

CHURCH ESTABLISHMENT

AND

CHURCH ENDOWMENT.

IN THREE PARTS.

PART FIRST:

CHURCH ESTABLISHMENT AND CHURCH ENDOWMENT.

PART SECOND:

CHURCH MINISTRY AND THE EPISTLE OF CHRIST.

PART THIRD:

CHURCH MEMBERSHIP AND GIFTS.

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CHURCH ESTABLISHMENT AND CHURCH ENDOWMENT.

THANK God, there is such a thing in the New Testament as an Establishment, but not a national one; for this kind of union between Church and State has already existed in Israel in the times of Moses and Solomon, and will yet again be set up in the Millennium, under the reign of the Messiah. The only other Establishment (and a wonderful one it is) is that which fills up *this* present interval, between Christ's rejection by Israel and the world, and His second appearing in glory—and is of a totally opposite character—formed with Christ, whilst He is hidden in the heavens. It is in part described by Paul in his second epistle to the Corinthians: "Now he which *stablisheth* us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us in God; who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts." If the Lord's people had not been blinded by the craft of the enemy of God and man, they would have thankfully owned *this* as their new standing in the Second man—the last Adam; and maintained it, under the anointing and sealing of the Holy Ghost, as new creatures on the earth, and been seen up to this day, as "the Epistle of Christ," known and read of all men.

In Judaism, "the House of God" *was* a material building, and David and the tribes could speak of

going up to it, in Jerusalem; but in Christianity, the Church is composed of *living* stones. We cannot therefore talk of going to Church, for it is the Church which goes; and the building itself is not the Church, but the people who are there. For the same reason, we cannot properly speak of coming out of Church, because *we* are the Church, and the members of Christ. Peter teaches this great fact, in writing to the converted Jews, respecting Christ and themselves, in his first epistle: "To whom coming as unto a *living stone*, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God and precious, ye also, as lively stones, are *built up* a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." Paul also writes to the Ephesians: "No man ever yet hated his own flesh, but nourisheth it, and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the Church, for we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones." Nothing can be plainer than *this*; but Satan, the untiring corrupter of the truth of God, has mixed up the present ministration of Christ with the past dispensation of Moses and the law; and thus destroyed the peculiarity of the Christian calling, and what a Christian *is*, as well as the Church.

This confusion will oblige us to look into the testimony of God in the Epistles, respecting a believer in Christ (whether he be Jew or Gentile, bond or free), and see what the mighty power of God is that has created him anew, and authorised him to take his place as a member of the body of Christ, and of nothing else.

SEE I CORINTHIANS.

The attention of the Lord's people has been largely directed of late to the Epistle to the Romans, with a

view of showing the summary it contains of the responsibilities of Jew and Gentile before God, and yet the common level upon which they both stood. "They are *all* under sin." Besides this, there is a further judgment pronounced by the righteous God upon the great fact of man's *enmity*, as expressed by the cross and the betrayal of Christ, by which "every mouth is stopped, and the whole world brought in guilty before God." Moreover, when tested by the standard of what was due from the creature to the Creator, "all have sinned and come short of the *glory* of God." Adam and all his posterity, as in the flesh, are here set aside, under sin and the righteous judgment of death.

Nothing but the grace of God could take advantage of a crisis like this, and make it the opportunity of introducing righteousness in its *new* association with Christ in grace—"whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood," to declare at this time His righteousness, "that he might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus."

God Himself is here seen, as brought by the atoning blood of Christ in our redemption, into the new circle of His own delights—saving the lost, pardoning the sinner, justifying the guilty, because of the work of Christ on the cross; and His having been "declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead." With what delight do all the redeemed, together with principalities and powers in the heavenly places, listen to the voice of the Holy, Holy Lord God Almighty, as He challenges the whole universe around Him: "*Who* shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" "It is God that justifieth," silences every fear. "It is Christ

that died, yea rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us," is the ground of our largest confidence, and the guarantee for our boldest hopes! We are predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.

The God who has suited us for Himself, and for conformity to His Son in the eternal glory, also fashions us for a correspondingly suited place while we are in this world: and this is the second part of the Epistle to the Romans. "I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye *present your bodies* a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God which is your reasonable service, and be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind." A Christian must in this way be modelled both for the heavens and for the earth, both for time and for eternity. He is called out by grace to take no other place than with Christ above, and with a rejected Lord below; but how far short of this vocation in its two-fold character the Christians of to-day have fallen, each heart, alas! knows for itself.

The immediate purpose of this paper is not however with the Romans, but with the Corinthians: only it was necessary to preface the subject with these remarks, "since Paul throws open the Church at Corinth (so to speak) to the beloved of God, the called saints of Rome out of the great capital of the Gentile nations. Jerusalem, as God's centre of earthly blessing, and the city of the great king—the only true national establishment—is given over to be trodden down of the Gentiles, till the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled." The Jews and Jerusalem are dispensationally set aside in the earth,

and God is now "calling out from the Gentiles a people for himself." The second coming of the Lord Jesus from heaven is the grand turning point in the counsels of God with mankind, both for blessing to the converted and for judgment to the unconverted, like as in the day when Noah entered into the ark. In other respects there is "no difference [between Jews and Gentiles], for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." All the world is guilty, and every mouth shut; men and the world have been morally judged at the cross, and *by* the cross; cities, too, have drunk, and will be made to drink, the cup of God's fury; Jerusalem has already drunk deeply of it; our holy and beautiful temple, where our fathers praised Thee, is thrown down, and the city is a desolation. Babylon of the Gentiles is the next that will come into God's remembrance, "for her sins have reached unto heaven." The word has gone out, "Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird." Thus we have seen that men, whether Jews or Gentiles, and their cities, whether ancient or modern, together with the whole world, are proved guilty by the great confederation of the nations at the cross, in their rebellion against God, as manifested by the crucifixion of His only-begotten Son. The resurrection of Christ from the dead, and His exaltation to the right hand of the throne of God, is the denial and absolute reversal of what man has done at the cross, as the enemy both of the Father and the Son. "Now is the judgment of this world; now shall the prince of this world be cast out," were the words of the Lord Jesus upon this momentous issue, as He submitted to His

betrayers and murderers. The difference we are now seeing, and shall have to consider, marks the distinction between God's actings towards kindreds, and peoples and tongues, under His righteous government on the earth, in the midst of things as they were and are; and His sovereignty in divine grace, by which He can *now* take up a Jew or Gentile, through the redemption that is in the blood of His Son, and establish such an one in Christ, and anoint him, and seal him, and give the earnest of the Spirit in his heart, till the day of glory comes. The gospel of God preached among all nations, for the obedience of faith through His name, makes known this salvation of God, and introduces a believer to this blessedness. A comparison of the opening verses of these epistles will show the difference now pointed at, and in application we shall discover that it requires a first-rate Roman-Christian, to make a really good Corinthian-churchman. To the first Paul writes, not as a gathered body, but "to all that be in Rome," &c.; whereas, to the last he writes "unto the *church* of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours." These are recognised as worshippers, and their first act of Christian faith is, as gathered round the person of the living and risen Lord, the Head of the Church, to call upon His name, &c. The Romans were instructed in *their* epistle how they were called and made saints and sanctified in Christ Jesus, so that they were prepared individually to be gathered on the very threshold of 1 Corinthians, for Church employment upon proper Church ground, "with all in every place who call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both

theirs and ours." This platform is wide enough to embrace all the sanctified in Christ Jesus, and yet exclusive enough to shut out all who are not redeemed by the blood of the Lamb.

In pursuing our examination of this 1st Corinthians, we shall find that the first eleven chapters are occupied with the important subject of true Church Establishment, and the remaining part with the engrossing question of real Church Endowment; but closing all up by the glorious chapter xv. of resurrection, as the only and proper hope of the Church of God on earth. How important a matter this is, in all its parts, at a time like this, and for Christendom generally, need not be insisted on.

Let us now follow this 1st Epistle to the Corinthians, as the successive chapters lead us; and first of all notice, yea, and associate ourselves with, that *new* source and measure of Church blessing and benediction with which it opens: "Grace be unto you, and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ," as the only proper standing of called saints, and of the sanctified in Christ Jesus. Should there be a doubt on the heart of any worshipper, as to his title to take this place before God, let every such misgiving be reprov'd, as he reads in this same chapter, "But of him are ye *in* Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: that, according as it is written, he that glorieth let him glory in the Lord." What a *new* object has the Father's grace found for us in this Son of His own love, and our Saviour Jesus Christ! may we not fail on our part to "glory in the Lord," by an unreserved acknowledgment of all that God has made Him to be, by resurrection from the dead. But connected with this

encouraging exhortation there is likewise a stern prohibition, "that no flesh should glory in his presence;" and may the Holy Ghost, who dwells in us, keep us as mindful of one as the other, in our new Church relations, which are thus opening out to us!

