corinth had failed at first in this, and had not rather mourned. Besides, the loss of a fellow-believer under such circumstances means essentially a defect in the church as such. For, as with the physical body, if one member suffers, "all the members suffer with it" (I Cor. 12:26).

Further, unjudged sin in the church mars the testimony in the eyes of the world, and gives "occasion for the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme." Achan's sin prevented Israel from standing before their enemies (Josh. 7:13). To be evil spoken of for the sake of the Name of Christ is to have "the Spirit of glory and the Spirit of God" resting

upon us (I Pet. 4:14). But where the fair escutcheon of His Name is marred, and legitimate ground is given to the world to point the finger of derision, there is call for deep and constant humiliation in the sight of God, and for such measures as will do all that is possible for the removal of the blot.

Where there is a real sorrow and brokenness of spirit on the part of the gathering, the act of expulsion will not be simply looked upon as the removal of an offender; instead, the priestly service will be undertaken of eating the sin offering in the holy place, making the sin our own and judging it as though it had been committed by us; judging, too, the lack of that spiritual power which might have prevented the erring one from falling into sin. "If we discerned ourselves, we should not be judged."

As to Doctrinal Error

The Apostle speaks of delivering the offender unto Satan. There was probably special apostolic authority in that respect. Such an act cannot be regarded as simply involving the alternative of being put into the sphere of the world (as that which lies in the evil one) instead of the church, for the object of that particular discipline in the case of I Cor. 5 was "for the destruction of the flesh." Again, in regard to the evil of the doctrinal error by which Hymenmus and Alexander were guilty of making shipwreck concerning the faith, the act of delivering them to Satan was wrought by the Apostle himself and not by a church. Yet one who holds evil doctrine is to be the subject of church discipline equally with one who is guilty of the sin of immorality. The church at Pergamos received blame from the Lord for having in their midst those that held the doctrine of Balaam and those that held the doctrine of the Nicolaitans. His reproach makes clear that the church was to put them away (Rev. 2:14-16).

Similar discipline is enjoined where a believer is "a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner." No company is to be kept with such; the saints are not to eat with them; that is to say, they are not to have social intercourse with them. Such dissociation necessarily involves the same attitude as in the particular instance dealt with in the chapter. In all these cases a course of unjudged sin is indicated, not sin that has been repented of.

Certain forms of discipline called for are of a less severe nature than that of excommunication. Those who are disorderly are to be admonished (I Thess. 5:14). Believers are to withdraw themselves "from every brother that walketh disorderly" (2

Thess. 3:6). Timothy is exhorted to reprove them that sin, in the sight of all, "that the rest also may be in fear" (I Tim. 5:20). "Unruly men, vain talkers and deceivers" are to have their mouths stopped. Those who are so careless and unspiritual as to give ear to such, are to receive a sharp reproof (Tit. 1:10, 11, 13).

Chapter 17: Giving

The opening verses of the Epistle of James contain a description of God as "the giving God." That is the literal rendering of the phrase "God who giveth," in the statement "God, who giveth to all liberally" (verse 5). "The giving God" it is almost a title. How abundantly it is illustrated in the Scriptures! "He gave His only begotten Son"; "How shall He not also with Him freely give us all things T' His giving is the outflow of His love "God so loved that He gave." He gives "liberally" (James 1:5), "freely" (Rom. 8:32), "richly" (I Tim. 6:17).

Likeness to the Father

One of the prominent lessons in the teaching of the Sermon on the Mount, is that by shaping our conduct in obedience to the Lord's precepts our character will be conformed to that of our Heavenly Father. We shall be truly "Sons of our Father which is in heaven" (see, e.g., Matt. 5:45). Not merely children but "sons." That is to say, those who not only are born of God but share His character, and so represent Him worthily, bearing the impress of the Divine parentage. As then His grace is such that He is "the giving God," liberal in His giving, the same spirit of liberality is to characterize us. When Christ sat over against the treasury and observed "how the people cast money into the treasury," He was really noticing the kind of giving which corresponded to God's mode of giving. The poor widow cast in all that she had. Was not that like the gift the Father gave in giving His Son? He was His all. Giving is a test of character.

Motives

The world forms its estimate according to the getting: Christ's estimate is measured by the giving. The world reckons what sum is given. Men consider the amount: Christ considers the motive. With the world the great question is: What does a person own? The Lord takes notice as to the use a person makes of it. How much is suggested by the Lord's remarks about the widow's offering! "This poor widow cast in more than they

all: for all these did of their superfluity cast in unto the gifts: but she of her want did cast in all the living that she had" (Luke 21:3, 4). There was little, if any, sacrifice in their case. They were as comfortably off afterwards as before. She had nothing left. Theirs was a matter of religion; hers was a matter of love and devotion to God. After all, the great criterion was, not how much she gave, but how much she kept. What a difference between their balance and her nothing!

Love and devotion to God! That imparts the real value to giving. And this perhaps serves to explain why no command as to the amount is laid down for believers. To obey a command stating the amount or proportion would be easy, but what exercise of heart would there be? Where would the motive be? Loyalty would be superseded by mechanical religion. Love would be replaced by formalism. Both individuals and local churches would lose their sense of * the high motive which should inspire in the offering a loving response to the love of the great Giver Himself.

Tithes

It may be asked, Was there not a Divine command for the Israelites? Was it not enjoined upon them to give tithes? And if so, is it not appropriate for the Christian to give tithes? In the first place, the Israelites paid much more than a tithe. In addition to the three tithes specifically mentioned, namely, that given to the Levite (Lev. 27:30, with Num. 18:21-24; Deut. 14:22-27), there was the further tithe at the end of every three years, which was also for the stranger, the fatherless and the widow (verses 28, 29). Some hold, indeed, that the tithes mentioned in the three passages referred to, were disconnected, and this is supported by the Talmud. To these tithes, however, there must be added other offerings; those of the sin offering, the burnt offering, and the firstfruits. Mal. 3:8, for instance, speaks of "tithes and offerings" (lit. heave offerings). It has been computed that an Israelite's total offerings would amount to about one-sixth of his income. One writer has even put it at a fourth. If such was the case with those who were under moral obligations, what response should there be on the part of those who are under the power of the love that expressed itself at Calvary, and still burns in the heart of Him who gave Himself there, and is ministered by the indwelling Spirit of God!