In chapter ii. we are instructed respecting "a wisdom of this world, and of the princes of this world, that come to nought"—and "the wisdom of God which he ordained before the world unto our glory, which none of the princes of this world knew," &c. Let us connect these important facts together. In the first chapter "man *in the flesh*" is cast out of God's presence, and the Second man, the Lord, is the only object of glory. Here we get, as a consequence of this, the wisdom of the *world*, and its powers set aside; and another wisdom connected with Christ introduced, "which God ordained *before* the world to our glory." This wisdom (which was once a mystery) is now revealed by the Spirit of God, that Spirit which searcheth the deep things of God; and this Spirit we (the redeemed) have received, "that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but 'which the Holy Ghost teacheth,' &c. Had the princes of this world known the ordained wisdom of God, and Jesus the Lord, in whom this mystery was embodied, and developed, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. Here we are taught the distinction between the Church of God and the world; and what it is which really constitutes and measures the distance between the two in time and eternally—this hidden wisdom—a solemn fact in the government of God and for the consciences of His saints, as to where *they* are!

Everybody admits the interest which attaches to laying a foundation stone, and the ceremonials which are attendant thereon. Be it so: our chapter iii. calls us to witness such a thing in a divine way, but infinitely more grand since God lays it; and the apostles as the master builders are gathered round this new foundation, "the pillar and ground of the truth." As we approach we hear it proclaimed, "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." The Lord, when on earth, said to Peter, "On this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." After the Lord was risen and gone to heaven, Peter inscribed thereon, "a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God and precious." Prophets of Israel, guided by the Holy Ghost, also pointed out this Christ as "a sure stone, a tried stone, a precious stone, and the chief corner stone," and the top stone to be brought out with shoutings in that day when He fills all earth and heaven with His praise. In the meanwhile we add, "this is the Lord's doing, and marvellous in our eyes." Let us further examine this kind of Church Architecture, and the designs, and hear from the lips of Paul "according to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise master-builder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon." And again, "If any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble: every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire: and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is." What a solemn and searching word, for a day when Church

extension is on everybody's lips, and commended on all sides! What must that Church be which is no longer as a city upon a hill which cannot be hid; but has become that Church of which the Lord says, "Because thou art neither cold nor hot I will spue thee out of my mouth?" To take things as they are, and to try and make the best of them, is to become Laodicean, and in fact to deny real Christianity, and the assembly of God: "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." Christ's work on the cross, in our redemption, and the Son of man in glory on high, are the proofs that God will not accept things as they are, but make all things new. Over the entablature of the true Church at Corinth was written, "If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are." Sharp cuttings and inscriptions follow: "Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool that he may be wise." And again: "The wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness." We will only take a glance at our Church bequests and then pass on to chapter iv.: "Therefore let no man glory in men. For all things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's." These are our Church benefactions.

We are now led to the offices in the Church and to church dignitaries, but only to receive our *new* lessons as to these also. "Let a man so account of us as of the ministers of Christ and stewards of the mysteries

of God. Moreover, it is required in stewards that a man be found faithful." Astonishing as it is to see men brought into this nearness to God, and put into the Church as the new vessel of witness and testimony on the earth; yet how plainly does the world show itself to be the self-same world as regards this Church and its ministers, as it was before, when its princes crucified the Lord of glory! "For I think," Paul says, "that God hath set forth us the apostles last, as it were appointed to death: for we are made a spectacle to the world, and to angels, and to men. We are fools for Christ's sake; we are made as the filth of the earth and are the offscouring of all things unto this day." There is not only a Church, and a world in this epistle, but each is true to itself; and the distinction as obvious as between Christ and Belial. *These* ministers could say, "Being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it; being defamed, we entreat."

In the next chapter we are taught what Church discipline is, and why it is to be exercised, and how. "Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? Purge out therefore the old leaven that ye may be a *new* lump, as ye are unleavened." The Lord will not suffer us to be inconsistent even with ourselves as "unleavened;" and this is very wonderful, because all such acts get the authority and sanction of His name. Here let me observe that, as on our entrance upon Church standing and true Christian worship we were seen "calling on *the name* of Jesus Christ and our Lord," so here, when in the Church, and exercised in Church discipline, it is "when ye are gathered together," and "in *the name* of our Lord Jesus Christ," as the only but all-sufficient source of blessing and of power. From

these our responsibilities in the Church of God flow. "Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person." After this, will any plead for the allowance, much less the admission, of "a little leaven," whether in corrupt doctrine or in loose practice?

Chapter vi. instructs us in our new behaviour as regards any exaction of our natural rights. "Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust, and not before the saints? Know ye not not that we shall judge angels?—how much more the things that pertain to this life?" It is important to observe the contrast between the Holy Ghost's teaching in the Church and the teaching of Moses under the law. If an injured man puts himself in connection with the law of Moses, he will be justified in exacting "an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth;" but if he puts himself at the feet of Christ, he will be taught another lesson, "But I say unto you, that ye resist not evil;" or, as we have it in our chapter, "Now, therefore, there is utterly a fault among you, because ye go to law one with another. Why do ye not rather take wrong? Why do ye not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded?" Our separation unto the "kingdom of God" is likewise introduced here, and our connection with it is made the motive for actions which correspond therewith. "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived . . . neither thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God." The liberty is equal to the subjection. "All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any." The bondage of self and the body,

with the thousand claims it makes, are set aside, and true Christian liberty affirmed in our new allegiance to Christ in life. "The body is for the Lord and the Lord for the body. Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? and he that is joined to the Lord is one Spirit." If any inquire by what methods such an emancipation has been effected, our chapter supplies the answer. "Such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God." Again, if self is no longer to be the object, nor the body our rule, to whom do we belong, and whose are we? "What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? for ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's." Such are "the members of Christ," and these new "temples of the Holy Ghost" on the earth, *both* engaged and possessed! We are His.

Chapter vii. treats mainly of the states and condition of life in which a man or woman may be living, when called of God to the knowledge of His Christ and our Lord. For example, "The unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean; but now are they holy;" as also, "He that is called in the Lord being a servant, is the Lord's freeman: and he that is called, being free, is the Lord's servant." So as regards marriage, if any step out of the place in which he was called, and marry, "he hath not sinned," nor she: only let them marry in the Lord.

In chapter viii. we are taught how to conduct our-

selves in reference to the knowledge that puffs up, and the charity that edifies, as applied to meats and drinks, and days and seasons, and things offered to idols. The governing and absorbing fact for Christianity is, "To *us* there is but one God, the Father, by whom are all things, and we in him, and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him"—so that charity may pass into its own region, and delight itself in seeking an object upon which to spend itself for its good unto edification. Mere knowledge on diversities, such as are here in question, puffs up, "but if any man love God, the same is known of him."

Chapter ix. gives the proofs of Paul's apostleship, not by succession nor by human appointment; but as he says, "Have I not *seen* Jesus Christ our Lord? Are not ye my work in the Lord? If I be not an apostle unto others, yet doubtless I am to you; for the seal of mine apostleship are ye in the Lord." As to maintenance and reward, "Even so hath the Lord ordained, that they which preach the gospel, should live of the gospel." And again, "What is my reward then? Verily, that when I preach the gospel, I may make the gospel of Christ *without charge*, that I may not abuse my power in the gospel, and this I do for the gospel's sake, that I might be partaker thereof with you." His service and labour are disconnected from all human and secondary considerations: "For necessity is laid upon me; yea, *woe* is unto me if I preach not the gospel." He puts himself under responsibility to the Lord by a deeper self-judgment than ever, "that he might be temperate in all things, even when striving for the mastery." Moreover this responsibility becomes now a prominent feature of this epistle, and is extended

to these Corinthians by the verse, "Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run that ye may obtain." Personally he closes with the solemn warning, "But I keep under my body and bring it into subjection; lest by any means that when I have preached to others, I myself should be cast away."