Again, were giving in the case of the believer simply a matter of tithes, those whose income is very considerable would give far less proportionately to their income than

those whose income is very small. The former, of their abundance, would so give that there was little sacrifice. With the latter there might be a danger lest the regulation might militate against the inspiring motive.

Yet, if the Israelites paid tithes, that amount may well be regarded as a minimum of our offerings, and from the willing heart there will be a further response according to the ability that God gives. Whatever set proportion there may be as a firstfruits, the proportion will be increased with increasing facilities and possibilities.

Robbing God

How intensely solemn is the closing book of the Old Testament, written about one thousand years after the giving of the Law! The people of Israel, instead of charging themselves, in a spirit of repentance towards God, with their own sins as being the cause of the troubles that had come upon them, were adding to their guilt by reproaching God and blaming His prophets. Among the various sins by which they were transgressing the Law, there was the non-payment of tithes. How grievous an offence this was in His sight, is made known in the stirring remonstrance in chapter 3. To His gracious command and promise, "Return unto Me, and I will return unto you," they asked, "Wherein shall we return?" To this the Lord replied, "Will a man rob God? Yet ye rob Me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed Thee? In tithes and offerings. Ye are cursed with a curse; for ye rob Me, even this whole nation. Bring ye the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be meat in Mine house, and prove Me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it. And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes." What a gracious attitude! There was God, waiting all the time to pour out upon them a copious blessing. Their selfishness was hindering their own prosperity. In their meanness they were acting against their own real interests. Let them give God His due. Let them bring both their tithes and their offerings, and they would find that what was retained for their own requirements would far more than meet their needs.

The Windows of Heaven

The opening of the windows of heaven! How significant a metaphor! Had not the windows of heaven been opened in judgment in such a manner that the waters prevailed greatly upon the earth (Gen. 7:18)? The language that describes that act of

judgment becomes used to depict a promise of blessing. "Prove Me now herewith." The command is an appeal to faith. It holds good today. Shall we not take God at His Word? To say that we are not under the Law but under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, as if thus to make an excuse for doing less than what was done under the Law is to ignore the words of the Lord Jesus, "Think not that I came to destroy the Law or the prophets: I came not to destroy but to fulfil." The Lord spoke eighteen parables, and no less than sixteen of these deal with the use of money. Let us remember His remarks at the conclusion of one of them: "If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another's, who will give you that which is your own?" (Luke 16:11, 12).

Corporate Giving

Turning now to the Epistles, it is well to remind ourselves that Divine grace has not only placed us individually in Christ, He has made us members of churches, or assemblies, giving us local corporate privileges and responsibilities. There is this also to bear in mind, that what is recorded of the circumstances, for example, in the church at Corinth, is not simply an account of what took place there, but, as part of the God-breathed Word, is permanently left for the instruction of the saints throughout the present era. The circumstances may vary, but the principles and commands remain binding. When the Apostle wrote his first Epistle to that church, there was deep poverty among the saints in Judea, and the churches in different lands were called upon to send relief to them. Their very poverty has been the means of giving us permanent instruction on the subject of giving. That the call for assistance was not limited to Corinth, but was given to other churches in Greece, and to the churches in Galatia, marks the universality of the instruction.

Certain Principles

The injunction given to the churches in Corinth and else. where to have fellowship with the needs of their brethren in another country, was as follows: "Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I gave order to the churches at Galatia, so also do ye. Upon the first day of the week let each one of you lay by him in store, as he may prosper, that no collections be made when I come" (I Cor. 16:1, 2). More closely to the original the command is, "Let each one of you lay by him, storing as he may prosper."

While this conveys the thought of storing at home, yet whatever was laid by was to form part of a united offering, as in verse 1.

However varied the details may be in differing circumstances, the principles are clear. The giving was to be regular ("upon the first day of the week"), universal ("each one of you"), proportionate ("as he may prosper"). As to the first of these, there is clearly an intimation that liabilities were to have been duly met, and that a fresh week was to be begun by an offering to the Lord as each had prospered. There was to be a definite purpose of heart (2 Cor. 9:11), and, as the giving was to be "to the Lord," there would be a constant exercise of heart to avoid anything like extravagance or carelessness in the matter of spending, so that there might be the more set aside for the Lord instead of less. Thus the gift would be "an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well pleasing to God."

Out of Deep Poverty

While there had been a readiness on the part of the church at Corinth to respond to the exhortation given them at the close of the first Epistle regarding their offerings, and their immediate zeal had stirred up the churches of Macedonia, yet the latter had evidently responded still more thoroughly to the appeal made to them; and this notwithstanding that they were in much affliction and were suffering great privations. In addition to their immediate hardships, three civil wars, waged in their territory by rival claimants either to Dictatorship or Imperial power in the Roman world, had devastated the whole district. Yet "their deep poverty" (lit., poverty down to the depth), and with it, indeed, "the abundance of their joy," had "abounded unto the riches of their liberality" (2 Cor. 8:2). They are accordingly set forth as an example to the church at Corinth.

The Great Example

Appeal is made, however, to a higher standard than even the liberality of those churches. The great incentive is the grace shown in the poverty of Christ and the enrichment we have derived from it. "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye though His poverty might become rich" (2 Cor. 8:9). With this we may put into connection that other word on grace in 9:8, "And God is able to make all grace abound unto you; that ye, having always all sufficiency in everything, may abound unto every good work" (five comprehensive "all's" and "every's," representing various forms of one word in the

original). The example of Christ (8:9) and the power of God (9:8)! These are designed to kindle our liberality. That the grace of ministering to need is specially in view is clear from what follows: "As it is written, He hath scattered abroad, he hath given to the poor: his righteousness abideth for ever."