Let us recapitulate a few of the important points which have passed before us in these nine chapters. We saw first, as regards man himself, that *he* was put aside as in the flesh, with all his pretensions, "that no flesh should glory in His presence;" secondly, that *the wisdom* of the world and its princes were set at nought; and thirdly, that the *world* itself was a worthless world, because it had lost the one chief treasure which God in grace had sent into it, and was given over to its prince. Consequent upon this rejection of Christ (but in fulfilment of the purposes of God) this Second man, the Son of God, has been exalted to the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens, and has become the centre around whom the "called saints and the sanctified in Christ Jesus" gather together as one body, and on whose name they call, as the true worshippers, who worship God in the Spirit and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh. The Church of God below, has *properly* begun its life and history from the glorified Head above, in an entirely *new* standing before the Father, through redemption by the blood of the Lamb, and called by the God of our Lord Jesus Christ to a portion with Him. Also we are quickened, raised, and seated in the heavenly places in our Head, to be caught up to meet the Lord in the air when He comes with a shout.

But to return. Chapter x. introduces us to Church ordinances and a responsible people who take that ground before God as Israel did: "Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed under the sea, and were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea," &c. Professing Christendom has found at this point an entrance for ordinances and sacramentalism, the only points within the reach of man in the flesh and the craft of Satan; for who could touch Christ in the glory, or the real Church of God, as one with Him *there*? But baptism and the Lord's table and the supper, with all their varied and significant meaning in truth, by the Holy Ghost, could be corrupted and turned round to suit mere human ideas of self-importance, and the subtlety of the enemy: who always revives and works by that which God has judged and set aside in Christ at the cross.

Who knew better than Satan that *death* had closed up all the relations between God and the creature, and by man's own act too, by which he had been not only the betrayer, but the murderer of Christ? Baptism was the great outward expression of this solemn fact, the *end* of man in the flesh. "Know ye not that as many of us as were baptized unto Jesus Christ were baptized unto his *death*?" The enemy would not suffer such a testimony as this to proclaim to the conscience of Christendom the fact of death; but soon turned it round to suit his own ends, and by ways and means with which all are familiar declared baptism to express *life*, and thus affirmed that the baptized were regenerate by that ordinance, children of God, members of Christ, and heirs of the kingdom! Could there have been

such a Christendom as this nineteenth century presents, if the scriptural meaning of baptism, and the Lord's table, and the supper had been kept before the heart in testimony as representing *death*, the death we had deserved, but judicially borne by the Lord Jesus Christ, who suffered in our stead, the Just One for the unjust? How significant are the warnings of this chapter x. to people who still "sit down to eat and drink, but rise up to play." With many of them God was not well pleased, but they were overthrown in the wilderness. Now these things were our figures or types. "Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them tempted and were destroyed of serpents."

There is a difference, at least so I judge, between chapters x. and xi., though both are alike sacrificial. Nevertheless, I take chapter x. to be characteristically "the table of the Lord," and therefore separative in its claims (as representing His title) from everything antagonistic to the Lord in the world around us: "Ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table and the table of devils." What little weight has Paul's challenge—"do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? are we stronger than he?"—upon the professing Christians of our day! Further, the table of the Lord is not only separating as regards believers and unbelievers, but uniting between believers and one another. "For we being many are *one* bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one loaf." We are many members, but only one body, of which the one bread which we break is the symbol. So the "cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ?" The body and blood of Christ are the only basis of assurance before God, and our communion one

with another, is on the common ground of the shedding of His blood.

The claims of the Lord upon us, founded on His rights and titles, extend from the table, as a *new* centre, known by us in redemption, to "the whole earth and the fulness therefore." All this is the Lord's, not asserted in creative title (though that be true too), but like Boaz, who not merely had his Ruth but purchased the inheritance besides. We, believers, own the Lord's title to it all by resurrection, a title to be made good in divine power, when He comes a second time. Man in a state of nature, since Adam was driven out from Eden, is a trespasser, or at least an intruder in this creation, and is only in it by the sufferance of God; but *we* are redeemed creatures, and owning the right and title of our risen Lord to the inheritance by redemption purchase, ask leave of no one to walk through the length and breadth of it, though we have not in fact so much as to set our foot upon. Whatsoever therefore "is sold in the shambles, that eat, asking no question for conscience sake: for the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof." Our privileges as redeemed are *new*, so are our responsibilities; for this same Lord does not suffer us to do any longer the commonest things in an ordinary way, but says, "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." What an elevation, and what a motive is this! So also as to the style of our behaviour in the Lord's inheritance: "Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God: even as I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved." God had put aside man in the flesh, judicially

in Christ on the cross ; but now we see the redeemed putting self aside in the power of resurrection life, and in the Holy Ghost, so that we anticipate the day of our perfect blessing, and begin while on earth to sacrifice self for the profit of others, and for the glory of God. A Christian is a heavenly man, on earth.

This redemption of the inheritance, and the Lord's title and claims, introduce us to chapter xi., where we get the *new* creation order, when all will be manifestly established in blessing according to God. The old creation order was God, and the man, and the woman ; and this standing upon creature responsibility failed ; but only failed to make room for the reserve of God, and the introduction of Christ into a *new* creation-order : " But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ ; and the head of the woman is the man ; and the head of Christ is God." In this *new* order of headship, where the head of man is Christ, there is an end of all fear, for the head of Christ is God.

The supper follows this, and puts us into our places to feed upon the broken body and shed blood of Christ ; or rather as out of that scene of judgment, where in the understanding of our souls, in perfect peace with God, we are set to judge ourselves as to the allowance or existence of anything in us which Christ died to deliver us from ; and which the judgment of God has condemned and put to death. It is a wonderful place to be set in, and to be told to judge ourselves, and that " If we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged " of the Lord ; and that even " when we *are* judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world." But besides, and beyond

these matters of self-judgment, we are gathered round the Christ Himself who died for us, and to remember *Him* in His death—not the living, risen, and ascended One—the object of our worship, and on whose name we called in the opening chapter of this epistle—but the night of His betrayal, when He took bread, and broke it, and said, This is my body broken for you—likewise the cup—only *now* given out to us from the Lord in heaven by our apostle. It is necessarily with this addition, “For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord’s death till he *come*.” The Church fulfils of the death of Christ, will be in our rapture into the heavens, and our being changed into His likeness, and our being presented in the presence of the Father’s glory, faultless and with exceeding joy.

Having considered in these eleven chapters the scriptural nature of the true Church’s Establishment, we now come to chapter xii., to the remaining subject of the Church’s Endowment. Such a Church as this epistle describes (where Christ is everything from the foundation stone, to the top stone; and where the truth of the Person, and work, and death of Christ is taught doctrinally under the anointing of the Holy One, and sacramentally set forth by baptism, and the table, and the supper) could only be endowed correspondingly by the gifts of the Holy Ghost. Therefore we read, “Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant;” and then follows the surprising catalogue or enrolment of what divine love could bestow on this *new* vessel of testimony on earth—the body of Christ. There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit; there are differences of ministries, but the same

Lord, there are diversities of operations, but the same God, which worketh all in all." What must the gifts be that spring forth from sources such as these, and how entirely independent and separate from any power under, heaven, whether national or episcopal, is *this* "Church of the living God!"

Besides these diversities, which are necessary to the existence of a divine unity, there is the Person of the Holy Ghost, which is beyond all His operations and gifts: "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit." We are all conversant with the diversities that make up and constitute the unity of the human body; and this is taken as a figure of the Church in verse 12, "For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ." Scripture only recognises one body, the body of Christ, not a congregational or a nonconformist body of Christians—much less an evangelical alliance—or a Baptist, or a Methodist body, but "ye being many are *one*."

As we saw just now, there are not many suppers, but only one Lord's Supper, and not many tables, but only one table of the Lord. "For we being many are one bread and one body;" nor are there many Churches, such as Popish, Greek, or Anglican; but we are all one in Christ Jesus. "Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels . . . and not holding *the Head*, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, maketh increase with the increase of God."

As regards gifts, God has set some in the Church ; first, apostles ; secondarily, prophets ; thirdly, teachers ; after that, miracles ; then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues. Such are some of the Church's Endowments. The purpose of this bestowment next follows in chapters xii., xiv., which contain yet further direction as to their use for "the edification of the body." In brief, it may be said that the gifts enumerated in chapter xii. need to be baptized in the element of love, or the charity of chapter xiii., in order to be rightly exercised for the edification and growth of the body, as described in chapter xiv. The presence of a plurality of gifts in the assembly is recognised, and consequently directions are given for their exercise, affirming that "the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets," and that God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all the assemblies of the saints, adding, "Let all things be done decently and in order." How generally an ordained minister, and his flock or congregation has been substituted for God's order in the Church ; it is not here my purpose to expose. Nor do I think, where human rules have introduced such a flagrant contradiction as is generally admitted, in what is called "the faith and order" of established and dissenting communities ; anything is wanted but an exercised conscience before God to find the sure way of relief, and an "open door, which no man can shut," by which to escape.