Various Terms

There are seven different words used in these two chapters to describe this ministry. (1) The first indicates the spirit which characterized the saints: haplotēs, rendered "liberality," is really "singleness" (8:2; see R.V. margin, and 9:13); it suggests that Godwardness in the giving that makes His will and glory the one great motive. (2) The gift is called a charis, "a grace" (verses 4, 7, 19); the word also denotes "thanks" (see 9:15), and the suggestion may be that their gift of grace was the outcome of gratitude to God. (3) The same verse speaks of the gift as "fellowship" (koinonia, a having in common, 8:4, and 9:14; the word is rendered "contribution" in Rom. 15:26), indicating that it is not simply a matter of giving to others what we have and what they have not, but of sharing what belongs to us all. (4) Again, it is called a diakonia, a "ministry," or "administration" (8:4; 9:1, 12, 13); the root meaning of this word is "to pursue"; it suggests earnestness in the undertaking. (5) In 8:14 it is spoken of as "an abundance" (perisseuma, lit., that which exceeds, and so, in this respect, that which is more than one's actual requirements). (6) In 8:20 it is described as a "bounty" (hadrotēs, not simply "an abundance," but that which is full, fat, rich, bountiful). (7) In 9:5 it is called "a blessing" (eulogia, see margin); what is indicated now is the goodwill which finds expression in the gift; the spirit of the giving is thus transferred to the gift itself.

Cumulatively the description is very full. It marks four great aspects of the giving. These are: (a) the Godward view in (1) and (2); (b) the attitude towards the recipients in (3) and (7); (c) the character of the act itself in (4); (d) the nature of the offering in (5) and (6).

Corporate Responsibility

Now while the offering especially in view in the Epistles to the church at Corinth was contributed by individuals, each according to his ability, it was an expression of the fellowship of the local church. So were the gifts sent to Paul from Philippi (Phil. 4:14, 18). Since, then, in addition to our giving privately for any particular object about which the Lord may exercise our hearts, we also have a corporate responsibility as members

of assemblies or churches, some means must be adopted of collecting the contributions. There is no method particularized in the Scripture for the actual "collection." The method, whether by passing round a receptacle or otherwise, is not the important point. What matters are the principles laid down in the Word of God to guide each believer and the whole company in its united offering.

All things are to be done "decently and in order." We may render this injunction as follows: "Let everything be done in a becoming manner and according to Divine ordering." Honesty is to characterize us collectively as well as individually. We are to take thought for "things honourable in the sight of all men" (Rom. 12:17). There are liabilities, such as rent, heat, lighting, and caretaking, to be met. These must not be allowed to get into arrears.

The Poor

Nor must we neglect "to do good and to communicate." There are the indigent widows and other poor saints to be cared for, according to the teaching of such passages as I Timothy 5. There are the claims of poverty in other localities, claims enforced by the Epistles to the Corinthians. There are servants of God who "for the sake of the Name" have gone forth, "taking nothing of the Gentiles" (3 John 7); in the case of those who visit churches for the ministry of the Word, as called of God for such service, honesty will provide their travelling expenses (unless the gift is for any reason refused), liberality will rejoice to do more, it will set them forward on the journey "worthily of God" (verse 6), welcoming them so as to be "fellow-workers with the truth" (verse 8). There may be those who, giving themselves to pastoral work, and recognized in that capacity, stand thereby in need of material assistance.

The Work of the Gospel

As to those who have gone forth to "regions beyond," the exhortation in 2 Cor. 10:15, 16, is significant in the matter of practical fellowship in this respect. With what delicate suggestiveness the Apostle says, "having hope that, as your faith groweth we shall be magnified in you. . . so as to preach the gospel even unto the parts beyond you" | Their faith was to find its increase in practical cooperation in the furtherance of the gospel. Were they to be content with having received its benefits themselves? What about the people lying in darkness beyond them? The object of the appeal was not personal support; nor was it made merely for the sake of evangelism; it did, however, bring

home the responsibility of an assembly regarding material assistance in gospel work in other regions, and it remains on record as a message to all assemblies.

There can be no more suitable time for the offering collectively to be made than at the gathering for the Lord's Supper; for the material offering is associated with the worship and praise which characterize the occasion. Yet the fact remains that, according to I Cor. 16:2, the money then brought together is but the united application of what has already been set aside for the Lord at home.

The Handling of Gifts

As to the handling of the gifts which have been brought together, how important are the Apostle's words, "avoiding this, that any man should blame us in the matter of this bounty which is ministered by us: for we take thought for things honourable, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men" (2 Cor. 8:20, 21)! Ezra's care provides a lesson for us in this connection. He separates twelve "of the chiefs (R.V.) of the priests," weighing the offering, reminding them of their holy character, and charging them to watch, and keep the gifts until they weighed them before those responsible in Jerusalem (Ezra 8:24-29). So Paul sees to it that at least more than one brother should deal with the offering from the church at Corinth. "Whomsoever ye shall approve by letters (i.e., to the saints in Jerusalem), them," he says, "will I send to carry your bounty to Jerusalem," "and if it be meet for me to go also, they shall go with me" (I Cor. 16:3, 4).

In all our giving we do well to follow the example of the saints in Macedonia, who "first gave their own selves to the Lord" (2 Cor. 8:5). They were His already by redemptive grace, but they evidently made it a special matter of realizing, in this presentation of themselves, that they were not simply giving for a particular purpose, but were doing it unto Him. Just as we are individually and collectively in true fellowship with the Lord, so we shall be "faithful in the unrighteous mammon" and so we shall be entrusted "with the true riches." If that attitude towards Him characterizes our giving, we shall be cheerful givers, whom "the Lord loveth." "The liberal deviseth liberal things; and in liberal things shall he continue" (Isa. 32:8).

Chapter 18: The Church, the Churches, and the Scriptures

The opinion is sometimes advanced that we owe the Bible to the Church, and that the authority of the Church is superior to that of the Scriptures. Certain facts and considerations will serve to disprove the validity of such a view. They say that Christ did not write a book but founded a Church. That, however, does not serve to show how the New Testament Scriptures were produced or by what authority they come to us.