We come now to the magnificent chapter xv. or "the resurrection" chapter, the proper close to such an epistle, because the Church's translation into the heavens to meet her Lord, is her present and blessed

hope. Satan knew this right well, and turned this chapter round into a burial service, and rung over it the funeral knell of the departed—changing a resurrection out of death into a burial service unto death, and the grave and corruption. Let us examine one or two leading objects; and in the first place, what was in question at Corinth? Not whether any died, but if there was any resurrection. “How say some among you that there is *no* resurrection of the dead?” The chapter is to prove a resurrection *out* of corruption, *out* of the grave, and *out* of death, and not a burial into them, which no one ever doubted. “Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ’s at his coming” are the key notes of this *new* chapter of our Christianity, which brings life and incorruptibility to light. Can it be called a burial service which introduces that great fact, “But now *is* Christ risen from the dead,” and affirms, “if Christ be *not* risen, your faith is vain, and ye are yet in your sins?” The enemy, who so successfully changed the meaning of baptism from death to “regeneration,” was equally skilful in turning this great revelation of Christ, and our resurrection into the heavens, into a funeral service and a requiem over the dead.

Further, this rising from among the dead on the part of the Second man by the glory of the Father—this rainbow which spans the horizon of our faith—puts the Lord by ascension into connection with His kingdom, in which He is yet to reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. “The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.” The grand and distinguishing part of Christianity is the risen Son of man, the guarantee of the Church’s resurrection, or

translation to meet her Lord; the assurance too "that God has appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained: whereof he hath given assurance to all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead." How necessary it was for Satan that he should blind the minds of people to this twofold character of the resurrection, is obvious to any exercised soul. An ascended Lord is the pledge to a believer that he can never come into judgment; whereas a risen Christ is the proof to an unbeliever that he cannot escape it! It is resurrection from the dead, which has put the Son of man in his proper place of supremacy and headship of a new creation. It is by the future reign of the ascended One as Christ and Lord, that the kingdom shall hereafter be given up to God, even the Father, "that God may be all in all." Henceforth let this chapter be owned as the record of our victories, for such in truth it is, since we can say, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy *victory*?" And again, "Then shall be brought to pass the saying, Death is swallowed up in *victory*." What becomes us to do, as we quit this triumphant arena of our conquered enemies, but to bow our heads and say, "Thanks be to God, which giveth us the *victory* through our Lord Jesus Christ?" If things were with a saint according to the old law of nature, he might and would still prepare for death, and pay this debt, as some say; but with the sanctified in Christ Jesus all debts and liabilities have been cancelled long ago at the cross, and we are brought by Paul into connection with the blessed hope of the Lord's coming. "Behold, I shew you a mystery: we shall not all

sleep, but we shall all be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye." Henceforth, there can be nothing common in the pathway of a saint. "As we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly." Is there anything common in the pathway of our Lord? "As Christ is, so are we in this world," is where grace has set us.

Our epistle closes with Church commendations upon this *new* footing, so that "if Timotheus come, see that he be with you without fear: for he worketh the work of *the Lord*, as I also do." Likewise with proper Church salutations, "The churches of Asia salute you. Aquila and Priscilla salute you much *in the Lord*, with the church that is in their house." Finally, "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maran-atha."

The Lord encourage His beloved people to step out of every system that will not bear the light and test of this epistle, and to accept the word which says, "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord" (1 Cor. xv. 58).

CHURCH MINISTRY, OR "THE EPISTLE OF CHRIST."

SEE 2ND CORINTHIANS.

THE object of the former paper upon "Church Establishment and Church Endowment" was to bring forward from the 1st Epistle to the Corinthians the

teaching by the Holy Ghost on those two important subjects, and to present them to the hearts and consciences of "the sanctified in Christ Jesus," as a word in season for the perplexed, and to show the Lord's claim on their obedience. It yet remains to examine what the purposes were, on account of which "the church of the living God" was thus established and endowed; and these I desire now to trace, from the 2nd Epistle to the Corinthians.

Let me observe at the outset that the professing Church has long separated in practice the necessary connection of these two epistles: necessary, I mean, if the Church was to be "the Epistle of Christ," known and read of all men. We have already seen that gifts, and ministries, and endowments by the Holy Ghost, such as miracles and tongues, distinguished the Church as the vessel of display on the earth—and was the new proof how God could accredit and enrich this mystic Eve, the body and the bride of Christ.

Jehovah had bestowed much upon the beloved nation of Israel, and upon her prophets, priests, and kings in former times; but it is to "the great salvation," which began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard Him, that God Himself bears witness, "both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will." Never was there such an opportunity for Satan to turn all these endowments against God as now, for God had never before put such things into the hands of men as His servants. As a consequence, we are told by Paul in this epistle, "such are *false* apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ; and no marvel, for Satan himself is

transformed into an angel of light," &c. To the beloved Corinthians Paul said, "Now ye are full, now ye are rich, ye have reigned as kings without us, and I would to God ye did reign, that we also might reign with you." Gifts, moreover, and ministries, were the proofs from the risen and ascended Lord of His love to the Church, for He gave them; and they were "enriched by him in all utterance and in all knowledge . . . so that they came behind in no gift, waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."

But besides the ascension and the coming of the Lord, there is the great but forgotten fact of a *rejected* Christ, and the Christian's present association *with* his Lord and Master in that rejection by the world. This identification with Christ in suffering, is what the apostle brings out in this second epistle, and puts in the foreground. A mere glance at Christendom will show any thoughtful mind, how its Churches have contended for establishments and endowments, and gifts and ministries, though never reaching them according to the divine order of 1st Corinthians; and have entirely abandoned the idea of present participation with a rejected Lord, by their avowed union with the state and the world, which cast Him out and crucified Him!

With these introductory remarks let us now proceed with the Epistle itself; and observe how differently it is cast in all respects from the previous one. God himself is presented as "the Father" of our Lord Jesus Christ; and "the Father" of mercies; and the "God of all comfort," who comforteth us in all our *tribulation*, &c. Let it be observed too that this form of presentation is peculiar to this epistle, and is necessary for the objects proposed, "that we might be able

to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God." The purpose of the Holy Ghost, therefore, is to show the Church of God at Corinth that they were called out into association with Christ their Lord on the earth, as well as in the heavens. They were not only "to come behind in no gift" from the ascended One; but to come behind in nothing that faithful allegiance would bring them into with the rejected One: knowing "that as the sufferings of Christ abound, so our consolation aboundeth by Christ." Human nature could thrive, and vaunt itself, and even make a gift of the Holy Ghost the pedestal for self-exaltation in the first epistle; but human nature can never connect itself with the pathway of our Lord, in the descending steps which brought Him down to the obedience of death.

Paul could say here of these Corinthians, "Our hope of you is steadfast, knowing that as ye are partakers of the sufferings, so shall ye be also of the consolation." Such a path can have no attraction except for a new creature in Christ, as led by the Spirit into real discipleship with our Lord. It is only as our steps follow on in the footprints He made for Himself and left for us, that we descend into the region where He once was, and lived and glorified God. Let us ever remember that the consequences of our obedience are not our care; but the consideration of Him whose will we follow. It is at this point that the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort meets us; and it is here too that, as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation aboundeth by Christ. Paul could say, as to the trouble which came on them in Asia, "We were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired

even of life; but *we* had the sentence of death in ourselves that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead." The two positions are remarkable, into which the Spirit leads these believers. *Here* they are united in life and obedience *with* the humbled, rejected, and suffering Christ as their example; whereas in the first epistle they were gathered upon the confession of their standing, as the sanctified *in* Christ Jesus, calling upon the name of the living, risen, and ascended Lord, as worshippers with all in every place—both theirs and ours.

The enemy knows if he can separate these two parts of a whole Christ in the life of a believer (as he has done, by separating these two epistles in the history and ways of the Church on earth), he has spoiled all testimony for the Lord *below*; and consequently we look in vain for anything collective, anywhere, that stands unmistakably as "the Epistle of Christ," known and read of all men.