The Preparation

What the Lord accomplished in the days of His flesh prepared the way for the production of these Scriptures after His Ascension, and under His authority, by the operation of the Holy Spirit. They were written at intervals, not by the Church, but to the churches, and to individual believers, by Apostles or those associated with them, each writer acting in his individual capacity under the power of the Spirit of God. By Divine providence the work was accomplished during the lifetime of the Apostles, the period in which local churches were first being formed. Thus the Spirit's operation was twofold, one, the planting of local churches by oral ministry, the other, the addition of "God-breathed" writings to the similarly produced Scriptures of the Old Testament. By this means the oral instruction was put in permanent form for believers generally.

The Necessity of the Scriptures

An inference sometimes drawn, that the oral instruction would have continued in its pristine purity, even had there been no Bible, is without foundation; it is disproved indeed both by apostolic forewarnings and by facts of history. Already the Apostles were speaking of "the many corrupting the Word of God" (2 Cor. 2:17), of those who were wresting the Scriptures (2 Pet. 3:16); they were foretelling of men who would arise from within the churches, "speaking perverse things" (Acts 20:30), and of the advent of "false teachers" bringing in "destructive heresies" (2 Pet. 2:1), predictions which subsequent events fully substantiated.

The teaching of Christ and His Apostles was designed, then, not to remain merely oral, to lie open to the variable and wayward traditions of men and the seductive antagonism of errorists. The Apostle Peter definitely states, for example, that one great object of his Second Epistle was, that after his decease the things of which he wrote should be called to remembrance (2 Pet. 1:15).

There was tremendous opposition to the spread of the Scriptures, yet the activities of false teachers and the production of spurious writings was a means of stirring the faithful to assiduous efforts to keep the true and reject the false. Thus, the Divinely inspired writings of the New Testament stood out in their true character as such in immediately post-apostolic times.

The Mode of Production

The churches were the recipients (and therefore so with the Church), not the producers of the Scriptures. Nor were they produced by the subsequently organized system of ecclesiasticism known as the Church. While the general recognition of the writings of the New Testament, as being inspired of God alike with those of the Old Testament, was progressive, yet the principle by which they respectively received recognition was acknowledged from the first.

The Canon and the Apocrypha

The limits of the Canon were fixed in the earliest times, not by hostile attack, but by usage, and that long before the convening of ecclesiastical Councils and their decisions. The usage, too, was based, not on tradition, but on immediate and Divinely imparted knowledge of the authenticity and Divine authority of the writings. Their general and regular use in the churches was determined, not by the issues of controversy, but by their recognition as Divinely given, by spiritual men (I Cor. 2:14).

As to the Apocryphal books and the writings of the Apostolic Fathers, certain facts mark a radical distinction between them and the inspired writings of the New Testament. As external witness, the Canonical books as thus incorporated are supported by the concurrent testimony of believers from the earliest days; in contrast to this, for the support of the Apocryphal writings only scant and isolated opinions can be adduced. Further external evidence lies in this, that, under the stress of Imperial and inquisitorial persecution, while Apocryphal writings were readily handed over, as superfluous, to officials for destruction, no pains were spared to preserve these of the New Testament.

As to internal evidence, an unbiased perusal of the contents sufficiently reveals the gulf which separates the two both in character and in time, both in the relation of the books one to another and in matters of doctrine. The Apocryphal writers themselves

bear testimony to this. Further, there is an essential, untransferable unity in the inspired Canonical writings which is conspicuous by its absence from Apocryphal books, to say nothing of the convicting, soul-transforming effects of the former, with their appeal to the conscience, and the fellowship they establish with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. These Scriptures endorse no doctrine not visibly embodied in the lives of true believers.

The earliest references to the New Testament writings show that they were received as of Divine authority by the churches, and that a complete Canon of truth, conveyed orally by the Apostles, providentially became fixed in their writings by the immediate operation of the Spirit of God.

The Canons of Truth and Scripture

Thus there was an indissociable connection between the Canon of truth orally taught and the Canon of Scripture. The contents were identical as long as the oral teaching was adhered to, and was free from perverting influence. Neither the Canon of truth nor the Canon of Scripture derived its authority from the churches, much less from the Church as an organized body. The Scriptures, then, were given by the individual writers raised up of God for the purpose, and were not imparted through the Church as such.

From the earliest post-apostolic times the churches lapsed from their purity. Yet the authority and value of the Bible remained unaffected by the apostasy. The written truth stands out, indeed, all the more clearly in its permanent value by reason of the promulgation of error.

There is ample evidence, too, that copies of all the books comprising the New Testament were made in abundance and circulated in all the churches from the very first. The work of copying them out was carried on assiduously by numerous copyists. So that at the beginning of the second century the Scriptures as we have them were in general recognition and use. The production of spurious writings served only to throw into contrast those that were genuine. Hence the God-breathed Scriptures of the New Testament, issued, in their manifest authenticity and Divine imprimatur, from the conflict of the contending forces of truth against error. What the Apostle Paul had declared concerning divisions in the church at Corinth, is true of the Scriptures, "There

must be heresies ... that they which are approved may be made manifest among you" (I Cor. 11:19). The exposure of the false served but to manifest the true.

Not by Church Councils

It was not the Church that settled the Canon of the New Testament. It is true that the Council of Laodicea, held in the latter part of the fourth century, gave in its sixtieth canon a list of the books of the Old Testament, and that the third Council of Carthage, held in A.D. 397, gave a list of all the books in the present Canon of Scripture, but it is not due to ecclesiastical councils that we possess the Bible as we have it. The Canon had been practically fixed by the common use of Christians long before, and was not formally marked out by any combined investigation. These ecclesiastical Councils only confirmed the antecedent recognition of the Canonical books, a recognition manifest in earlier post-apostolic writings and acknowledged in general by the earliest churches in contrast to writings which had received no such general recognition. The recognition was primarily the effect of the testimony, in this very respect, of the Scriptures themselves. They bear, to the spiritually minded, their own witness to their validity. Thus, for instance, the Apostle Peter bears witness at the end of his second Epistle to the validity of all the Epistles of the Apostle Paul as being of equal authority with "the other Scriptures," a clear intimation as to the existence, among the churches, of a well-known and recognized number of inspired Scriptures.

To show how worthless the decisions of Church Councils regarding the Canon can be, the Council of Trent went so far as to admit the Apocrypha into the Old Testament Canon. The authority of Church Councils was derived and enforced, not as the result of a process of Spirit-guided conformity to the teaching of Christ and His Apostles, nor by way of development in adherence thereto, but through departure from the faith and through prejudicial influences. The traditions of men, were as contradictory to the revealed will of the Lord as the traditions of the Pharisees and Scribes were in the nation of Israel in its degenerate state.

Appeal is made to the analogy of the so-called Church Council in Jerusalem recorded in Acts 15. But the record given in that chapter shows that the nature of that gathering was vastly different from that of the ecclesiastical Councils established in later centuries. When the Apostles and elders met in Jerusalem to decide a question that was troubling the saints, their decision was given, not as from their own authority, but

in the light of Holy Scripture. They did not add to truth which had already been given by God and recorded in the Scriptures. They simply confirmed what had already been revealed.

It becomes us, then, in days when the sufficiency of the Bible is being called in question, to adhere to the instruction of these Holy Scriptures, and to hear constantly the voice of God through them, remembering that they are able to make us "wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus," and are "profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness: that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work" (2 Tim. 3:15-17).

Chapter 19: Local Church Characteristics

The object of this chapter is to give a brief statement of some special characteristics of a "church of God," that is, a local church formed according to the Scriptures.

Jesus is Lord

A local church is, firstly, a company of believers where Jesus Christ is acknowledged as Lord. This is stressed, for instance, in the opening of the first Epistle to the Corinthians, where "the church of God at Corinth" is addressed as "them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that call upon the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ in every place, their Lord and ours." Six times in the first few verses the title "Lord" is mentioned, and it forms an outstanding feature of several parts of the Epistle. At the beginning of the twelfth chapter the acknowledgment of His authority as Lord is noted as the distinguishing mark of believers, and the Apostle terminates that section, at the end of chapter 14, by declaring that the things which he has written are "the commandment (sing. number) of the Lord." Subjection to His will, as revealed in the Scriptures is, then, to be the guiding principle in all matters.

The Holy Spirit's Prerogatives

Secondly, the prerogatives of the Holy Spirit in His presiding and directing power are acknowledged. To Him it belongs, for example, to raise up, qualify and equip bishops (otherwise spoken of as overseers, or elders) in each local church. Thus to the elders of the church at Ephesus the apostle says, "the Holy Ghost hath made you bishops, to feed (or, rather, 'tend,' i.e., act as pastors in) the church of God" (Acts 20:17, 28). To

Him it belongs to control the exercise of the functions of oral ministry in the assembly, "dividing to each one severally even as He will" (1 Cor. 12:8-11), and to lead the worship of the saints. They "worship by the Spirit of God" (Phil. 3:3, R.V.). If we relegate the direction of collective worship and the oral ministry of the Word of God to a presiding minister, we quench the Spirit, deny His prerogatives and hinder the free operation of His power. So is this the case, on the other hand, where, even if such ministerialism does not exist, men act in the impulse and energy of the flesh, under a sense of imagined freedom! But two wrongs do not make a right. The will of the Lord is served neither by spurious liberty nor by ministerial officialism.

The Whole Word of God

Thirdly, there is scope for the teaching and practice of the whole Word of God. A local church is spoken of as "the pillar and ground (or 'stay) of the truth" (I Tim. 3:15); that is to say, of whatsoever is taught in the Holy Scriptures, each truth being apprehended and maintained consistently with the unity of doctrine contained in the whole Volume. A church will adhere to the Word of God as such, not to a creed or set of doctrines drawn up there from, nor to the dictates of a Synod or ecclesiastical Council, or other form of centralized authority governing a number of churches. Guided by the Scriptures of truth, a church is the Divinely appointed medium by which the truth relating both to doctrine and godliness of life is maintained and practised. In this connection we may mention the ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, which should be taught and carried out according to what is set forth in Scripture.

The Priesthood of Believers

Fourthly, the priesthood of all believers is recognized. The teaching of Christ and His Apostles is plainly contrary to the appointment of an order of human priests acting in and on behalf of a church. The Apostle Peter testifies that all believers are constituted "a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ." They are likewise "a royal priesthood" (I Pet. 2:5, 9). The Apostle John testifies that Christ has "made us to be a kingdom, to be priests unto His God and Father" (Rev. 1:6). That anyone should be appointed to administer the sacraments, or dispense the elements, contravenes the character of that which was instituted by Christ; it is a departure from apostolic instruction, and is the outcome of mere human tradition. There are not two orders of human priests in the Church. All believers are constituted priests

"to offer up spiritual sacrifices," such as the "sacrifice of praise" and the presentation of themselves to the Lord for His service. An overseer, or bishop, is not a priest in virtue of his being a bishop. He is a priest with all the members of the church as being together set apart for this purpose.

Separation from the World

Fifthly, separation from the world is maintained. The character of the gatherings, whether in the matter of worship or in any other respect, is to be free from that which characterizes the world. Both in collective testimony and in that of individual life the exhortation applies, "Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers" (2 Cor. 6:14-18). In this passage the relationship of believers to God as Father receives special stress, as that which is made good in the experience of believers, in the fulfillment, on God's part, of all that He designs to be as a Father to His children. The rhetorical questions "What fellowship have righteousness and iniquity? or what communion hath light with darkness? and what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what portion hath a believer with an unbeliever?" (verses 14, 15) are accompanied by the following command with promise: "Wherefore come ye out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch no unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be to you a Father, and ye shall be to Me sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty" (verses 17, 18). This can be enjoyed only where separation from the world is maintained, and where the testimony of the assembly is not marred by worldly schemes, arrangements and methods. For the assembly, as well as for the individuals who compose it, the exhortation of the Apostle John holds good: "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the vainglory of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world" (I John 2:15, 16). Where the fear of the Lord is not realized in the fulfillment of this exhortation, there may be a form of godliness, but the power of it will be denied and wanting (2 Tim. 3:5).