The former paper treated mainly of Church Establishment, as connected with 1st Corinthians; but there is a very full and precious scripture in this, which speaks of Christ-establishment, and is its counterpart: "For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us. Now he which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us is God; who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts." This is the circle of our present and eternal blessing, where God and Christ and the Holy Ghost are alike interested and occupied with us, till all things "shall be to the glory of God *by us*." The brightness of this eternal blessedness opens itself out to the faith of all, and links itself peculiarly with

the sufferings of Christ and with the sentence of death in ourselves.

Another grand subject of this epistle is "the ministration of the Spirit," which is taught in the central chapters, from iii. to vii., and is properly introduced by the verses just quoted, as to our anointing and sealing.

Before passing on it may be well to observe that this same scripture, which finishes with "the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts," should be taken as a companion picture to that with which the first epistle opens: "Of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, who from God is made unto us wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption," that He who glorieth "should glory in the Lord." In this last instance, it is what God has made Christ to be *unto us* that we might glory in the Lord; whereas in the other it is what we are as established by that same God in Christ, and of which the Holy Ghost is the witness to us, and seal and earnest. The soul will readily feel how necessary these two descriptions of our blessing are if we would understand who the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is; and how He has suited us to Himself by the work of Christ *for us*, and by the work of the Spirit *in us*, for His own present joy and the delight of His Son, and "that we should be holy and without blame before him in love."

Here comes very fairly the question—*What ministry* has God in reserve for this new race of people—"the sanctified in Christ Jesus?" and in whom is it to be opened out to them? and in what power can it be wrought out, and ministered as the faith of God's elect? The chapters which now lie in order before us supply the answers to these important queries. Historically,

there have been two ministries, with their respective ministers and their ministrations. The first was introduced upon the earth, at Mount Sinai, by Moses, by bringing in the law, under which the nation of Israel bound itself by a covenant of works: "All that the Lord had commanded us, we will do." Whatever the outward glory was with which this giving of the law was accompanied (so that even the mountain and Moses quaked), it was a ministry which *claimed* righteousness from man and was formally written and engraven in stones. In effect the law brought in the knowledge of sin. "I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet;" and consequently it became "a ministration of condemnation" to all who were under it, and had thus accepted its conditions, on the footing of their own responsibility. Rewards and promises to the obedient were out of the question, and in fact forfeited by the transgressors of the law of Moses; and its threatenings and curses were earned instead, so that this ministry became further (as stated in our chapter) a "ministration of death." The law and its demands upon the people—expressed by the words "thou shalt," and "thou shalt not," and accepted by them upon the old covenant of works "do this, and thou shalt live; or do this, and thou shalt die"—has brought out the great fact that, if there "had been a law which could have *given life*, then verily righteousness should have come by the law." The ministry engraven in stones, consequently brought the knowledge of sin and condemnation and death; and equally proved that unless "the Spirit, and the water, and the blood," found their way in by the grace of God, all were cursed, and under the curse.

The *present* ministry is from the heavens, and is founded upon the finished work of Christ upon the cross below, where He put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. God has raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, by the blood of the everlasting covenant, and has crowned Him with glory and honour. Moreover, He has founded a new ministry, upon the worthiness of this Christ and Lord, "not of the letter which killeth, but of the Spirit which *giveth life*." It is this ministry which Paul contrasts here with the former, and which he characterises as a *ministration* of the Spirit; a *ministration* moreover of *life* and righteousness and glory, from the living and exalted Son of man, at the right hand of God, by which we are brought into liberty, and are changed from glory to glory even as by the Spirit of the Lord. This ministry by the Holy Ghost, from the heavens now—or when applied prophetically to the nation, and the Gentiles, and to the ends of the earth in the Millennium—is based upon the blood of Christ—the blood of the New Testament; but this may, and does open itself out, as to the *kind* of blessing, to the heavenly and earthly people, according to the manifold counsels of God, and the place in which Christ *is*; whether as now hiddeu with God, or as by-and-by displayed in power and glory in the midst of the sons of men.

Promises, covenants, and types, and also prophecies had announced the Lord as the seed of Abraham, and indeed as the Son of David, and heir of all that God had bestowed upon his progenitors; to be substantiated when the Messiah comes again, "and his people Israel made willing, in the day of His power." In the

meanwhile Jesus has been rejected, and all this earthly order is therefore in abeyance. Moreover, the veil is upon the heart of that people, until they shall turn to the Lord, and then shall the veil be taken away.

What can God connect, during this interval, with Him who has been declared *worthy* to receive all honour, and blessing, and glory, and power? This brings out Paul's mission in our chapter: "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves: but our sufficiency is of God; who hath made us competent ministers of the new covenant." Paul was himself arrested by this glorified Son of man, "to be a minister and a witness both of those things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear to thee." In the wisdom of God there were purposes and counsels which lay hidden, as Moses testified, "the secret things belong unto the Lord our God, but those which are revealed belong unto us, and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law." It is these secret things, Paul says, which, "according to the revelation of the mystery, were kept silent since the world began, but *now* are made manifest and by the Scriptures made known to all nations," &c.

God had given away the earth, and had lighted up the path, which He was taking with His people through it, with types and promises connected with "the seed," and founded on the blood of the New Testament, which by-and-by will be ordained in the hands of the true Mediator, when the people of Israel shall be established under its blessings in Immanuel's land. God had nevertheless the heavens in reserve, and to give away to another and an entire

new race of people, when their Lord and Head had first taken His own place in them, on the right hand of the throne of God. The Lord Jesus is thus to fill the earth and the heavens with His praise, and to lead not only His brethren after the flesh, and put them (as the true antitypical Joseph) into the land of Goshen; but likewise to carry the people of another standing and calling into the Father's house which He is gone to prepare for them! God has made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure, which He hath purposed in Himself, "that in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one, all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth, even in him, in whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated," &c.

Though our chapters in 2nd Corinthians do not stretch out to such a circle as the Ephesians, yet they open to us the fact that, under this present ministry of the New Testament, we have a ministration from life, in the risen and ascended Christ, to life in us by the Spirit—as well as a ministration of righteousness from the Lord where and *as* He now is, who is our righteousness, and by which we are made the righteousness of God in Him. This ministry is personal, and essential to us as individual believers, that we may know how suited we are by our new creation for all that is prepared for us, as our portion with the Lord; according to the Father's purposes and counsels, in the eternal glory for which we wait, and of which the Spirit is the seal.

In the meanwhile this personal ministration of life is to produce by the Spirit of the living God, in the fleshy tables of the heart, "an epistle of Christ, known

and read of all men"—moreover, an epistle (as Paul says to these Corinthians) written in *our* hearts. Here we may pause and put a question to our souls: Is this the ministry I recognise—a ministration of life, righteousness, and glory, from the risen and ascended Lord in heaven; and written not with ink, nor on a table of stone, but with the Spirit of the living God on the very heart itself? Or am I still entangled with the former ministry of Moses, and the voice of words on Sinai, and the claims of a law which rightly *demand*ed righteousness, and said, This do and thou shalt live? How different are these two ministries; and how lamentable to see thousands of the Lord's people wandering back into the old house of Moses; instead of accepting with joy this present ministration of life and righteousness as the *only* existing ministry between God and His beloved people! When will they take their proper places in the Church of the living God, and in the conscious liberty whereby Christ has made His members free, by redemption through His blood?

What other ministration can there be, for those who understand what the assembly of God is on the earth? and what else could the craft of the enemy do than blind people to it, and get them back into the house of bondage, to lean upon ritualistic observances, of which, when at their best, God said, "I have no pleasure?"

Never let it be forgotten that the First Epistle to the Corinthians gives the present pattern of true Church Establishment and Church Endowment; and that this Second issues the only true Church Epistle, known and read of all men, and reveals the only ministry that can produce it; that is, a ministration of life and righteous-

ness by the Spirit of God, written on the fleshy table of the heart! May God emancipate His own people, and bring them out from responsibilities and disappointments as under the law; to stand in the privileges of His own grace and calling, and the accomplished work of Christ, by which they are put in a complete acceptance with the Father, as sons!

But to return. There is every now and then to be found in the epistles (especially when some new or extraordinary subject is introduced, like "this ministry of life" of which we are now speaking) a further revelation of God and of Christ, suited to the occasion, and which becomes the testimony of the Holy Ghost. If God acts in grace towards men in their sins, to plant them in His own righteousness, it must be from Himself, and in the Second man alone, that He can do this.

In this chapter ii., for instance, there is consequent upon this ministry, such a change as carries us beyond the mere *natural* relations of God and man; for another person, the Word made flesh has come in, "the day-man who has laid his hand upon both." The preaching of what He did in *redemption* upon the cross, ascends up before God as a sweet savour.