Holy Love

Sixthly, the saints dwell together in holy love. This is the Divine hall mark for believers. It is what the Apostle calls the "46still more excellent way" than even the possession of "greater gifts" (I Cor. 12:31). Believers are indeed to "desire earnestly spiritual gifts,"

but they are to "follow after love" (14:1). "Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace," they will learn to walk in love even as Christ also loved them, a love that, negatively, refrains from all that is inconsistent with the claims of Christ, and, positively, is exercised in denying self and seeking the good of others.

The Power of God

Seventhly, the power of God is manifested. Only where believers dwell together in love, and where the Holy Spirit is not grieved by that which is inconsistent with the Word of God and the character of Christ, can such power actually be manifested. There may be a show of power without that real possession and exercise the effect of which will meet with approval at the Judgment Seat of Christ. Divine power is both repellent and attractive, keeping out that which is false and corrupting, and drawing sinners to the feet of Christ and restoring backsliders to repentance and acknowledgment of the truth.

Gospel Activity

Eighthly, an aggressive Gospel activity is maintained, not only in connection with the testimony of the assembly itself, but in the spread of the truth in other regions. The church of the Thessalonians is a standing example in this respect. The company had not long been formed. The assembly there was comparatively in its infancy, and yet the Apostle could say, "from you hath sounded forth the word of the Lord, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but in every place your faith to Godward is gone forth." To show to what extent their testimony had proceeded, the two provinces mentioned were together about the size of England. The church at Corinth does not seem to have been quite so aggressive, and the Apostle found it necessary to exhort them to cooperate in regard to his desire to preach the gospel even in the parts beyond them (2 Cor. 10:15, 16, R.V.).

The Hope

Ninthly, the saints live in constant and earnest expectation of the return of Christ. In this the church of the Thessalonians is again commended; they had "turned unto God from idols, to serve a living and true God," and "to wait for His Son from Heaven" (1 Thess. 1:10). The Lord keeps His coming before the church in Philadelphia as an incentive to their maintenance of the faith. He says, "I come quickly: hold fast that which thou hast, that no one take thy crown" (Rev. 3:11). The weekly remembrance of

the Lord in "the breaking of bread" likewise has this in view: assemblies are commanded thus to proclaim the Lord's death "till He come" (I Cor. 11:26).

Chapter 20: The Position and Service of Sisters

What is put as the second verse in the eleventh chapter of I Corinthians really begins a new section of the Epistle; here the Apostle takes up matters concerning the relative position of men and women in the church, and certain abuses which had arisen in other respects as well. He introduces the subject by a threefold statement regarding headships. "The head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God."

A Sign of Authority

This forms the basis of injunctions concerning the gatherings of assemblies that the heads of men are to be uncovered and those of women are to be veiled. The reasons given are connected with the creation of man: "For a man indeed ought not to have his head veiled, forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God: but the woman is the glory of the man. For the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man: for neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man."

The reference is to the Divine designs regarding authority and subjection; there is no suggestion of any distinction between men and women in their individual relation to Christ as believers. In that respect there is equality: "Neither is the woman without the man, nor the man without the woman, in the Lord" (verse 11). In regard, however, to the subject dealt with in the chapter, it is otherwise. Under the Headship of Christ man acts in his capacity as "the image and glory of God." He is not only a visible representation (image) of God, but is in himself a manifestation of God's excellence. There may be a representation without glory; or there may be a manifestation of glory without a visible representation. Both are combined in man. In the assembly, therefore, man is to be unveiled.

"The woman is the glory of the man." This signifies that without her there is not the full manifestation of what the man is. She is his counterpart and complement. The woman, too, sets forth the higher relationship of the Church to Christ. When Rebekah learned from her servant that the man who was walking in the field to meet them was his master, "she took her veil and covered herself" (Gen. 24:65) not only an indication of

her position with regard to him who was to become her husband, but an intimation that her beauty was for him alone. The Church is not only derived from Christ but is designed to be set apart entirely for Him.

Headship and Subjection

In a gathering of the saints, then, the veiled head of the woman symbolizes the Headship of Christ and the subjection of the Church to Him. Her place of subordination is thus at the same time a position of glory and honour. It is one of subordination indeed, "for the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man: for neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man" (verses 8 and 9). What the woman possesses is derived from him. Eve was formed from Adam; she was bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh (Gen. 2:23). Her name "Issah" was derived from his, "Ish."

The first "I will" in the Bible is in God's declaration concerning Adam: "I will make him a help meet for (i.e., answering to) him" (Gen. 2:18). The last "I will" is in the invitation to John: "Come hither, I will shew thee the bride the wife of the Lamb" (Rev. 21:9). There is a significant connection between the two "I will's."

In the assembly, therefore, that the women have their heads covered is emblematic of the higher relationship of the Church to Christ. The matters of praying and prophesying in the gatherings of the saints are referred to in this passage incidentally. They do not here form the special subject with which the Apostle is dealing. What are in view here are general principles concerning the position of men and women in the church. Injunctions regarding the public utterances of men and women on occasions when the church assembles are laid down in the 14th chapter. Obviously the present passage does not state that women are to veil their heads at a given time during the gathering of the church, for their heads are to be veiled throughout the whole time of such gatherings, and in this respect he says, "For this cause ought a woman to have a sign of authority on her head, because of the angels" (verse 10, R.V.).

The witness given to the angels in the display of the Divine counsels of grace is of the utmost importance in God's sight. The Lord is now making known, through the Church, "unto the principalities and the powers in the heavenly places the manifold wisdom of God" (Eph. 3:10). The veiled condition of the woman, then, betokens the authority of Christ. She has a twofold covering. There is the temporary one, that of the veil, in

regard to a gathering of the church, and put on for the immediate purpose, and there is the permanent one consisting of her long hair. "Doth not even nature itself teach you that, if a man have long hair, it is a dishonour to him? But if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her: for her hair is given to her for a covering." It is the glory of a Christian woman in this, that she thereby symbolically sets forth the Headship of Christ and the subjection of the Church to Him.

The careful consideration of the details of this passage in the light of the great principles of verse 3 will show that this is no insignificant matter. How could it be so when it is the express will of the Lord? Again and again, things which may seem to be of comparative insignificance, are, when brought within the scope of the teaching of Holy Scripture, seen to comprehend truths of the very highest order.