Paul, as the apostle and witness to this gospel of the glory of Christ, "thanks God who led him about as in *triumph*, and made manifest the savour of his knowledge in every place. Moreover, he and his fellow-workers "were unto God a sweet savour of Christ in them that are saved, and in them that perish." The relations and responsibilities of men, spring out of this new ground likewise; for "to the one *we are* the savour of death unto death, and to the other the savour of life unto life." This is what the

acceptance or rejection of this ministry of "the gospel of the glory" involved. Adam, and the fall of man, are no longer the exclusive subjects; but the grace of God, through Christ, brought to such an one as Saul, "the very chief of sinners," and presented to any like him, who are in the ruins of the first man's condition.

But if God in grace, through Christ, is thus active in love towards sinners in their sins, "the god of this world" can also use this ministry of the new covenant for his own objects against mankind. "If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost, in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not." No power would be equal to such a scene of ruin and wretchedness as the wickedness of Satan has produced; unless the Creator-God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness upon creation's chaotic confusion, had done a far greater thing; and given by almighty power "the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God," to shine unto sinners dead in trespasses and sins, and quicken them out of this state.

Adam was created in the image of God in the Genesis of human life; but by this first man came sin, and death, and the long catalogue of mortal woes. The last Adam has since come in, and by His atoning sufferings and death, has laid a new foundation for the operations of God in grace and righteousness. Redemption is become the *new* ground upon which God is displayed, and the Second man in the heavens has taken His place as "the image of God" in them. It is from thence that Paul says, "God hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ."

How little is this gospel of the grace founded on the blood of Christ on the cross, below—or this gospel of the glory, from the right hand of God above, presented to the acceptance of the lost and the undone !

Man is either left to struggle with himself and his own corruptions in a state of nature, or handed up to Moses and the law for the improvement of this nature ; instead of to the cross where the old man has been crucified with Christ, that the body of sin might be *destroyed*. In such a case as this last, there is no ground left for a believer to take as a standing before God than redemption ; and none but the Second man to whom he can be conformed now or hereafter. Besides “the epistle of Christ” which the Corinthians *were*—and this “gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God”—there is yet the fashioning power of this life within us, whilst in the mortal body, and this I would desire to trace a little. In chapter iv., this life, ministered from the ascended Christ, put the ministers into the same place as the only true Servant took, when amongst His disciples on earth : “for we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your servants for Jesus’ sake.” How entirely the place of the minister in our times varies from, and indeed, contradicts the character of our Lord’s service, and that of the apostle’s, is plain, if we remember the way in which the Master quelled the strife that arose among His disciples, which of them should be accounted the greatest. It is the Lord Himself that gives the true glory to Christian service. Was He ever so great as when “the hour was come, that he should depart out of this world to the Father,” and He rose from supper and laid aside His garments, and took a towel and girded Himself,

and poured water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet? How great was He in the eyes of all in heaven throughout the three and thirty years of His humiliation; when He emptied Himself, and became obedient to death, even the death of the cross! We are not living in the power of this life, or enough in the company of Him in whom it was seen to perfection, to be charmed by its grandeur in the midst of a world whose "kings exercise lordship." The first thing for "a new creature in Christ" is to understand how *this fact* has necessarily changed his relation and standing to the heavens and the earth; and that his relatively new position to each, is precisely what Christ's is. We must be truly one with Him, where He now is, in conscious exaltation as heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; in order to get into our true place of service in the Church, where to be great is to be little—"less than the least of all saints." Next in importance to our getting into position upon earth, into the place *now* that corresponds with the mind of God (like the Master found in His day), is the conscious dependence upon God, with which this ministration of life connects us: "We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us."

Again, outward circumstances in a world like this, only call out this life from the risen Christ in greater brilliancy where it dwells. "We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body." What a divine life and

what a ministry "the Spirit of the living God" is working out in us as new creatures, "for we which live are always delivered unto *death* for Jesus' sake!" The resources and confidence of this ministration of life are not only outside ourselves, but outside the world, and are found in the Person and ways of the Christ who is our life, "knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present us with you." Again as to afflictions, can they stumble the man in Christ, or clog the divine life; or make it shine the brighter, as it stretches itself away to its own height for relief? "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we look not at the things which are seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal." The real strength of a soul, will be in what it is consciously connected with. If it be far more with things unseen than with things seen, the things seen will become tributary to this life in Christ. When the spies compared themselves with the giants, they were grasshoppers in their own sight; but when faith in Caleb contrasted the giants with the God of Israel, then these giants were the grasshoppers. Life from the ascended Christ and Lord, connects us by the Spirit with *what* He is, and our affections are set on the things at God's right hand.

But, further, this ministry provides for every emergency of the body too, so that "we know if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is

from heaven ; if so be that, being clothed, we shall not be found naked."

We have thus been guided to consider this ministry of life in the members of Christ, as to body, soul, or spirit ; putting them into an entirely new relation with all things, whether present or future, temporal or eternal, seen or unseen ; and as regards all the circumstances of the way, only laying these under tribute, so that they work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. This life, moreover, worketh down into death all in us that else would live, and, living, would be the link by which the flesh and Satan work, so as to connect us with this present world, out of which by the death of Christ we have been redeemed. We must be either false to the objects of our redemption, or else, in the power of that life which we have with a risen Christ, insist upon death with ourselves, and with the world, which by its own act, and by the judgment of God at the cross, is left *under* that death. "Now he that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit." This ministry of the new covenant, in connection with the ascended Son of man, gives these triumphs to us as the consequences and fruits of His work, that in us (who are dead but have life) "mortality might be swallowed up of life." The Church at Corinth and elsewhere, was to be "the Epistle of Christ, known and read of all men" upon every point in which its conformity by life and righteousness ; and by the work of the Spirit of the living God, could make it manifest. Another and a totally different race of people, "new creatures in Christ," were to be seen in this old creation—men no longer living to themselves, but to Him

who died for them and rose again—men who were bearing about in their body the dying of the Lord Jesus, in the presence of the very world that had put Him to death and cast Him out. Properly, this life in us takes up the fact of this judgment by God, and puts us in the place of death, and bears about the dying of the Lord Jesus. What else could this life in the power of the Holy Ghost *produce* in a new creature?

It requires a world such as *this is*, in which to go down to nothingness, weakness, and death; just as it requires another in which to rise and pass up into its own height of glory, like Christ who is the life. It is dependent on nothing under the heavens, nor obstructed by anything, but finds and forces its way in the pressure of resurrection power, drawing us into fellowship with the sufferings of Christ, that in the measure in which the afflictions abound, so “the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort” may administer the consolations. It draws its sweetest motives from nothing lower than Christ. “The love of Christ constraineth us” and conforms its progress by the example of Him “who died for us and rose again,”—knowing too “that we must all be manifested before the judgment-seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.”

Lastly, this life coming from the glorified One, makes Him as He is, the test and standard of its judgment. “Wherefore, henceforth know we no man after the flesh, yea though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more . . . old things are passed away; behold all things are become new; and all things are of God, who hath reconciled

us to himself by Jesus Christ." May God give us to know this ministration of life, righteousness, and glory, as the ministry under which we are placed; and to understand the Spirit of the living God as the power, which is adequate for all the purposes which are to be wrought out in us, so as to keep up the truth of death working by life below; and the other truth of life working beyond the reach and range of death, above, according to "the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God!"

"The ministry of reconciliation," to wit, that "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses to them," is the suited adjunct to this ministry of the new covenant. "The ambassadors for Christ" to His betrayers and murderers, open their credentials by presenting God as beseeching men to be reconciled to God upon this new footing, "that he hath made Christ to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." What "the sheet let down from heaven," wherein were all manner of four-footed beasts and creeping things, was to Peter, as the warrant from God to him to open the door to Cornelius and to the Gentiles; this ministry of reconciliation was to Paul *now*, seeing its aspect was to the whole world. Therefore he could say, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the chief." The Jesus whom Paul was persecuting when stoning Stephen—the Son of God in glory, Christ the Lord, and this blasphemer, the very chief of sinners, give the two extremes of "this ministry of reconciliation," and and they meet, and are together.

Chapter vi. speaks of the ministers themselves, and what care should be taken that the ministry be not blamed, giving no offence in anything, but in all things approving ourselves in afflictions, in distresses, in stripes, by pureness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned ; as unknown, and yet well known ; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing ; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things. This part of the epistle closes with a solemn appeal to the Corinthians, as to things which had interfered with the exercise of this life, "and straitened them in their own bowels."