When the Apostle says, in the conclusion of this part of his subject, "If any man seemeth to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the churches of God" (verse 16), he is not by any means suggesting the abandonment of the injunction as to the veiled condition of the woman and the unveiled condition of the man, but to a custom of contending. This will be clear from the true significance of the word "seemeth." It has the meaning of "making a show," not, that is to say, merely of appearing to do something, but of making a display of it. People at Corinth would know exactly to what Paul was referring. Instead, therefore, of saying anything by way of retracting what he had just taught, he is confirming it by stating that these things do not come within the scope of contention.

A Second Sign

With regard to the second principle, that "the head of the woman is the man," what was said in regard to chapter 11 in connection with the significance of the veiled heads of the women in the gatherings of the church, likewise applies to the injunction given at the close of chapter 14, "Let the women keep silence in the churches; for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but let them be in subjection, as also saith the law" (verse 34). Subjection implies authority, or headship. Accordingly, as the veil is a sign of authority (11:10) so is the silence of the women.

That this injunction does not refer to abstention from conversation or chattering, is shown both in the context and in the use of the word rendered "keep silence" in verse 28. There it is a command for men under certain circumstances, to refrain from oral

ministry. Exactly the same meaning attaches to the word here. Moreover, if the reference was to conversation it would be equally unsuitable for men to engage in it during a meeting as for women. Their position of subjection would not be exhibited by their abstaining from chattering while the men did so.

The Glory of the Significance

Nor, again, is the prohibition a case of curtailment of what some consider to be women's rights. On the contrary, when understood in the light of the teaching concerning Christ and the Church, the silence of the woman, in respect of oral ministry in the gathering, is seen to be a matter of holy privilege and high honour. This must be the case with anything that sets forth the glory of Christ, and it holds good in the circumstance, as it did in chapter I I regarding the veil on the head, that "the woman is the glory of the man." The Apostle does indeed base his injunction upon God's decree recorded in Gen. 3:16, "thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee" (for it is to that verse that the words, "as also saith the law" apply). Yet what was decreed of God in the garden of Eden, as a result of transgression, is, while still binding, transformed into a matter of glory and honour, as a result of the work of the Cross and the exaltation of Christ as "Head over all things to the Church." The subjection of the woman remains, but it is a subjection which sets forth the relation of the Church to Christ.

False Ideas

All theories advocating that these exhortations were Paul's prejudiced opinions, are at once ruled out by what the Apostle himself says, as are those which argue the inapplicability and impracticability of the teaching in regard to the present time. "If any man," says the Apostle, "thinketh himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him take knowledge of the things which I write unto you, that they are the commandment of the Lord" (verse 37). It is not therefore a case of the opinion of Paul, or of an out dated restriction, but of the binding will of the Head of the Church.

The interpretation that the injunction was simply a prohibition against chattering on the part of women is not borne out by the context; it is largely an inference derived from a supposed custom of the time, always a precarious way of handling Scripture. As was pointed out above, the word rendered "keep silence" is the same as that in verse 28, and is not to be understood in any different sense; there the meaning is obvious; the

silence enjoined was abstention from the form of ministry referred to unless there was an interpreter.

Again, in regard to the explanation, "for it is not permitted unto them to speak," the idea that the speaking was chattering or conversation is quite arbitrary and unreasonable. The word rendered "speak" is the same as in verse 27. We must avoid, therefore, any paraphrasing of the passage which gives the idea of a prohibition against mere conversation. If that were the case the good behaviour of the men, in their abstention from conversation during the meeting, would likewise indicate that they were thereby in subjection, a conclusion patently contrary to the significance of the passage.

Again, the Apostle is not simply dealing with disorder in the gatherings of the church; he is doing much more, he is giving instruction as to varying forms of ministry.

The additional injunction that, if the women desired to learn anything, they were to ask their own husbands at home, is a continuation of the instruction concerning the attitude of subjection, and not an enforcing of a supposed prohibition against conversation.

Whatever was said in the eleventh chapter as to the praying or prophesying of women must therefore be read in the light of the injunction in this fourteenth chapter, where the phrase "in the church" is added. It was absent in 11:4. Broad principles were laid down there; here details of the actual assembling are taken up.

The injunction is confirmed in the second chapter of I Timothy. That the Apostle is dealing in that Epistle with the behaviour of women in the church and not simply in the home, is clear both from the context in that chapter and from what is said in the third chapter as to the object for which the Epistle is written. There he says that he is writing to give instruction "how it is necessary (i.e., for believers the word "thou" as in the A.V. is not in the original; nor is the word "men" as in the R.V. the reference is to the conduct of all in the church) to behave in the house of God, which is the church of the living God (i.e., the local assembly), the pillar and ground of the truth" (3:15).

Praying and Teaching

The 8th verse of the 2nd chapter enjoins that "the men pray in every place, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and disputing." The exhortation is especially, then, as to a

manner of life or conduct, and in connection with this the consistent conduct of women follows immediately: "In like manner, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefastness and sobriety; not with braided hair, and gold or pearls or costly raiment; but (which becometh women professing godliness) through good works."

There is no reference here to public prayers on the part of women. This is mentioned only in regard to men. That not merely conduct in general is in view, but also those occasions when the church assembles, is clear from what follows: "Let a woman learn in quietness with all subjection. But I permit not a woman to teach, nor to have dominion over a man, but to be in quietness."

Here again the admonition is not against chattering, but against public teaching on the part of women in mixed gatherings. This is not a case of undue literalism, but of a plain meaning. That there is no reference to singing and no possibility of any inconsistency with such a meaning where women join in singing, should be perfectly clear, where mere quibbling is avoided. The same is to be said in regard to Bible Class and Sunday School work.