Their enlargement depended for its manifestation on their being "not unequally yoked together with unbelievers ;" and it is important to observe that the Spirit of God delivers a soul, not by discussing with it that particular point by which it has been caught by the enemy, but by bringing the conscience up to the sources of life, and the springs of real Christian conduct. "What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness, and what communion hath light with darkness?" and again, "What concord hath Christ with Belial, or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?" These are the challenges which brace up the soul, and free it from the spider's web ; for the craft of Satan is, to drop in the intermediate shadings between two extreme colours, such as light and darkness ; and produce a Christendom in the place of Christ ; and to confuse things, so that there is neither the Church, nor the world to be seen in these last days of delusion. Men, and alas ! Christians, may call *this* kind of progress—enlargement and liberality ; but Paul has another word for modern advancement—"straitened." Many an exercised conscience groans under the bondage, and perhaps little thinks how

near the door of escape is, if there were but simplicity of faith to pass through it. "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." *Here* is the secret of all real strength and enlargement of soul—found alone in this association with the living God, and in an entire separation from the evil, which straitens the new man.

How well does Paul add: "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God!" Here it is, if we may so say, that the Apostle of the Gentiles leads these Corinthians to the brazen laver, that they may wash themselves and pass into the inner courts on their priestly service; bidding them remember that in our dispensation, "they are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people." To them, and to him, and to us, all else summed itself up into infidelity, or idolatry; respecting which in all its varieties, we are asked, "What agreement hath the temple of God with idols?" we go outside the camp of the day to Jesus, bearing His reproach. Here, this ministration of life, by the Spirit, has described its own circle; having commenced by writing on the fleshy table of the heart, and finished by cleansing the feet of the saints, and separating them from the Belial of that day, and this: upon the authority and blessedness of the promise, "I will receive you," a word of sufficient encouragement for every exercised heart, whether at Corinth, or in England, or elsewhere.

A few remarks on the remaining chapters may close this paper, my object being mainly to show from this Second Epistle, what Church ministry really is, and in what it consists; just as in the First Epistle I attempted to show what true Church Establishment and Church Endowments were; and what the assembly of God is which is to receive this ministry and its ministers, and to be the Epistle of Christ (as altogether distinct from the world) "known and read of all men."

The example of Christ Himself is introduced in chapters ix. and x., and the grace in which He commended Himself to our souls, is held out when a corresponding virtue is required, from the life of Christ *in us*. For example, when Paul says, "As ye abound in everything, in faith, in knowledge, and utterance . . . see that ye abound in *this* grace also [of liberality]," he adds, Ye know "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, for our sakes became poor, that we through his poverty might be rich." It is the real secret of power to be thus associated with Christ, not only in life, as we have seen, but in the known intelligence of life, which appreciates and loves according to God, what was manifested in perfection in our Lord. "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ" is irresistible as a moral motive, and as a new power in us, which binds the heart to Himself in a similar expression of grace, however different in measure, as all surely must be in us, though the same in character.

So again in chapter x. when Paul encourages them to another grace, he does so by reminding them of "the meekness and gentleness of Christ," "and that the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;

casting down reasonings, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." Thus the things which straitened these Corinthians were not only exposed in a former chapter, as resulting in an unequal yoke—false concords, mixed communions, and corrupt agreements—but are here hunted down to their strong holds, and their hiding places discovered to be in the flesh; and looking on things "after the outward appearance." Nothing less, than the knowledge of God for our faith; and the obedience of Christ, for abiding fellowship in the truth; can be the upper and the nether springs for the inner man: and the saint who is watchful, may often find an opportunity of bringing a stray thought into captivity, instead of being led into captivity, or being straitened by it in himself, by its existence. What had they reduced their standard to, when they said, "His letters are weighty and powerful, but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible?" How tenderly, yet effectually, does he recover them from the point of their degradation, of "comparing themselves among themselves"—by saying, for "*we* dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves For not he that commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth."

Alas! though the temple of Solomon, with its porches, and beams, and posts, and walls, was overlaid with pure gold; and though the house was garnished with precious stones for beauty, and the gold was the gold of Parvaim; yet declension began with its own king, and the glory which overcame the spirit of the

Queen of Sheba was soon tarnished; and the Ichabod of Eli's days became a prophetic word to Solomon! The Egyptian king came up against Jerusalem, and took away the treasures of the house of the Lord, and carried away the shields of gold which Solomon had made, "instead of which the king Rehoboam made shields of *brass*," &c.

The same enemy was at work in the church at Corinth, and the watchful apostle writes, in chapter xi., "I am jealous over *you* with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ."

False apostles and false doctrines are in the dark catalogue of this chapter. The truth of Christ and the Church has been corrupted, and the false gods of Jeroboam's day are renewed and set up—the one in Bethel, and the other in Dan. The house of high places, with its priests, and the ordained feasts of the eighth month, on the fifteenth day of the month, are become established by *law*, as the religion of the country. Ritualism, with its ordained priesthood and consecrated buildings and confirmed worshippers, as a system, is set up throughout the length and breadth of the land, though varied here and there by the lighter shades of Evangelicalism, or the fantastic hues of Nonconformity. The brass shields of a corrupted Christianity are boldly put in the place, and largely accepted, in lieu of the golden ones, which (our enemy) the great Egyptian has carried away: "Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness;

whose end shall be according to their works." What an opportunity does this day of departure afford to an exercised conscience (and, thank God, there are many) to refuse these innovators, though they bear with them the imitation shields of brass! The fine gold of Parvaim—the gold of the house of the Lord—"the word which ye have heard *from the beginning*," remains, and Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. Are they ministers of Christ? asks our apostle. "(I speak as a fool) I am more; in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. . . . If I must needs glory, I will glory in my infirmities. The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is blessed for evermore, knoweth that I lie not." Who that loves the truth, and the true Church—the assembly of God—would not step outside this great and last corruption, before the final apostasy, and Christ spues it out of his mouth?

Here we may say, how truly is Paul a competent example and minister of this life; which first in the Lord Jesus Himself, reached death in the obedience which could alone bring Him there, "that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us"—a life which could neither be worn down by the enmity of foes, nor by the desertion of friends—a life which could not be worn out by the patient endurance of what was appointed Him, but a life which spent itself in doing the will of the Father that sent Him, and found its own sustainment whilst doing it! So Paul, like a lesser light, is carried about in triumph wherever the Spirit leads him; whether beaten with rods or stoned, in shipwreck and in the deep, or in journeyings, in perils of robbers or in perils among false brethren, let down by

the window at the walls of Damascus, or caught up to the third heaven (as in chap. xii.), every step was but the pathway of this life, from the man in glory—and *now* this man in Christ. A life which lived as truly upon death; and by means of dying daily in this world, as this same divine life will rejoice in the eternal glory, when surrounded by circumstances that are (not more suited perhaps, but) more proper to it, where *God is*, and where evil cannot come? “He that loveth his life shall lose it, and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal.”

One thing more remains to notice in the last two chapters, that this ministry of life from the exalted Head, by the Spirit in us, which keeps its pressure of death upon the flesh, so that its own activities should not be straitened; is made perfect by weakness, in the absolutism of its own nothingness, and therefore of entire dependence upon the Lord. The persecuting power of Satan, let loose upon him at Philippi (so that he spoke in the beginning of the epistle of the trouble that came upon them in Asia, even to the despairing of life), was accepted by him as “the sentence of death, that they should not trust in themselves.” The God who raises the dead was all the nearer, and far more present; on the pathway of obedience unto death, than anything else.

Every adversity was turned to account, even to Satan himself. So that at the close of this epistle Paul gets quite to the other extreme of the afflictions of Christ, and, “coming to visions and revelations of the Lord,” says, “whether in the body or out of the body, I cannot tell; God knoweth.” Such an one was caught up into paradise and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter. “Lest I should be exalted

above measure, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me."

Here likewise Satan is turned to profit for Paul, in the history of this life, in "a man in Christ," not in Philippian persecutions, but in the abundance of the revelations in the third heavens! "For this thing I besought the Lord thrice that it might depart from me, and he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness."