The Great Object

What the Epistle is enjoining is the need of holiness on the part of all in the assembly. The reasons given for the injunction that a woman is not to teach or to have dominion over a man, but to be in subjection, are, firstly, the order in which God created man, "Adam was first formed, then Eve;" secondly, that Eve, the second in creation, was the first in transgression, "Adam was not beguiled, but the woman being beguiled hath fallen into transgression." The effect of her transgression was the Divine declaration that she should bring forth children with sorrow. Here the Apostle says, "She shall be saved through the childbearing, if they continue in faith and love and sanctification with sobriety." This assurance has been understood in different ways. It seems not unlikely that what is referred to is that, by bearing children and so being saved from becoming a prey to the vices which characterized the world at that time, and which are far from being absent today, the woman who brought up a family for God would thus take her place in the maintenance of the witness given by the local church.

Widows and Aged Women

In the 5th chapter of this Epistle special injunctions are given concerning the responsibility of the local church with regard to widows. Incidental to the main instructions there are set in striking contrast the godly manner of life of women who fear the Lord and those who fall into the snare of the Adversary. The former obtain a good report through having diligently followed every good work, both in their home life and in ministering to the needs of others, washing the feet of the saints and relieving the afflicted. Those who turn aside after Satan are such as "learn to be idle, going about from house to house; and not only idle, but tattlers also and busybodies, speaking things which they ought not" (verses 10-13).

The Apostle is occupied here as elsewhere, not with the spiritual privileges and blessings of the believers, but with the moral duties which are essential to a good witness in the world on the part of the church. The enemy must not have just cause for casting aspersion upon the saints. Widows, indeed, that is to say, who were in indigent circumstances and lacked relatives to support them, were to be maintained by church gifts. Those who had children or grandchildren were to be maintained by them. If any one had widows in his household or family, and did not provide for them he had "denied the faith" and was "worse than an unbeliever" (see the R.V. of verse 8). A charge is given as to the age at which a widow was to be enrolled, that is to say, put on the list of those who were recognized by the assembly in the way referred to.

Whatever were the particular circumstances of that time at Ephesus, including the possibility that there were widows who gave themselves to the care of orphans, binding themselves to abstain from marriage, the great point of instruction in the passage is that of piety in the home and in the church. The women who marry are to bear children and rule the household, and give none occasion to the adversary for railing. Their manner of life is to be such that, should they arrive at a condition of need, their circumstances may receive practical recognition on the part of the assembly.

Similar instructions concerning conduct are given in the Epistle to Titus. The aged women are to be "reverent in demeanour, not slanderers nor enslaved to much wine, teachers of that which is good; that they may train the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be sober minded, chaste, workers at home, kind, being in subjection to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed" (Titus 2:3-5, R.V.).

Family Relationships

In that section of the Epistle to the Ephesians in which the obligations connected with family relations are enjoined, certain facts are especially noticeable.

Firstly, in each case, whether of husbands and wives, or parents and children, or masters and servants, the obligation rests especially upon the spiritual connection with Christ. The wives are to be in subjection unto their own husbands "as unto the Lord." The husbands are to love their wives "even as Christ also loved the Church." Children are to obey their parents "in the Lord." The fathers are to bring them up "in the chastening and admonition of the Lord." Servants are to be obedient to their masters "as unto Christ" and are to render service as "unto the Lord." Masters are to act towards their servants in the realization that Christ is Master both of themselves and of those who serve them, and that there is no respect of persons with Him. Everything is to be regulated, then, not simply on the ground of natural conditions but particularly in view of the relationship to Christ and in recognition of His authority. Natural ties, so far from being cancelled by spiritual conditions, are raised thereby to a higher level.

Secondly, the order, wife and husband, children a servants and masters, is not given so as to stress particularly the duties of the weaker, but by way of emphasizing the corresponding duties of the stronger. There is to be mutual subjection in the fear of Christ (verse 21, R.V.).

Thirdly, the discharge of all these duties comes under the great command, "be filled with the Spirit." For believers are filled with the Spirit, not by passing into some ecstatic state, but by ordering their lives in the apprehension of their relation to Christ and of His authority as their Lord.

Fourthly, the obligations of wives to husbands and husbands to wives are laid down first, inasmuch as that relation is the very foundation of human life as Divinely designed. The Creator of man and woman assigned to each that position which would fulfil His beneficent will for each toward the other and for all the conditions of a well ordered family life.

The adornment of the women was to be "the hidden man of the heart, in the incorruptible apparel of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price. For after this manner aforetime the holy women ... who hoped in God, adorned

themselves, being in subjection to their own husbands: as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him Lord" (1 Pet. 3:4-6). The Divinely appointed counterpart of this is that the husbands dwell with their wives "according to knowledge, giving honour unto the woman, as unto the weaker vessel, as being also joint-heirs of the grace of life" (verse 7).

The Spiritual Significance

Fifthly, it is the relation of husband and wife that is used to provide a comparison of the relation between Christ and the Church. "The husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the Head of the Church, being Himself the Saviour of the Body" (Eph. 5:23). Authority and control rest in the husband. From him the wife receives protection and counsel, just as the Church does from Christ.

The second point of comparison in the simile is that "as the Church is subject to Christ" so the wives are to be to their husbands in everything; that is to say, in everything belonging to the sphere of conjugal obligation. The third comparison has to do with affection. The husbands are to love their wives, f4even as Christ also loved the Church, and gave Himself up for it; that He might sanctify it, having cleansed it by the washing of water with the Word, that He might present the Church to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. Even so ought husbands also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his own wife loveth himself."

The love that leads to the union should perpetually maintain it in harmony and happiness. The headship of the husband is never to be exercised at the expense of love to the wife. The love of the husband towards his wife is to be a reflection of Christ's love to the Church, self-abandoning, tender, ardent. In the glory and purity of the Church the love of Christ finds the realization of the designs of Divine grace.

The next point in the simile is that in nourishing and cherishing his wife as himself, the husband is acting as Christ does towards the Church, "because we are members of His body" (verses 29, 30). The nourishment given by Christ is by the Holy Spirit through the Word, the Word of God viewed here in its various parts, each part of the Holy Scriptures being used from time to time for the required purpose. As Eve derived her being and her life from Adam and physically was of his body, so spiritually are believers of Christ. The very life of Christ is extended to all the members. He is made

unto them "wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption."
"When Christ Who is our life, shall be manifested, then shall ye also with Him be
manifested in glory."