The Father of mercies and the God of all comfort opened the abounding consolations at the beginning, and now at the close we see the Lord Himself perfecting His own sympathy and strength, in the felt weakness of this chosen vessel unto Christ. What a use the Lord can make of us for Himself, before we quit these earthly places, if we will only go to nothing; that Christ may be magnified in our body, whether by life or by death! "Most gladly therefore," he adds, "will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me." Old things are passed away, and all things are become new, and all things are of God; and the things that were gain to me I count loss for Christ. Reproaches and afflictions, with persecutions, are the Lord's bequest to us in this world: they are not misfortunes when met in the path of life and obedience, but they are (as Caleb said of the giants) bread for us.

We need difficulties and trials to prove that this life in Christ, and in us, will pass in its own title of suffering or endurance, through the last and greatest of them. God wants them, to bring in His mercies and comforts in the tribulation; and the Lord needs them, to prove the sufficiency of His grace and that His strength is made perfect in weakness. Moreover, Paul adds, "Therefore I take

pleasure [what a triumph !] in infirmities, in reproaches, in distresses for Christ's sake, for when I am weak then am I strong." In the unweariedness of this life, seeking objects upon which to express itself, he assures these Corinthians, "I will very gladly spend and be spent for you, though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved." What a new rule for charity is this, or rather what *another* charity is introduced into the Church of God ! In chapter xiii. (the last) Paul again insists on weakness, even as Christ who, though He was crucified through weakness, now liveth the power of God. "We also are weak with him, but we shall live with him by the power of God toward you." If they sought a proof of Christ speaking in him in any other way, let them "examine themselves, whether *they* be in the faith ; let them prove their own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in them, except ye be reprobates." How could they doubt this ministry of life, or fail to believe that through this ministration of the new covenant, Jesus Christ had been received, and was in them ? Finally, he prays to God for them, that that they do no evil, and is glad when he is weak and they are strong, and wishes their perfection ; at the same time adding, "I write these things, being absent, lest being present I should use sharpness, according to the power which the Lord hath given me to edification and not to destruction. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace, and the God of love and peace shall be with you."

This ministry here finds its culminating point, in making perfect, and producing comfort in *this* state, where the God of love and peace may be known and can dwell—an enclosure of His own, in spite of the

world, and the flesh, and the devil—a habitation of God through the Spirit! A benediction rests upon this temple of the Lord, this household of God: “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost be with you all. Amen.”

CHURCH MEMBERSHIP, AND GIFTS.

IN reading the Epistle to the Ephesians, it is of the greatest consequence, doubtless, to notice the various subjects of which the Holy Ghost is treating, seeing it is God Himself, and “the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory,” whom it reveals, as come forth in the fulness of *all* blessing to the Son of His own love, and to those who are His.

It is however only one of these subjects which I desire to follow in this paper, and in the simplest way; so that I shall almost confine myself to the manner in which it is unfolded in each successive chapter by the apostle Paul. Let us then consider what this scripture teaches respecting the Church—the Church’s Head, and its members—the source of gifts, for its edification and growth—and the Lord’s care over it till He comes “to present it to himself a glorious Church, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing.”

Chapter i. 19-23, treats of the Head and the body, and speaks *only* of Christ, as raised up into His place of Headship, by “the working of the mighty power of God, which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places.” It is of great moment, in these last days of establishing, or dis-establishing the national

churches (so called) of Christendom, to see that *this* Head of the Church, which is His body, can never be touched or tarnished by the wisdom, or wickedness of men. Moreover, this scripture tells us that God "hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the Church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all." The Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, of whom alone these wondrous actings of God are true, is therefore the Head of the Church, which is His body, and there can be consequently no joint, or second head. The acknowledgment of this *fact* will be found to clear the minds of the simple, of all difficulty and doubt as to the true and only Head of the assembly (or Church) of the living God.

Chapter ii. as plainly teaches how the body and its members are formed. "God who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, hath quickened us together *with* Christ (by grace are ye saved) and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places *in* Jesus Christ." The members of this Christ, as Head; and therefore the members of the Church which is His body, are quickened persons, who were *once* "dead in trespasses and sins, and were by nature the children of wrath even as others;" but they have been born again, born of the Spirit, born of God, have life in the Second man, and are raised and seated in Him, as the Head in the heavenlies. When the Lord comes with a shout, it will be to call the members up to meet Him in the air, as Christ the Head, to be glorified together with Him. The mighty power, which wrought in Christ and raised Him from the dead, has been also put forth "to us-ward who believe," and

has quickened us out of the death in trespasses and sins where we once lay ; and will presently be displayed a second time, in raising or changing us into the image and likeness of the heavenly man.

These persons are members of Christ, the mystic man, members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. None else are members, nor is there any *other* membership ; and to own or sustain any other, is therefore to be false to the truth. There are not two memberships, nor two bodies, any more than two heads. What a deliverance would the Lord's people get, if they were simple enough to give up every membership but *this one* which God alone can give : for it is *He* who has quickened us together with Christ as our Head, one as much as another !

Chapter iv. declares to us that the source of all gifts to the Church, is in the Lord Himself as Head of the body, and flows from His love, which passeth knowledge. As regards the members of Christ, "unto every one of us is given grace, according to the measure of the gift of Christ"—and as regards the gifts to the body, "He *gave* some apostles, some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ ; till we all come in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." The Lord in supreme power is thus the only source of gift, in the heavenlies, though the Holy Ghost on earth, and especially in the Church, acts according to the Head, in carrying out these purposes, and in agreement with His own love. Besides this, it

is "by one Spirit we are all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit."

A fact of great moment may come in here, though the record of it is found at the close of chapter ii., which is, that the Church *on* earth is "the habitation of God through the Spirit," nor is there any other. Thus we learn from the Scriptures that the source of life and power and gift to the members of Christ, is in the Lord; and that no one can make a pastor or a teacher, any more than an apostle: and that the members of the body in every locality, are responsible for disowning *any* and all such pretensions or assumptions, from whatever quarter they may come. Nor is it enough to disown the false thing; but our privilege is to be maintained by owning the right, this one body, and one Spirit; as well as the sufficiency of the Lord's loving care to give all gifts that are needed, in order that the Church which is His body, may not fail in one particular, on which He has expressed His mind and purpose. If the Lord's people saw how they were thwarting the action of the Holy Ghost in the Church, by human arrangements and systems; and by parochial divisions of the sheep and the shepherds, through authoritative appointments of clergy, or the commoner forms of congregational elections and ordinations; they would waken up to the discovery of the sad and general departure of the saints in the present day from every true idea of what the Church of God really is, whether as regards its exalted Head in the heavens—its quickened members, baptized into one Body by the Holy Ghost—or the various gifts bestowed upon evangelists, pastors, and teachers, for the perfecting

of the saints ; or the work of the ministry, for the edifying the body of Christ.

Chapter v. declares the unchanging love of the Lord to the Church, for which He gave Himself "that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word ; that he might present it to himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing : but that it should be holy and without blemish." This is what the Church is to the Lord, and He is the Saviour of the body. He is coming to fetch His Bride away—His Eve—in the day when "the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready." Were the Lord's people looking for such a presentation, and such a marriage, or such a Bride ; or the coming forth of the Bridegroom who is to "present her to himself a glorious Church," how many a stirring thought would spring up in the mind ! How many searchings of heart would there be among them, as to whether each could not, by association with such a scene, get more into correspondence with the Lord's wishes respecting His Bride ; and thus be detached from this present evil age, and from the evil servant who said in his heart, "My Lord delayeth his coming, and [as a consequence] began to smite his fellow-servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken." But there is more than any mere separation, from the *evil* of Christendom—for all such must get into the place of the Lord's own mind, about His house during His absence, when he said, "Who then is that faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season ? Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing." It is a great

thing on the part of the saints of God to know the Son's house, and to be in it; as well as by spiritual instinct to discern the right meat, and to eat it: "He that eateth *me*, even he shall live by me." The ruin of the Son's house, and of Christianity, has come about, by the introduction of Judaism, and the establishment of the house of Moses, with its ritualistic ordinances, and orders of priesthood, between the worshipper, and God in the holiest. How many thousands of the Lord's people are in the wrong house—and instead of being in the liberty of sons with the Father, and looking for His Son to come and fetch them home into the Father's house—are declaring before heaven and the Christ who died to set them free, "that they are still left on earth as miserable sinners—tied and bound by the chain of their sins?" What a denial of Christ and His work, yea of Christianity itself, is *this* confession! He says, "Behold, I come quickly, and my reward is with me." "I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star." Would not a consciousness of His own deep love, lead us on our part to reply, "The Spirit and the Bride say, Come?" And if He yet adds "He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly," may it only find this answer from the longing affections of our souls, "Even so, *come* Lord Jesus!" "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen."

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